

## THE BREAKER

Micah 2:1-13 (NASB)

David Bruce Linn, Pastor-Teacher

19 December 2010

All Rights Reserved

The Cesar Millan television show called *The Dog Whisperer* showcases Cesar's insights into dog psychology. He was asked to help with one case where the dog was almost always in an excited state, was hard to manage, and showed dramatic separation anxiety. This otherwise nice dog was becoming hard to handle and not much fun as a pet.

As he always does, Cesar began by asking for the dog's history: Have you had Sparky since he was a puppy? Did the problem behavior begin early or was there an event which caused it? Cesar discovered that Sparky had been much more balanced and manageable in the past, but a terrible thing had happened. He was normally left outside in a fenced yard during the day while the owners were at work. One day they came home and discovered that their energetic friend had gotten himself into a horrific jam. He had attempted to worm his way between his doghouse and the fence—which was an impossibly slim gap, and gotten wedged there. He had been there all day in a semi-crushed position.

The owners immediately took their beloved pet to the vet who had a frightening assessment. Sparky had life-threatening abrasions and compression wounds all over his body from being stuck all day. As it turned out, the vet was able to nurse him back to health. But inward scars remained. The happy-go-lucky pet became hyper, difficult, and plagued with separation anxiety. Every time they tried to leave the house Sparky would literally freak out.

As is always the case on television, Cesar came to the rescue and helped bring emotional and behavioral healing to this troubled dog. Sparky had been trapped physically, and though he was released and recovered physically, he became trapped mentally and emotionally. The vet brought the life-saving treatment for the physical entrapment and Cesar Millan brought the life-restoring help for the mental and emotional entrapment.

## THE EVIDENCE OF ISRAEL'S ENTRAPMENT AND OURS

The prophet Micah said similar things about folks like you and me. God called him into action in 8th century Israel with the unhappy ministry of pronouncing doom upon a degenerate nation with a compromised leadership. The people found themselves trapped by powerful leaders who were preying on them, as Micah spoke in 2:1-2 : "**Woe to those who scheme iniquity, /Who work out evil on their beds! /When morning comes, they do it, /For it is in the power of their hands. /They covet fields and then seize them, /And houses, and take them away. /They rob a man and his house, /A man and his inheritance**" (Micah 2:1-2).

The leaders of Israel would lie awake at night thinking of ways to rip people off--and then they would wake up and do them! Micah expands his rebuke in verse eight: "**...You strip the robe off the garment /From unsuspecting passers-by, /From those returned from war. /The women of My people you evict, /Each one from her pleasant house. /From her children you take My splendor forever**" (Micah 2:8b-9). What we see here is an entire culture of plundering. Those with power took

what they wanted from those with less or no power. It was a culture of lawlessness at the top, and thoroughly heartless. There was no concern for the good of the people. The people lived in bondage under such leaders. This is the behavior of a prison house, not the house of the Lord, and it sounds all too familiar.

While this kind of power looks like freedom for those endowed with power, it is actually the worst kind of bondage to sin, death, and judgment. Even on worldly terms, what nation can prosper and endure with leaders like this? Certainly not the holy nation of Israel! The Lord's response was angry and decisive, as Micah spoke in verses three through five: **"Therefore thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity /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 take up against you a taunt /And utter a bitter lamentation and say, "We are completely destroyed! /He exchanges the portion of my people; /How He removes it from me! /To the apostate He apportions our fields." /Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line /For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD'"** (Micah 2:3-5). The Lord's promise for such behavior was judgment in this life for Israel through domination by its enemies. Micah recalled how each tribe in Israel received its allotment of territory in the promised land, and revealed that every tribe would lose its lands to pagan invaders by the will of God. Proof of entrapment by your sins is established when you keep doing them to your own harm and even destruction.

But were the citizens of the land of Israel only entrapped by the sins of others? Not so, said Micah in verse eleven where he speaks of the corrupt ministry of the prophets: **"If a man walking after wind and falsehood /Had told lies and said, /I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor, /He would be spokesman to this people"** (Micah 2:11). In the vernacular, Micah is saying that instead of receiving prophets who warn the people not to get bombed on alcohol, the people eagerly received prophets who encouraged their partying and a materialistic approach to life. The common people were trapped by their inward sins just as much as their leaders.

How easy it is to condemn those stiff-necked and wayward Israelites, and yet as we do, we are confessing that we ourselves are also trapped. We, too, have powerful leaders who enrich themselves on the backs of the citizens. And even as we focus our ire on bad leaders who are taking advantage of us, we must confess that the people of the nations of Western society are fundamentally materialistic and oriented toward selfish, sinful lifestyles. We have all become entrapped doing things which come naturally to us like that dog Sparky who jammed himself between his house and the fence.

Even someone as spiritually discerning as Paul the Apostle was forced to say: **"For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate"** (Romans 7:14-15). We are all stuck with the sentence of death on us—all locked into sinful patterns from which we cannot extricate ourselves. Who will come to our rescue?

## THE PROMISE OF THE BREAKER

And thus we come to one of the most obscure prophecies of the coming of the Son of God. Micah delivered this pregnant prophecy in 2:12-13: **"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 /They will be noisy with men. /The breaker goes up before them; /They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. /So their king goes on before them, /And the LORD at their head"** (Micah 2:12-13). Israel is pictured here as sheep in a fold, thronging and talking and bustling about. They have been regathered from captivity and the dispersion by the sovereign intervention of the Lord, yet are still trapped from within.

And then we are introduced to someone called the Breaker—*happoresh*, in Hebrew. I do not think that this name appeared on that popular poster with the names of God and Christ. Who is this mysterious figure? And what does he do?

First, the Breaker is called both King and Lord—this last name is the personal name for God we transliterate as "Yahweh." He appears not outside the fold, but right in the middle of Israel, so he arises from among them. He us one of us in our humanity. He breaks the bondage symbolized by the sheepfold. And he leads the people out as their King and their Lord. Put these elements together and you have a decisive identification of the Breaker as Messiah Jesus, Our Lord. Yes, Israel would be restored from captivity in the short-term, but this verse peers through the majestic sweep of time to see the final release from the bondage of sin and death achieved by the Messiah. It is the coming of the great Shepherd.

So Christ said of himself: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ...So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"** (John 8:34-36). So the angel of the Lord announced to Joseph: **"...Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'"** (Matthew 1:20-21).

And so, even as we complain about the abusive rulers above us who box us in, we, like Sparky, walk through life in a bondage which comes from within us. We do things we do not want to do, which we hate. We fail to do the things we want to do. We always hurt the ones we love. And we yearn for release.

The Breaker has been sent to us to give us freedom from the law of sin and death. Abandon your sins and run to him for your freedom! Embrace him, bow to him, follow him. Then you will be free indeed. And here is how he came: **"Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn"** (Luke 2:1-7).

The Breaker, upon whom our only hope for release from bondage rests, arrived as a baby in a manger. But he did not stay there. Welcome him into your heart!