

THE FLESH FROM THEIR BONES

Or, Micah 3:1-12

Written by

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MICAH 3:1-12 (KJV)

1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

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

3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

4 Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

5 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.

6 Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

11 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.

12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Setting: An office. Clean, well-appointed, closer in mood to a sanitarium than an office environment. A simple desk and two chairs.

Characters:

THE MAN - 40s

MICHAEL - 30s

THE REPLACEMENT - 40s

As the lights rise, THE MAN is seated comfortably behind his desk, with his back turned, gazing out the window. Perhaps he hums a little tune to himself.

MICHAEL enters, tentatively. THE MAN does not hear or see him.

MICHAEL coughs. THE MAN swivels around.

MICHAEL

Excuse me, but I'm looking for The Man?

THE MAN

(Smiling:)

I'm The Man.

MICHAEL

Oh. R- really?

THE MAN

(Still smiling:)

Unfortunately, yes.

MICHAEL

(As if preparing himself:)

The Man. For years I have sought you, in order that I might, as I have heard in song, bring you down, for the good of all people.

THE MAN

(Still smiling:)

Is that so? And just who are you, young fellow?

MICHAEL

I am Michael. I have come to bring you down, The Man. And I shall not rest until my mission has been fulfilled.

THE MAN

(Gestures:)

Well, go on then. Have you brought sword or fire, steel perhaps?

MICHAEL

That's not for me to say, right now.

THE MAN

I see no weapons on your person.

MICHAEL

I come bearing only the truth, the most powerful weapon of all.

THE MAN

Oh, Michael.

Have a seat. Talk with me.

It's the least you can do, if you intend to kill me.

I remain quite defenseless.

He raises his arms so MICHAEL can see he is unarmed.

MICHAEL

How do I know you don't have a weapon in your drawer?

THE MAN

Look, if you just want to get it over with, I quite understand. I'll keep my hands up for you. I'm afraid I'm not too quick on the draw in my old age. I just think you'll find it a little more satisfying if we get to chat first. That way, I can try to see things from your point of view.

I think you'll find, Michael, that I'm a very rational fellow. I respond well to rationality.

Are you a rational fellow, Michael?

Have a seat. I insist.

MICHAEL sits in the chair opposite THE MAN.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Thank you, Michael. I appreciate you taking the time to express your concerns with me today. Now,

(He leans forward:)

what have I done wrong?

MICHAEL

Well ... I can't believe we're doing this, but well ... let's start with injustice.

THE MAN

Yes?

MICHAEL

Uh... War. War, funded by hardworking taxpayers, who die for you and get nothing in return, while you profit from the weaponry.

THE MAN

You certainly don't beat around the bush, Michael.

MICHAEL

No, sir.

THE MAN

Well, I'll tell you, Michael, I don't fight for war. I fight for peace. And let me tell you something else, I'm just a hardworking fellow like you, Michael. And I've got to make a living too.

MICHAEL

Off of war? And death?

THE MAN

No! Off of ... safeguarding the nation. Off of opportunities that others cannot see, being blinded by - oh, I don't know, a sense of pride, dignity ... War, through which we make peace, gives the community a sense of purpose, a sense of binding togetherness. Values which are all too lacking in our society, wouldn't you agree?

MICHAEL

Togetherness against who?

THE MAN

The wicked, Michael. Those who are Not Of Our Team.

MICHAEL

We are all one team. All of us, on this planet, one team, together.

THE MAN

(Laughing softly:)

Who walked into my office today to kill who, Michael?

Wars can be good, and useful. No one receives more respect in Society than a soldier, right?

(MORE)

THE MAN (CONT'D)

What else have you got for me, Michael?  
I didn't expect this today, I'm very tickled.

MICHAEL

Um. Racism. Pitting people of different skin colors against each other, telling them one is better or more superior to the other. Making people feel unwelcome just because of what they look like.

THE MAN

You blame me for this?

MICHAEL

Yes.

THE MAN

That's very convenient.  
People do that, you know, with very little help from me or anyone else.

MICHAEL

But you push them. You blind them and tell them not to see one another's skin when what you really mean is to ignore everything that's ever happened to a people because of their skin color. What you really want is for everyone to forget.

THE MAN

Don't you want that, too?  
I mean, after all, you just shouted at me that we are all one people.

MICHAEL

We ARE one people, but we're a people under -

THE MAN

We are one people but you want those people to be the same, not to fight one another, but you also want people to remember those wars, but you also want peace and freedom from resentment because of those wars over skin. I'm sorry, Michael, I'm confused.

MICHAEL

You aren't. You aren't confused. You know exactly what I mean. You're twisting my words.

THE MAN

I really am trying to follow you, Michael. I'm trying to be logical.

MICHAEL

(Growing frustrated:)

Okay, fine, how about income inequality?

THE MAN laughs.

THE MAN

Good luck with this one.

MICHAEL

You pay workers an inadequate wage while you sit on your yacht drinking champagne.

THE MAN

I prefer bourbon, truthfully.

MICHAEL

Whatever. Those families are struggling. They can't pay their rent. Their children are dying. They can't survive under these conditions. You could give them more money, but you won't, because you are selfish.

THE MAN

They would have no money at all if it weren't for me and my own hard work. Did any of those people take the time to create their own businesses?

MICHAEL

Maybe you had money already.

THE MAN

Maybe, maybe not. Is that my fault, that someone else made money, and generously decided to give it to me? Is it a crime to have wealth?

MICHAEL

It's immoral to have wealth while others have none.

THE MAN

Michael. Everyone has some kind of wealth. Some people are rich in love and wisdom. Some have a wealth of good friends. Others are rich in currency. What's the difference? It's all wealth!

MICHAEL

You don't believe anything you're saying. You know you're full of crap.

THE MAN

That's not a very nice thing to say, Michael. Especially to somebody whom you've announced you plan to kill. Imminently. Who's the villain here?

MICHAEL

(In disbelief:)

You. You're the villain.

You make people work long hours for no money, so that they have no time to spend with the people they work so hard FOR. You slowly rob them of their time and dignity until there's nothing left but test tubes and cold tile floors - if, God help them, they even make it that far in life before being shot, by someone who hates them, for shallow reasons, maybe because they wore the wrong shirt or have the wrong kind of nose, or because they believe the wrong things or speak the wrong languages or yelled or got angry. And then if they survive that you lock them in prisons until they forget who they are. And you sell us things! You sell us things we don't even want or need! You scream at us that we need these things to get us through our miserable lives because these things will make our lives more bearable but they're just THINGS. They don't carry love or respect or friendship or wisdom, they just take up space, and the minute we die, our children throw them away, because they realize how pointless they were, because what matters most is time spent with the people we love, and caring for the people around us, even if it makes us seem weak or stupid or, whatever, to you, The Man, who sit there, behind your desk, thinking you're our savior, but you're not. You're not.

(He stands.)

And today is your last day.

When I take you down you, when you are vanquished from this world, there will be a revolution.

THE MAN

(Calmly:)

Really? How interesting.

MICHAEL

You might own this world now.

(He takes out a knife.)

But you won't own the next.

Beat.

THE MAN

You think there's a next?

MICHAEL nods.

MICHAEL

I do.

THE MAN

So don't do this.

A long silence.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Would God want you to do this, Michael?

MICHAEL

You think you know what God wants?

THE MAN

Perhaps God put me here.  
Perhaps I am God's sanctioned ruler of this world.  
Perhaps it will not be His will for you to remove me.  
God loves kings and princes too.

MICHAEL

You're all the same. You use his name to do what you want to do, and never mind the rest of us.

THE MAN

(Gently:)

But you're doing what you think God wants, too, aren't you?  
So how can you know?

MICHAEL

You're manipulating me.  
When I kill you, all these evils will die out.  
We'll be fine on our own.

The Man shrugs.

THE MAN

Maybe.

(Sighs:)

Well, make up your mind. Supper's on the table in an hour and I'd like to beat traffic.

Beat.

MICHAEL

Stand up.

The Man stands up.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Hands up.

The Man puts his hands up. Michael walks around behind the desk. He is now face to face with The Man. A moment.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Will you change, The Man?

THE MAN

I'm afraid that's not up to me.

MICHAEL

Then you have made your choice.

(Whispering:)

This is for the people.

He stabs The Man deeply through the chest. The Man smiles as he falls, gracefully, behind his desk. After a moment, a thin stream of blood rolls out below the desk.

Michael drops the knife on the desk and looks at his hands. He looks out the window, and at The Man's still body.

He walks to the center of the room. Can't quite bring himself to leave. After a moment, the door opens. A second MAN enters the room.

THE REPLACEMENT

Excuse me, I'm looking for my new office. Looks like they've already got my name on the door. That's handy. They're so efficient here.

Michael stands in shocked disbelief as The Replacement walks around behind the desk. He sees The Man's motionless body.

THE REPLACEMENT (CONT'D)

Ooh. Bad luck there.

Well. You win some, you lose some.

Can I help you, young man?

Slowly, the lights fade to black.

END OF PLAY.