

Micah Chapter 6

Verses 1-2: The Lord commanded Micah (verse 1), as His advocate, to plead His case before the mountains and hills, which were to act as witnesses against His people (Deut. 4:25-26; Isa. 1:2). The mountains and hills were present as Sinai when the Lord made His covenant with Israel and when the commandments were written and placed in the Ark of the Covenant as a permanent witness (Deut. 31:26).

Micah 6:1 "Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice."

Micah opens this third cycle of oracles (6:1-7:20), with a dramatic courtroom motif moving back and forth between 3 speakers. The Lord pleading His case, the people responding under conviction, and the prophet as the lawyer for the plaintiff.

This is spoken to the whole house of Israel. Micah explains that these are not his words, but the Words of the LORD. The hills and mountains have been here from the beginning. They can witness to everything God has done.

Micah 6:2 "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."

In the first verse God directs Micah to take the mountains and hills for witnesses; now in this verse he calls upon those mountains to hear. It is an elegant personating of hearers and witnesses, as (Deut. 32:1; Isaiah 1:2; 2:2). By mountains understand princes and nobles.

“The Lord’s controversy”: Who’s sovereign Majesty, may well command what he pleaseth and expect to be obeyed. And whose unparalleled goodness to Israel ought to have been uncontroverted motives to obey him in all things. Yet the sovereign goodness is slighted and disobeyed. Which he now impleads his people and brings his action against them.

“Ye strong foundations of the earth”: called before hills. It is an explanation of the former, mountains. Or it may be an appeal to those deep foundations which are hid from any eye, and which seem most remote from what is done on earth. But the ill carriage, the disobedience, and sin of Israel is so notorious, that the whole creation may be subpoenaed witnesses against them.

“The Lord hath a controversy with his people”: Covenant, redeemed, and only people (as Amos 3:2).

“He will plead with Israel”: No longer put off the cause, nor forbear to punish them and right himself, he will bring the cause to hearing judgment and execution too.

It is as if the mountains are to judge this controversy between God and His people. God has tried to reason with His people from the beginning. He had revealed Himself in signs and wonders over and over to this unhearing people. He pleads with them to repent and live for Him.

Verses 3-5: This was the Lord's appeal. With tenderness and emotion, the divine Plaintiff recalled His many gracious acts toward them, almost to the point of assuming the tone of a defendant.

Noting their trek from bondage in Egypt to their own homeland, God had provided leadership (verse 4), reversed the attempts of Balaam to curse the people (verse 5a; Numbers chapters 22 to 24), and miraculously parted the Jordan River (verse 5b). So they could cross over from Shittim, located east of the Jordan, to Gilgal on the west side near Jericho.

God had faithfully kept all His promise to them.

Micah 6:3 "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

What injustice or unkindness? What grievous, burdensome impositions have I laid upon thee? Or, what have I done, or said, or enjoined, to cause thee to be weary of me? The words allude to the forms of courts of justice, wherein actions are tried between man and man. God allows his people to offer any plea which they could in their own behalf.

If there is some legitimate reason why they have not followed God, He wants to hear it. God calls them, His people. He is open to hear their complaints of what He has done to cause them to fall away.

Micah 6:4 "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

There seems a pause intended; but Israel, abashed, remains silent. So the Lord continues to plead: "Thou dost not testify against me? No; for I showed thee the greatest mercies: I redeemed thee out of Egypt, the house of bondage."

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam are mentioned as the three great members of the family to whom it was committed to carry out the Divine decree.

They were in heavy bondage in Egypt, when God sent Moses to lead them out to the Promised Land. The exodus began, after God sent 10 plagues on Pharaoh and his people to make him let God's people go.

Moses was the brother of Aaron and Miriam. God made Aaron the first High Priest in the tabernacle in the wilderness. Miriam was a prophetess in her own right. She led the praises of the people after the Red Sea crossing.

Micah 6:5 "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD."

This incident is adduced in the “pleading” as a signal instance of the controlling power of God, exercised in an unmistakable manner in behalf of the Israelites.

Balaam was constrained to bless when he had the highest conceivable motive to curse the Israelites. He apologized for this involuntary action on his part to Balak. There is no more conclusive instance extant of the will of man controlled to do the exact opposite of his intended action in the history of mankind.

“Remember also the incidents which happened from Shittim to Gilgal.” Shittim was the name of a valley in the plains of Moab (Joel 3:18), from which place Joshua sent two spies to view Jericho immediately before the passage of the Jordan to Gilgal was effected. Under the circumstances mentioned in the fourth chapter of Joshua.

God reminds them of the defeat of Balak, and the defeat of the sorceries of Balaam. Balaam was hired to curse Israel, when in fact, he blessed Israel. It is interesting to note, that a donkey spoke to Balaam, and caused him to see his error.

Verses 6-8 (see the note on 1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Verses 6-7: Micah, as though speaking on behalf of the people, asked rhetorically how, in light of God’s faithfulness toward them, they could continue their hypocrisy by being outwardly religious but inwardly sinful.

Micah 6:6 “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, [and] bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?”

The people, convicted by the previous appeal of Jehovah to them, ask as if they knew not (compare Micah 6:8). what Jehovah requires of them to appease Him. Adding that they are ready to offer an immense heap of sacrifices, and those the most costly, even to the fruit of their own body.

Bow myself before the high God? The most high God, the God of gods, whose Shekinah or Majesty is in the high heavens. As the Targum: his meaning is, with what he should come, or bring with him, when he paid his homage and obeisance to him, by bowing his body or his knee before him. Being willing to do it in the most acceptable manner he could.

“With calves of a year old?” Such as he had been used to offer on the high places of Baal to that deity. Sacrifices of this kind prevailed among the heathens, which they had received by tradition from the times of Adam and Noah (see Lev. 23:12).

The people have suddenly realized their ingratitude to God, and now, they are asking how they might please God. This is not just the desire of physical Israel to know the will of God in their lives, but is the desire of all believers, as well. The answer to this, and all other questions, is found in the Word of God. In this particular instance, it is verse 8 below.

Micah 6:7 "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, [or] with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn [for] my transgression, the fruit of my body [for] the sin of my soul?"

If single burnt offerings of bullocks and heifers will not do, will rams, and thousands of them, be acceptable to him? If they will, they are at his service, even as many as he pleases; such creatures, as well as oxen, were offered by Balak (Num. 23:1).

Oil was required too in their sacrifices, in the meat-offerings of them, but in no great quantities, a log or hin, (i.e. half a pint), or three quarts. But we know such gifts are infinitely short of the Divine goodness bestowed on us. He who is our God is worthy of rivers of oil, multiplied to thousands; had we such store it should be all his. Such hyperbole you see (in Isaiah 40:15-17).

This is proposed not as a thing practicable by any rule of reason or religion, but as a proof of their readiness, as Abraham, to offer up their first-born, as he did offer up his Isaac to God. It is much to part with any of our children, but it is more to part with the strength, and glory, and hope of our families. Yet, like hypocrites, or like unnatural heathen, this they would do, rather than what would please the Lord.

“For my transgression”: To appease the anger of the Lord for my sins.

I love the following Scripture in answer to that.

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams."

God is not as interested in the formality of sacrifice, as He is in our loyalty and love for Him. He does not want us to worship from obligation, but because we love Him.

Micah 6:8 "He hath showed thee, O man, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Micah's terse response (verse 8), indicated they should have known the answer to the rhetorical question. Spiritual blindness had led them to offer everything except the one thing He wanted, a spiritual commitment of the heart from which right behavior would ensue (Deut. 10:12-19; Matt. 22:37-39). This theme is often represented in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-20; Jer. 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:15).

Really, this is the secret to worshipping God. To routinely observe His laws is not what God wants. The Words in the verse above describe exactly what He does want of us. Jesus said it so plainly when He said in:

Mark 12:30-31 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment." "And the

second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Micah 6:9 "The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and [the man of] wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

“Hear ye the rod”: Listen for the description of the coming punishment (verses 13-15; Isaiah 10:5, 24).

The LORD's voice cries to the people, to get them to hear and believe. Those who are wise hear and understand. The "rod" symbolizes the threatened judgment upon the people. Listen to the warnings and repent.

Micah 6:10 “Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure [that is] abominable?”

Notwithstanding all the express laws, the exhortations and reproofs given you upon this subject, and so many examples of punishment set before you. Still are there many that use unjust and fraudulent means to enrich themselves?

“Scant measure”: Literally, the hateful ephah of leanness, i.e., less than it should be. The Jews were much addicted to the falsification of weights and measures. They made “the ephah small, and the shekel great, falsifying the balances by deceit” (Amos 8:5).

Things that are gained through wickedness soon disappear. There is no gain at all in ill-gotten gain. All that they have will be taken away.

Micah 6:11 "Shall I count [them] pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?"

"Shall I count them pure?" Rather, Can I be innocent with the deceitful balances? The enactments about weights were very stringently expressed in the Law, both affirmatively and negatively: e.g. in Leviticus:

Leviticus 19:35-36 "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure." "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I [am] the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."

Deut. 25:13-14 “thou shalt not have in thy house divers weights,” and “divers measures, a great and small”.

Proverbs 11:1 "A false balance [is] abomination to the LORD: but a just weight [is] his delight."

God had warned them over and over about cheating in weighing things.

Micah 6:12 "For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue [is] deceitful in their mouth."

"For the rich men thereof", that is, of the city. "Are full of violence", thieves and robbers lived by violence, but now, (as Isaiah at the same time upbraids them), "her princes were become companions of thieves" (Isaiah 1:23).

Not the poor out of distress, but the rich, out of wantonness and exceeding covetousness and love of luxury. Not only did wrong but were filled, not so much with riches, as with violence. Violence is the very meat and drink wherewith they are filled, yea, and wherewith they shall be filled, when it is returned upon their heads.

Fraud is itself lying, and lying is its inseparable companion. Jerome: "Lying followeth the gathering together of riches, and the hard custom to lay up riches hath a deceitful tongue."

The sin, he saith, is spread throughout all her inhabitants. That is, all of them, as their custom, have spoken lies, and, even when they speak not, the lie is ready. "their tongue is deceitful" (literally, deceit), "in their mouth." It is deceit, nothing but deceit, and that, deceit which should "overthrow" and ruin others. For one who is intent on gain is the lie ever ready to be uttered, even when he speaks not. It lurks concealed, until it is needed.

God is not angry with them, because they are rich. He is angry with them, because of the way they got their riches. They have used violence, lies, and deceit to acquire their wealth. Usually, this type of cheating occurs against the uneducated and the poor.

Micah 6:13 "Therefore also will I make [thee] sick in smiting thee, in making [thee] desolate because of thy sins."

Therefore, upon account of these thy sins, I will, ere long, so smite thee, O Israel, that the strokes shall reach thy heart, and make thee sick unto death of thy wounds. Or, the punishment wherewith I will afflict thee shall waste thy strength like a consuming sickness which preys upon the vitals.

God is saying, He will punish them for this evil they have done. It is God who will smite them and make them sick. Their sins brought this punishment upon them.

Micah 6:14 "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down [shall be] in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and [that] which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword."

Either not having enough to eat, for the refreshing and satisfying of nature. Or else a blessing being withheld from food, though eaten, and so not nourishing. Or a voracious and insatiable appetite being given as a curse. The first sense seems best.

"Thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee": Meaning they should be humbled and brought down, either by civil discords and wars among themselves, or through the enemy being suffered

to come into the midst of their country, and make havoc there; which would be as a sickness and disease in their bowels.

“And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword”. The sense is, that they should take hold of their wives and children, and endeavor to save them from the sword of the enemy, and being carried captive. Or should "remove" them as the word is sometimes used.

In order to secure them from them. Or should "overtake" the enemy, carrying them captive. But should not be able by either of these methods to save them from being destroyed, or carried away by them. And even such as they should preserve or rescue for a while, yet these should be given up to the sword of the enemy.

This is still speaking to those rich people, who have become rich through cheating and lying. God will take their wealth away from them suddenly, and they will be humiliated among their friends. They will feel hunger, as they have brought on those they cheated. Even the food they do eat, will not satisfy them.

It appears, they try to escape with their children and goods, but they will be taken by the sword.

Micah 6:15 "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine."

Either that which is sown shall not spring up, but rot in the earth. Or if it does spring up, and come to maturity, yet, before that, they should be removed into captivity, or slain by the sword, and their enemies should reap the increase of their land, their wheat and their grain:

“Thou shalt tread the olives”: In the olive press, to get out the oil.

"But thou shalt not anoint thee with oil": As at feasts for refreshment and at baths for health, this becoming another's property. Or it being a time of distress and mourning would not be used, it being chiefly at festivals and occasions of joy, that oil was used.

"And sweet wine": That is, shalt tread the grapes in the winepress, to get out the sweet or new wine.

"But shalt not drink wine": For, before it is fit to drink, the enemy would have it in his possession (see Lev. 26:16). These are the punishments or corrections of the rod they are threatened with for their sins.

This is speaking of their crops being confiscated, before they can even reap them. They will make olive oil from their olives, but someone else will get to use it. Even their wine is drunk by someone else.

Micah 6:16 "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."

"Omri" was the founder of Samaria, which later became the capital of the northern kingdom. Where the idolatrous practices begun by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 16:16-28), were intensified.

"Statutes of Omri" (ca. 885-874 B.C.). He was the founder of Samaria and of Ahab's wicked house as well as a supporter of Jeroboam's superstitions (1 Kings 16:16-28).

"Works of the house of Ahab" (1 Kings 21:25-26; ca. 874 - 853 B.C.).

This is speaking of the evil in their lives that has really caused the wrath of God to come forth. Omri was a very evil king of Israel. He built Samaria and made it the capitol. He and Ahab were both very evil. Ahab worshipped Baal. This is saying that the people had gone the way of Baal. God was very angry with their worship of a false god. This hissing is speaking of great shame.

Micah Chapter 6 Questions

1. Who is this message to?
2. Whose Words are spoken here?
3. It is as if the _____ are to judge the LORD's controversy between God and His people.
4. What questions did God ask them in verse 3?
5. What is God reminding them of in verse 4?
6. What relation were Moses, Aaron, and Miriam?
7. God made Aaron the first _____ in the _____.
8. What was Miriam's calling?
9. What did God remind them of in verse 5?
10. What caused Balaam to see his error?
11. When the people suddenly realize their ingratitude, what question do they ask?
12. God is not as interested in the formality of sacrifice, as He is in our _____ and _____.
13. Really, this is the secret of _____ God.

14. Who shall see thy name?
15. What does the "rod" symbolize?
16. A false balance is an _____ to the LORD.
17. Why is God angry with the rich man in verse 12?
18. Thou shalt eat, but not be _____.
19. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not _____.
20. Who were two very evil kings in verse 16?
21. Ahab worshipped _____.
22. What is the "hissing" speaking of?