

The word of Yahweh that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

*Hear, O peoples, all of you;
hearken, O earth and all you upon it.*

*Let the Lord Yahweh be witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple.*

For behold, Yahweh is going forth out of his place;

he will come down, and he will tread on the high places of the earth.

*The mountains will melt under him,
and the valleys will rend themselves
like wax before fire,
like water poured down a steep place.*

*All this for the transgression of Jacob
and for the sins of the house of Israel.*

*What is the transgression of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?*

*What are the high places of Judah?
Are they not Jerusalem?*

So I will make of Samaria a heap of ruins in the field,

like a place for planting vineyards;

*I will pour her stones into the valley,
and I will lay bare her foundations.*

*Her graven images will be smashed
—all her earnings burned with fire—
and all her idols I will lay desolate:
for a harlot's hire she gathered them,
and a harlot's hire they will become.*

"This reminds me of Isaiah," Curious remarked.

Micah was Isaiah's contemporary.

"Perhaps there's a connection."

Micah certainly rivals Isaiah's poetry.

"I like the way Micah has gotten right to the point in just a few verses."

But don't assume that the ruin of Samaria is his only point.

"That couplet about the harlot's hire. ... The meaning is a bit obscure. ... Oh, I get it: smashed idols is what their receipts as harlots will amount to in the end."

8 *Therefore, I must lament and wail:
I will go barefoot and naked;*

*I will wail like the jackals
and mourn like the ostriches,
for her wounds were incurable,
and it has come even to Judah,
reaching to the gate of my people,
even to Jerusalem.*

"I would be curious to know if he really did that," Curious grumbled.

Isaiah went naked and barefoot for three years.

"Micah must have known about Isaiah going naked, but that was by the command of God. He doesn't say here that it was God's command that he do so."

What would be the purpose?

"And it's not the same: in Isaiah's case it was 'a sign and wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia.'"

Now, suppose Micah actually walked the streets of Jerusalem naked. How would he explain what he was doing?

"It's not the best way to communicate one's condemnation of immoral practices."

This was mourning the impending fall of Samaria, as a warning to Judah.

"If he wanted to mourn for all Judah, he would have a number of cities to visit naked."

10 *Publish it not in Gath;
weep not at all there.*

*In Beth-le-aphrah [house of dust]
roll yourself in the dust.*

*As you leave, O inhabitant of Shaphir,
you are naked and humiliated.*

*Residents of Zaanan cannot escape:
Beth-ezel [house nearby] laments
and removes them from its welcome.*

*The inhabitant of Maroth [bitterness]
waits anxiously for good,
but evil from Yahweh has come down
even to the gate of Jerusalem.*

*Harness your chariot to swift horses,
O inhabitant of Lachish—
the city which brought sin to Zion—
for in you were found
the transgressions of Israel.*

So you will give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath [possession of Gath]. The houses of Achzib [falsehood] become deceptions to Israel's kings.

I will even bring them to master you, citizen of Mareshah [summit].

The "glory" of Israel will come down even to Adullam [refuge].

Make yourself bald, cut off your hair for your children which you cherish; enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they are going into captivity.

"Micah's attempt to express the warning he received from Yahweh sounds like quotations in some places."

In rendering divine intelligence into human language the prophet has that problem. Sometimes a form of quotation works best. I'm sure you know that.

Curious asked (inevitably), **"What purpose does that coupling of lamentations to the meanings of city names serve?"**

Is it not remarkable, at least?

"It would entertain scribes if nothing else. ... It stands as a signal to look for deeper meanings in Micah's writing."

And if you take time to look into it, it's not easily dismissed and forgotten.

2 *Woe to those who devise iniquity and plan evil upon their beds; when daylight comes they do it as it is in the power of their hands: they covet fields and seize them, taking possession of houses too; they oppress the owner of a house, even taking a man's heritage.*

Beware of nighttime thoughts, Curious.

"This is fascinating: if at night I think about doing something that normally I would not be concerned with, by the next day it seems almost necessary that it be done."

Yes, even though there was no wisdom in its conception.

"And now here is Yahweh coming out with a stern warning about something similar."

Imagination is powerful, Curious. Condemn unrighteous thoughts.

3 *Therefore, thus says Yahweh:*

"Upon this type I have fixed an evil from which you cannot remove your necks,

and you will not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time.

On that day they will taunt you and say with bitter wailing,

'We are utterly ruined:

he alters the area given to his people, dividing our fields among traitors.

Now no one will draw lines for us by lot in the assembly of Yahweh."

Is this a loophole in their real-estate laws that someone is taking advantage of?

"This happens all the time," said Curious. **"Now I see that it has been going on forever."**

This isn't idolatry, yet it seems to be as important, according to the amount of space Micah has given to it.

"So this too was a cause of the fall of Samaria," Curious reasoned.

Is there any justice at all for the family losing their inherited stake in the land with no recourse before the assembly?

"The necks of the thieves—or I should say that type of wealthy land owner—are promised slavery or worse. But not everyone will be killed or carried away by the Assyrians—if I remember correctly."

So it might be a blessing to be poor at a time like that.

6 *"Do not drip out words," they tell me, in their dripping out of words.*

But if prophets never drip out words, this disgrace will not be turned back.

O house of Jacob, how can you ask,

"Is the Spirit of Yahweh impatient?"

and "Would he really do such things?"

Do not my words benefit those who walk uprightly?

"I hear the heart of a true prophet," said Curious, **"—enduring ridicule."**

Notice that they don't disagree with the facts. Paraphrase their argument.

"They're saying, 'You must be kidding! Yahweh would never do such things to us.'"

8 *"Of late you rise up like an enemy,
stripping the coat away
from someone passing by peacefully,
someone who has no thought of war.
You cast the women of my people out
of their cherished houses;
you strip their infants
of their heritage forever.
Get up and go away,
for this is not your place of rest;
your corruption brings destruction,
and it will be grievous."
If a man who walks after wind—
lying and speaking falsely—says,
"I will prophecy of wine and liquor,"
he will be accepted by this people.*

"Thus the prophet echoes Yahweh then adds sarcasm," remarked Curious.

Is he becoming overzealous?

"Arise up and go away,' he says, like it's not the Promised Land anymore for them."

Only Yahweh could say that.

"But really it goes with the next couplet: they will get up and be ushered away as captives after the enemy destroys their town."

That's not at all what they care to hear.

"The prophet would get a kinder response if he sometimes had a favorable word from Yahweh."

He does even now, Curious. Listen to Yahweh's amazing words:

12 *"I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob:*

I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.

I will put them together like sheep in the fold,

*like a flock in the midst of its pasture,
and they will make a great noise,
there being so many of them.*

The one who breaks open will go up before them,

*and they will break out,
passing through the gate,
and going out by it.*

*Their king will go on before them,
with Yahweh at their head."*

"This is like Yahweh is speaking directly to the nation and promising to gather all twelve tribes and personally lead them out—out of something which he doesn't spell out."

It doesn't address their current circumstances, so why would they care? But your curiosity will make it relevant for us.

"It doesn't connect with anything that has been said so far, and it doesn't connect with their concerns."

Notice that little word "remnant."

"It's interesting that the first line in the couplet says 'all of Jacob,' and in the second line it's 'remnant'"

That's an easy one, Curious; there's no conflict.

"So it will be a remnant of the families of all of Jacob's sons; I get that."

Does this sound like a miracle?

"Since Judah and Benjamin were separated from the other ten tribes at that time, Yahweh is promising something extraordinary."

Don't you love the image of them being contained in a sheepfold?

"They're all talking at once, like over in Israel today."

Is this being realized in modern Israel?

"Jews living there now would be a remnant in some sense."

Who is the one who breaks open?

"All I can think of is that Jesus Christ is well known for having broken out of his grave."

And 'coming up before them' is a perfect image of resurrection.

"Then the remnant will break out and pass through the gate of death into resurrected life. That would be the ultimate remnant."

And their king? Who is that?

"In resurrection, their king could only be David. He leads them with Yahweh being his shepherd."

Are you combining Yahweh and Jesus Christ in one God?

"This must be when Yahweh breaks forth and kingdoms melt as Micah lyrically described in the opening of this book."

3 *And I said,*

*“Hear now, heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel:
is it not yours to know justice?
—you who hate good and love evil,
who tear off their skin from them,
and their flesh from off their bones,
who also eat the flesh of my people
and flay their skin from off them
and break their bones
and chop them in pieces
as for the pot,
as flesh in the cauldron.”*

“There’s no escape from that accusation!”

Curious exclaimed.

But it’s only a metaphor.

“It’s a picture worth a thousand words of prosaic indictment.”

I see what you mean. It penetrates the heart and haunts one’s head.

“One verse would make it vivid enough, but Micah is relentless.”

Yes indeed, he doubles down and adds more.

“Aside from the moral impact, the genius of it is that it focuses on the common effect of all kinds of injustice.”

Without naming particular ways in which people are consumed by their masters, it leaves no such crime outside its broad net.

“Is it Yahweh? Who said this?”

Judging by the way the chapter begins, it would be the prophet.

“It appears that he’s taking personal responsibility for the effect that this rhetoric would have.”

There’s no record of Micah being killed or imprisoned for it.

“I can imagine that these sharp words might have cut through the armor of privilege protecting judges and magistrates.”

4 *Then they will cry out to Yahweh,
but he will not answer them;*

*yes, he will hide his face from them at
that time,
according to the evil in their doings.*

Did they even know they were guilty of what amounts to social cannibalism?

“I’ve seen evidence of this everywhere in my travels. Yet I question how the world could work without injustice.”

Rulers naturally prefer inherited worthiness over equality-based justice.

“Even though in some places the stench of injustice is enough to make one choke.”

You’re rivaling Micah, Curious.

“By the way, how did prophets make a living in those days? Donations? I suppose they did whatever brought in the support.”

5 *Thus says Yahweh about the prophets
who cause my people to err,
who cry “Peace” when well fed
and predict war if you withhold food.*

*“Therefore, it will be night for you,
that you may have no vision,
and it will be dark for you,
that you may not divine;
the sun will go down for the prophets,
and the day will be black over them.*

*And the seers will be put to shame,
and the diviners confounded;*

*yes, they will all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.*

*But as for me, I am full of power,
by the Spirit of Yahweh,
and of judgment and of might
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.*

“So Yahweh intends to cut back on who gets to represent him,” Curious observed.

Micah is a true prophet: a false prophet would not have said this.

“The streets must have been polluted with prophecies from dubious sources.”

If any of them were adept in the dark spiritual realm, their pronouncements were aimed at obscuring the truth.

“Micah had no words to say about the national culture and religion being pleasing to God—contrary to the utterances of mercenary prophets.”

At some point in their future the demons were to be restrained.

9 *Now hear this,
you heads of the house of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel
who abhor justice
and pervert all equity,
who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with iniquity.
Her heads judge for reward
and her priests teach for hire
and her prophets divine for money,
yet they lean on Yahweh and say,
"Is not Yahweh in the midst of us?
No evil will come upon us."
Therefore, on account of you,
Zion will be plowed like a field;
Jerusalem will become heaps,
and the mountain of the house of God
will become high places in a forest.*

"Now here he goes prophesying ahead to the inevitable ruin of Jerusalem."

Why is it that no other means of reformation was possible? (A trick question.)

"Eliminating corruption was impossible or else Yahweh would have accomplished it."

How frustrating to be a true prophet and have your warnings ignored.

"As I think about God being the creator of all, it does seem illogical that he would not have within his power the means of straightening out at least some of the crooked elite."

He must respect our entire divine image, or our love is not love.

"He works with human nature and not against it, but he could get people to do anything by arranging a series of blessings."

In the end he will have no use for subjects who are too weak to stand without being shielded from temptation.

"Everyone needs to make a living, and to be successful in your occupation is always a priority. But why let that destroy a city?"

The first commandment is the framework of a life that meets his design. Outside of it you find depravity and devils.

"If there is no resurrection by which things get sorted out, none of this would make sense for these people. ... Or to me either."

4 *But in the last days it will be that
the mountain of Yahweh's house
will be the head of the mountains,
and it will be exalted above the hills;
and peoples will flow to it.
And many nations will go and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of
Yahweh
and to the house of the God of Jacob;
and he will teach us his ways,
and we will walk in his paths."
For out of Zion the law will go forth,
from Jerusalem the word of Yahweh.
He will judge between many peoples
and decide for strong nations far off;
and they will beat their swords into
plowshares
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation will not lift up sword against
nation;
neither will they learn war anymore.*

"That's straight out of Isaiah chapter two!"
Curious exclaimed.

It deserves to be said again.

"Either Yahweh could have given Micah the same words he gave to Isaiah, ...

Each prophet has a unique style.

"or Micah could be repeating a well-known prophecy found in Isaiah's early writings."

It could be what kept Isaiah alive.

"Every citizen of Jerusalem would have it memorized."

4 *And each man will sit under his vine
and under his fig tree.*

"That's exactly what was said about Israel in the days of King Solomon."

It's a quaint metaphor, is it not?

*And none will make them afraid,
for the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has
spoken it.*

"I was going to say, 'the high-rise apartments in Israel must come down.'"

Why did you hesitate?

"I can't imagine Israel going back to that—not with a population like it has today."

Those who would like a primitive economy, and a singular religion are few today.

5 *For all peoples walk in the name of their god,*

and we will walk in the name of our God Yahweh forever and ever.

"That contradicts the Isaiah prediction of all nations going to Jerusalem to learn the ways of Yahweh and walk in his paths."

Not at all. Look at it again, Curious.

"Oh, I see. In that couplet of contrast the tenses are different: the first line is about the prophet's present day; the second line is about the future of the prophet's nation."

One can draw much from it.

"But still, it implies doubt that all other nations will eventually embrace Yahweh."

That's a true statement, Curious.

"However, I expect Jerusalem will keep peace in the world—regardless."

6 *"In that day," says Yahweh,*

*"I will assemble those who are lame,
and I will gather those driven away
and even those whom I afflicted;*

*and I will make the lame a remnant
and the outcasts a mighty nation,*

and Yahweh will reign over them in Mount Zion

from henceforth even forever."

"Now, that little poem is all about Israel."

And it's full of action.

"The nation will be made up of exiles—
which came to pass after Cyrus permitted it."

But did that result in a mighty nation?

"And they did put up another temple."

By their own strength, for it was not the lame who returned from Babylon.

"But according to what I read in the last chapters of Daniel, they never became a mighty nation."

And today they struggle to maintain a place among nations.

"So this must refer to something that will happen yet in the future."

That's the only conclusion—if the words mean anything.

"But it's amazing that a nation called Israel exists there at all today."

Yet Jerusalem is a hodgepodge of religions and not even Israel's capital.

*"And you, O tower of the flock,
the hill of the daughter of Zion,
to you it will come,
yes, the former dominion will come,
the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*

"Micah is sure it will come to pass."

Yes, because Yahweh told him so.

"Now why do you make a loud cry?

Is there no king in you;

*has your counselor perished,
that pangs have taken hold of you
as of a woman in travail?*

So given that they have heard the promise, why are they in panic? What do you say, Curious?

"It seems simple to me, though I'm neither a physician nor a woman. At one time I nearly became a nurse, and I understand that what may seem like early birth pains could be something else."

So even if they understood, "no pain, no gain," as it were, it would take great confidence in the prophet's message to trust it beyond doubt.

"But can we blame them? Why does the rebirth of Jerusalem have to come at such cost if it will be virtually a miracle anyway?"

I don't think Yahweh is actually blaming them.

"Some details about the plan would help."

10 *"Be in pain, and labor to bring forth,
O daughter of Zion,*

like a woman in travail;

*for you will be going out of the city
and dwelling in the field,*

*and you will go even to Babylon,
from which you will be rescued;*

*Yahweh will redeem you there
from the hand of your enemies.*

*But as of now many nations
are assembled against you*

*who say, 'Let her be defiled,
and let our eye see ruin upon Zion.'*

But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh,

nor can they understand his counsel.

*For he has gathered them
like sheaves to the threshing floor.
Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion,
for I will make your horn iron,
and your hoofs I will make bronze;
and you will utterly destroy many
nations,
and you will consecrate their substance
to the Lord of all the earth.*

"This doesn't fit anywhere that I know of," said Curious. "So it must still be future if it means what it says."

Isn't this inevitable if Israel continues to be hated by many nations?

"Israel's enemies must be ignorant of this prophecy."

The Bible you hold in your hands is really a gift from Israel. It's their story, and all the prophets belong to them.

"I've gotten used to the idea that Israel is uniquely special to God. I'll have to say the Bible is a miracle book to have dragged me so far as to embrace that understanding."

There's a whole lot in that word "special" in the way you used it.

"It was expressed, back a few verses, where it said that all peoples walk in the name of their god, and Israel will walk in the name of Yahweh forever and ever."

The gods of other nations clearly do not want Israel to survive.

"If Yahweh is the God above all gods, he must be allowing this to happen, and if he's allowing it to happen, he must have a purpose in it."

The key was revealed when God drew Satan's attention to his faithful servant Job and allowed Satan to test him to prove that Job would not rebel.

"If Israel is supposed to be like Job, and the other nations are like Satan, then Israel has only strengthened Satan's argument."

There is a resurrection to look forward to, Curious, and a remnant will be there.

"I'm expecting to find the answer somewhere in the pages of this book that I haven't gotten to yet."

5 *"Now gather yourself in troops,
daughter of troops,
for they have laid siege against us;
they will smite the judge of Israel
with a rod upon the cheek.*

"Back to the present!" said Curious. "Or rather back to the awful times of the kings when Judah's enemies overpowered them."

Particularly at the end when Babylon besieged and tore down Jerusalem.

"The king being captured and humiliated in what was supposed to be the city of God—that would not make a prophet popular."

Not in his generation, anyway.

2 *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
little among the thousands of Judah,
out of you will come forth to me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose goings forth are from of old,
from the days of eternity.*

"Who would have known that little Bethlehem would become the city of God?"

Micah's prophet-credentials are secure.

"But this skips over his appearance back at the beginning of our calendar. This is about him ruling in Israel's future."

What is time to him who came out of eternity?

"It's like in Psalm 90: a thousand years in the sight of Yahweh are but yesterday or just a watch in the night."

3 *Therefore, he will give them up
until the time
that she who travails
has brought forth:*

*then the residue of his brethren
will return to the children of Israel.*

"So this interim period was expected," said Curious.

Which interim period do you mean?

"She who travails. ... That would be Israel in the context here. I'm seeing the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem because that's in the context too."

But who are the residue of his brethren?

"That sounds like resurrection."

4 *And he will stand and feed his flock
in the strength of Yahweh,
in the majestic name of Yahweh
his God:
and they will abide;
for now he will be great,
even to the ends of the earth.*

"That makes it clear," Curious said, "so clear it makes me shiver."

It's a beautiful gem made by God and cut by man. No argument can diminish its value—though I see it as a ruby, not a diamond.

"Now we have it that when Messiah (or the 'prince,' as Daniel says) returns some thousands of years after being 'cut off,' the remnant will abide again, being cared for by him who shares the strength of Yahweh and is able to bring about peace on earth."

I would like to think you came up with that on your own, Curious.

5 *And this will ensure our peace:
When the Assyrian enters our land
and when he treads in our palaces
then we will raise up against him
seven shepherds and eight princes of
men,
and they will shepherd the land of
Assyria with the sword
and the land of Nimrod at its
entrances,
and he will deliver from the Assyrian
when he comes into our land,
and when he steps within our border.*

"This is totally realistic," said Curious. "Peace will not prevail without being enforced as long as Assyrians and Babylonians (meaning any enemy) remain on earth."

One might get a false impression about conditions under the reign of Messiah in which an army of royal shepherds strolls about the hills looking for lost sheep.

"I thought it humorous, but now I appreciate its elegance in depicting not a standing army but shepherds with more than enough weapons to keep the enemy at bay."

Even if he steps across Israel's border.

"Why not? It's the border God made."

7 *And the remnant of Jacob
will be in the midst of many peoples,
like dew from Yahweh,
like showers upon the grass,
that tarry not for man,
nor wait for the sons of men.
And the remnant of Jacob
will be among the nations,
in the midst of many peoples,
like a lion among beasts of the forest,
like a young lion among flocks of
sheep
which, if it go through,
treads down and tears in pieces,
and there is none to deliver.*

*Let your hand be lifted up above your
adversaries,
and let all your enemies be cut off.*

"There's more to peacekeeping in the kingdom of God than I imagined there would be," Curious admitted.

This remnant of Jacob—do they have extraordinary powers, or is this merely poetic hyperbole?

"And there's more evil abroad than I thought there *should* be. But the remnant of Jacob appear to have superhuman strength to keep rebellion in check—and they're everywhere."

Superhuman powers in the remnant shows they've been resurrected.

"So when the earth is governed by the Prince of Peace, as Isaiah celebrated him, there will be a new system of law and order. What else will be new?"

And what evils will be done away with?

"The devil-inspired works of man will have to go first, of course, but how will that be done?"

Earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, not to mention wars.

"By direct action from heaven is what it sounds like."

We have seen that unrighteous people and ungodly nations will still exist.

"If civilization cannot be sanctified, the means of oppression will have to be destroyed."

10 *"And it will come to pass in that day," says Yahweh,*

*"that I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you,
and destroy your chariots.*

"Projected to the future, that would include energy and automobiles, not literal horses primarily," Curious declared.

If the devil's hands were kept out of those industries, there would be nothing wrong with mechanical conveyances.

11 *"I will cut off the cities of your land
and throw down your strongholds.*

"Cities are dying of corruption and crime, and they've been destroyed by earthquakes, volcanoes, fire and war. So this isn't hard to imagine."

12 *"I will cut witchcraft from your hand,
and you will have no soothsayers.*

"Locking up Satan where he belongs would accomplish that."

13 *"I will cut off your graven images
and your pillars out of your midst,
and you will no longer worship
the work of your hands.*

*I will pluck up your Asherim out of your midst,
and I will eradicate them from your cities.*

"Those things exist today; they're plentiful, and I've seen them."

They existed long before Micah's time, so if this cleansing applies to the whole world, it must be future.

15 *"And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath
on nations which hearkened not."*

6 Now Hear what Yahweh is saying:

*"Arise, defend your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.*

*Hear Yahweh's case, O mountains,
and you enduring foundations of the earth,*

*for Yahweh has a case against his people,
and he will contend with Israel.*

"Mountains, hills, enduring foundations of the earth ... metaphorically they would be nations, cities, and ... something else."

What outlasts cities and nations?

"Ideas that are passed down within cultures last thousands of years."

Wrong ideas never die of old age.

"Yahweh wants everyone to understand why he must punish his people."

3 *"My people, what have I done to you
and wherein have I wearied you?
Testify against me.*

For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt

and redeemed you out of the house of bondage;

*and I sent before you Moses, Aaron,
and Miriam.*

*O my people, remember now
what Balak king of Moab devised
and what Balaam son of Beor
answered him.*

*Remember from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the righteous acts
of Yahweh."*

"Yes, I remember about Balak conspiring with Balaam to inject pagan practice into the tribes of Jacob. Whose fault was that?"

That question is unworthy of you, Curious.

"That happened at their last camp east of the Jordan, which was at Shittim, and from there they crossed over the dry riverbed during flood stage. Their first camp in Canaan was at Gilgal."

So Yahweh, overlooking that disobedience, got them into the land he had promised them.

"The mountains and hills must wonder."

6 *With what shall I come before Yahweh*

and bow myself before the high God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?

Would Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams,

with ten thousand rivers of oil?

*Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

He has told you, O man, what is good:

*and what does Yahweh require of you
but to do justly and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?*

*"I've heard that before," said Curious,
"and I thought it was all I needed in practice."
How far did you get?*

*"The first two, being just and kind, I
thought were obtainable, and that's as far as
I got. Walking humbly with God had a pleasant
sound, and I left it at that."*

Israel doesn't have that option.

*"That's what makes Israel stand out
among the mountains and Jerusalem among
cities."*

*9 The voice of Yahweh cries to the city;
wisdom fears your name
and hears the rod;
the time has been appointed.*

*Are there yet ill-gotten treasures in
the wicked house
and a shrunken measure—which is
abominable?*

*Can I purify wicked balances,
and a bag of deceitful weights?
For the rich men are full of violence,
and the inhabitants have spoken lies,
and their tongue is deceitful.*

*So I will smite you with a grievous
wound;*

*I will make you desolate because of
your sins.*

*You will eat but not be satisfied,
and your filth will be in your midst.
You will put away but will not save,
for that which you save I will give up
to the sword.*

*You will sow but not reap;
you will tread the olives
but will not anoint yourself with oil;
and you will tread the grapes
but will not drink the wine.*

*For the statutes of Omri are kept,
and the works of the house of Ahab,
and since you walk in their counsels,
I may make you a desolation
and the inhabitants objects of hissing,
and you will bear the reproach of
being my people."*

*"It's clear to me," said Curious. "I agree
with Yahweh's case. It's harsh, but he knows
what he's doing."*

As a good father knows.

*"But hey! They've survived. Last I checked,
Israel is a nation and Jews are everywhere."*

*It's remarkable that you say that so
glibly. None of those to whom this was
originally written have survived. But it's a
point of view that has kept Israel alive.*

"Thank God for the resurrection!"

7 Woe is me!

*For I am as when they gather summer
fruits,
like gleanings vintage grapes
when there is no cluster to eat.
My soul desires the first-ripe fruit!*

*"I can identify with him on that!" said
Curious. "In my grandfather's day you could
get steady work and easily buy a house. Life
was simpler and people were kinder. But it
seems like they used up all the fresh opportunity,
and now we have to glean in fields that
have been picked over."*

*I hear you, but what was it like for
Micah?*

*"I know it was a bit different in Micah's
day."*

*What he finds as he considers causes
may be familiar to us.*

*2 Godly men are no longer on earth;
no one is upright among men;
they all lie in wait for blood,
everyone after his brother with a net.
Their hands are skilled at doing evil,
and they do it with diligence.*

*"I see three steps of descent: lack of trust
in God leads to family breakdown. And then it
becomes a deadly game of getting ahead by
any means."*

*The prince demands,
and the judge is ready for a reward;
the powerful man speaks his soul's
evil desire,
and thus they weave it together.*

"Woe is we, Micah. You're blessed if you can remember a time when the government was not greedy and judges were honest."

4 *The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright like a thorny hedge.*

"Oh, this fits perfectly today. But I think there are exceptions. I wish I could ask Micah about that."

*The day your watchmen waited for,
the day of your visitation, has come;
but they will be in perplexity.*

"What looks like a psychological operation (rational defenses stymied) is predictable, given the aimless culture."

Micah is mourning, not revealing secrets. But still, he has that role of prophet, so what he says is never irrelevant.

5 *Do not trust a neighbor;
put no confidence in a friend;
keep the door of your mouth from her
who lies in your bosom.*

*For the son dishonors the father;
the daughter rises up against her
mother;*

*the daughter-in-law goes against her
mother-in-law:*

*a man's enemies are the men of his
own house.*

"Where can one go to find a true ally for your soul, Micah?"

7 *But as for me, I will look to Yahweh
and wait for the God of my salvation,
and my God will hear me.
Rejoice not against me, O my enemy,
for when I fall, I will rise.*

*When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will
be a light to me.*

"I love that," said Curious. "He covers it all. There's even a glimmer of resurrection in it."

He's not putting it on anyone, yet it's the best defense in the world.

9 *Since I have sinned against him,
I will bear the indignation of Yahweh
until he pleads my cause
and executes judgment for me;
he will bring me forth to the light,
and I will behold his righteousness.*

"There's another masterpiece," said Curious, "—a trio of couplets that embraces the whole of salvation."

However, there's a mystery in the middle which Micah encases in that magnificent line, "until he pleads my cause."

"But how does this fit the context? Micah has the threat of Assyria on his mind."

10 *Then my enemy will see it,
and shame will cover her who said,
"Where is Yahweh your God?"
My eyes will look upon her,
and she will be trodden down
like the mire of the streets.*

If you try to pin this on a particular point in history, it's not going to work.

"When Assyria conquered northern Israel she could say to Micah, 'Where is Yahweh your God?' But then when Assyria fell to the Babylonians, was she aware that her defeat was called for by Yahweh?"

Regardless of whether or not she knew of Yahweh's hand in it, Micah did not live to see it.

"But this is interesting because Micah gives himself the vantage point of Yahweh."

Is not that vantage point another way to explain a true prophet?

"So I'm eager to know what he saw that would happen after that."

After that? A thousand years is as a day from Yahweh's vantage point.

11 *A day for building your walls!
On that day your debt will be cleared.
On that day they will come to you
from Assyria and the cities of Egypt:
from Egypt even to the River
and from sea to sea
and from mountain to mountain.*

"Seeing that Israel's debt to her God has been cleared, the nations want in, too."

Walls will be needed in order that Jerusalem not be inundated with foreigners seeking Yahweh's favor without taking time to learn Yahweh's purposes.

"One might wonder what reversed the antipathy toward Israel."

If it were not for Isaiah and the other prophets who foresaw the kingdom age, you *would* have reason to wonder.

"I mean, so sweeping a change could not happen in a day."

That's a piece of the prophetic puzzle that is generally ignored.

"I'm thinking of Ezekiel. There's a war in the transition that must devastate the land."

13 Yet the land will be desolate because of those who dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

"Micah doesn't say what their doings consist of, but the desolating effect of war in Judea would leave parts of the promised land uninhabitable for a time."

Jacob's trouble consists of more than war, but you're not supposed to know the details yet, Curious.

"Until renovation of the war-torn areas is complete, the remnant will need a place where they can get food and shelter."

14 Feed your people with your rod, the flock of your heritage, which dwells alone in the forest, in the midst of a garden land; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

"This is reasonable, but it sounds like Micah is telling God what to do."

Remember, the prophet shares the divine point of view.

"When he actually quotes Yahweh, there's less implied sharing—which I like"

15 "As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt, I will show you marvelous things."

There you go, Curious: a quotation. How do you take it?

"Better than relating it to the preceding trio of couplets about caring for the flock, this moves ahead to a large-scale event."

16 The nations will see and be ashamed of all their might; they will lay their hand upon their mouth;

their ears will be deaf.

They will lick the dust like a serpent, like crawling things of the earth;

they will come trembling out of their fortresses;

they will come with fear to Yahweh our God,

and they will be afraid before you.

"It doesn't say what marvelous thing Yahweh will do that gets such a response. In the Exodus, there was the Red-Sea crossing that gave the children of Israel respect in the sight of the nations. But then they lost it—or threw it away, I would say."

Any event where God overrules what we call nature would be terrifying.

18 Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity

and passes over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?

He retains not his anger forever because he delights in lovingkindness.

He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot.

That's very beautiful, and I'm sure you agree, Curious. It all hinges on one phrase: "he delights in lovingkindness." But to whom does it apply?

"This is clearly directed to the remnant of Israel, not everyone."

What is the reason for that?

"Israel is special to Yahweh. What can I say? I'm a descendant of a pagan worshiper of idols, and there has been no promise to my ancestors like there was to Abraham and Jacob."

Yet it doesn't say that the nations streaming to Israel will be turned away.

And you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.