

MICAH & JUSTICE

Bible Jam Session 9– Spring



NOTE:
Spring Semester Schedule:

April 19 & 26 – Reflection Days (No Class)

Semester Completes on May 17 or 24 (TBD)

“I had no idea this could happen...
‘the Disorienting Dilemma’ “

APRIL 5, 2022

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From "The Dharma in Difficult Times" by Stephen Cope

(1) "A 'disorienting dilemma' usually occurs when people have experiences that do not fit their expectations or make sense to them and they cannot resolve the situations without some change in their view of the world."

(2) "A disorienting dilemma is an experience within which a current understanding is found to be insufficient or incorrect and the learner struggles with the resulting conflict of views. The dilemma is also sometimes descriptively referred to as creating a state of 'disequilibrium' for the learner."

"We hear these tales all the time [...]. Sometimes we hear them told by a storyteller who is haunted and dazed. They often start in exactly the same way: 'I didn't see it coming at all.' "

"Sometimes we suffer [such] catastrophic blows as part of our society itself, don't we? The African American man is brutally murdered by a police officer in broad daylight as terrified bystanders film the tragedy. Can this really be happening in America? Oh yes, and worse.

"A pandemic grips the world. The economy collapses, and the social order is in chaos. The world is sunk into depression, and our family loses the little money we've managed to save. No one has a job. We garden in the backyard to grow tomatoes and squash. We wait, aghast, in food lines.

"During these times, we struggle to make meaning. We ask: How could this happen to me? To us? How can a world be this unfair? Why did God allow this chaos, this tragedy?

"How does any of us make sense of a world turned upside down? Well, how you make sense of it depends on who you are, I suppose. Christians may read the Book of Job—the Bible's handbook for disorienting dilemmas. The Book of Job raises what is called in scholarly circles, "the theodicy problem." Simply put, the theodicy problem is this" Is God just? And if God is, in fact

'just,' then exactly how do we explain human suffering? How can a just God allow an innocent child to die. How can She allow whole races of people to be oppressed?

Jews read the Book of Job as well, by the way, when they are wrestling with disorienting dilemma—though I must say that Jews are by and large much better at speaking back to God than my own Protestant crew is. God, you screwed up. Jews at Auschwitz concentration camp during the Second World War established a court in the prisoners' barracks and put God on trial. He was found guilty of high crimes.

“Hindus read the Katha Upanishad—a stunning dialogue narrated by Heath herself. ‘Death’ in this ancient text, turns out to be quite wise. She actually comes up with some pretty compelling answers.”

“Here’s an interesting fact: it turns out that no great spiritual hero has avoided a confrontation with a disorienting dilemma. Indeed, most great spiritual writing begins with our hero or heroine Laidlaw precisely by some such conundrum. Have you noticed? Job, of course, has been hit with suffering by a God who turns out to be playing games with him. (It’s shocking when one really understands how God has toyed with Job.) Old Testament Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his only son. The Buddha was continually tempted by Mara—the evil, ill-willed one. The gentle St. Thérèse of Lisieux today so please you had her mean-spirited co-religionists. Mother Teresa of Calcutta had her terrifying periods of spiritual aridity. And so on.

“In every instance, of course, the confrontation with difficulty forces the emerging spiritual adept to dig more deeply into her spiritual quiver. To look more closely at the whole mess. What does it all mean? What *are* the laws of God—precisely? Can I jerry-rig my view of reality to include even this world shattering event? Is there any true order in the Universe?

“These questions can preoccupy us for a very long long. Disorienting dilemmas can undo us for years...

“But here is the fascinating part: it is precisely in confronting the most disastrous disorienting dilemma that our classic spiritual hero finds God. This hero—this Job, this Mother Theresa, this Buddha, this Mohammed—learns to turn the wound itself into effulgent light. Really? These spiritual heroes, not *in spite of*, but *as a result of* the successful negotiation of their plight, reach the highest possibility of the human condition.”

Conversation:

1. What are the disorienting dilemmas of our times? What are the resolutions we await in real time.
 2. What was Job’s disorienting dilemma(s)? And what was the resolution of his trials?
 3. What was the disorienting dilemma of Jesus of Nazareth? What was the resolution of Jesus’ *dilemma*?
 4. What is the clear role of Justice in any of these or any other examples.
 5. What are your thoughts on God’
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The Book of Micah
Number Six of Twelve of the Minor Prophets

From The Interpreter's Bible

The Book of Micah is attributed to an 8th Century Judean prophet. Familiar verses of Micah:

4:3 God shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;

5:2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

6:8 God has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does God require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

We know very little about the prophet whose name means "Who is like Yahweh?"

He was an associate of three kings: Jotham, Ahaz, Hezeiah.

He may have been a younger contemporary of Isaiah.

His theology and religious fervor includes:

- identification with the poor and oppressed
- certain he had been called by Yahweh to prophesy
- angry at the Judean leaders responsible for Jerusalem's doom
- the situation of ordinary citizens was of great concern to Micah
- he felt compassion for the poor and dispossessed and held the leaders responsible.
- He does not sidestep the anger of God.
- What does God expect from us?
- disaster and suffering as judgment
- the task of a prophet is painful

A disorienting dilemma:

“How does one articulate a message of hope that is honest, realistic, and able to revive the spirit of one who has been crushed?” Micah is a resource for this.”

“When is it appropriate to speak of hope?”

Micah 4:1-5 “Peace Prosperity and Security in the Days to Come”

The Making of God's People

4¹⁻⁴ But when all is said and done,
God's Temple on the mountain,
Firmly fixed, will dominate all mountains,
towering above surrounding hills.
People will stream to it
and many nations set out for it,
Saying, “Come, let's climb God's
mountain.
Let's go to the Temple of Jacob's God.
He will teach us how to live.
We'll know how to live God's way.”
True teaching will issue from Zion,
God's revelation from Jerusalem.
He'll establish justice in the rabble of
nations
and settle disputes in faraway places.

They'll trade in their swords for shovels,
their spears for rakes and hoes.
Nations will quit fighting each other,
quit learning how to kill one another.
Each man will sit under his own shade
tree,
each woman in safety will tend her own
garden.
God-of-the-Angel-Armies says so,
and he means what he says.
5 Meanwhile, all the other people live
however they wish,
picking and choosing their gods.
But we live honoring God,
and we're loyal to our God forever and
ever.

Micah 4-5

In these chapters we see a strong desire for relief from oppression, a return to what was lost (and maybe something even better), a world in which God reigns supreme, God's sovereignty is recognized by all and justice is finally a reality. The desire for justice is sometimes very closely related to a human desire for vengeance on enemies who have caused (and will, for a time, continue to bring) great hurt to God's people.

Micah 6-7

When we get to chapter 7, Micah continues the lament the decadence of society. The Book of Micah, though, ends with what is often identified as a closing liturgy, making the final transition from suffering to hope, from punishment to forgiveness. This theme recurs throughout the book; thus it is not surprising that the book should end on a positive note.

7:18-20

Where is the god who can compare with you—
wiping the slate clean of guilt,
Turning a blind eye, a deaf ear,
to the past sins of your purged and precious people?
You don't nurse your anger and don't stay angry long,
for mercy is your specialty. That's what you love most.
And compassion is on its way to us.
You'll stamp out our wrongdoing.
You'll sink our sins
to the bottom of the ocean.
You'll stay true to your word to Father Jacob
and continue the compassion you showed Grandfather Abraham—
Everything you promised our ancestors
from a long time ago.

Videos: Micah <https://youtu.be/MFEUEcylwLc>

Justice <https://youtu.be/A14THPoc4-4>

MICAH

ALLISON TO GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES TO ABRAHAM (GENESIS 12, 15, 17)

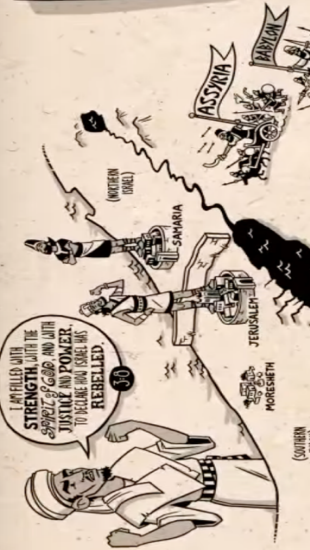
EYES

JUDGMENT ← ALL HAVING GUILT AND BLESSING THROUGH ABRAHAM

CONSCIOUSLY → BEARING THEM AND SEEING THEM PROMISE

CONTRIT & JUSTICE → GOD'S PROMISE TO BLESS THROUGH ABRAHAM

BYING HIS PEOPLE → GOD'S PROMISE TO BLESS THROUGH ABRAHAM



6-7

ISRAEL'S INJUST ECONOMIC PRACTICES

THE HEAS TOLD YOU O HUMAN, WHAT IS GOD, AND WHAT THE LAND RESOURCES OF YOU. TO DO JUSTICE TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD. (6:8)

7:10-20

ISRAEL PERSONIFIED AS A SUFFERING, DEFEATED INDIVIDUAL

REASONS FOR FUTURE HOPE:

- 1 GOD'S CHARACTER** - GOD IS A GOD LIKE YOU, WHO FORGIVES SIN & PUNISHES REBELLION (7:18)
- 2 GOD'S PROMISES** - YOU WILL SAY THAT TO JACOB & SHUA COVENANT LIVE TO ADOPTIVE AS YOU SWORE LONG AGO (7:20)

LET MY GOD HEAR ME!

WATCH FOR THE LORD...

4b-5

4b-5 ASSYRIA → BABYLONIAN EXILE → RESTORATION

5:1-6 BABYLON

5:1-6 PERSIAN KINGDOM

5:7-14 NEW JERUSALEM

GOD'S KINGDOM CONFRONTS EVIL & BLESSES THE NATIONS

BEHOLD THE DAY WHEN I SHOW MY GLORY

3-4a

INJUSTICE OF ISRAEL'S LEADERS

TO OUR LAND

TORAH VIOLATION! (Micah 2:1-2, 3:1-2, 3:9-10)

DISASTER IS COMING.

NO HOPE!

BUT IT'S NOT PERMANENT

4:1-7

PERMANENT RESTORATION

PEACE ON EARTH!

NEW JERUSALEM

1-2

1 GOD APPEARS TO JUDGE HIS PEOPLE (LIKE AT THE SINAI - SEE EXODUS 19-20)

2 BUT WHY...?

ACCUSATIONS & WARNINGS

NETSPUNN

LEADERS & PROPHETS

LEADERS & PROPHETS

WEALTHY THROUGH THEFT & GREED

2:12-13

HOPE & RESTORATION

GOD WILL SHEPHERD THE REMNANT OF HIS PEOPLE