

Micah uses the imagery of a courtroom in chapter 6 to present the dispute that the LORD has with Israel because of their sins. The LORD asks how He has wronged Israel and they respond with offers of insincere religious activity. In chapter 7, however, Micah expresses his trust that the LORD will show mercy, forgiveness, and restoration to His people after the time of judgment has passed.

Micah 6

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

Micah calls on the people to listen to what the LORD has to say, using the imagery of a court case being brought against Israel. The LORD is the plaintiff, Israel is the defendant, and the mountains, hills and foundations of the earth are the jury. The word “contend” means to “argue a case” and the word “controversy” means “a dispute.” “Plead” means “to argue.”

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

“O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me” – The LORD brings His case against Israel by asking them in what way has He harmed them to cause them to no longer want to serve Him. He gives them the opportunity to answer with their own accusation if they can fault with the LORD.

“For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants” – The LORD reminds them that it was He Who rescued them from the slavery they were enduring in Egypt and set them free from that bondage.

“and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” – It was also the LORD Who sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to not only lead them out of Egypt, but also to teach them the ways of the LORD. Commentators point out that Moses was their lawgiver, Aaron was their priest to offer sacrifices for them, and Miriam was a prophetess who led them in praising the LORD for His goodness.

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.

The LORD reminds them that He protected them from Moab's king Balak, who wanted the prophet Balaam to curse Israel (Num. 22-24). These things were not an example of wrongdoing but were demonstrations of the LORD's righteousness toward Israel.

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? 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?

Most commentators see this as the people's response to the LORD's testimony of His own goodness toward them. Their response seems to be sarcastic, asking “Well, what does the LORD want from us?” They seem to only be interested in avoiding the judgment because they suggest offerings and sacrifices ranging from the simple to those that are exaggerated in their magnitude. They even ask if it would please the LORD to give their firstborn child as an offering.

8 He hath shewed 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 responds to Israel's question by telling them that it has already been revealed to them what the LORD expects. Besides the guidance found in the Law of Moses, the will of God had been revealed through the prophets who pointed out the sins of the people. Micah summarizes the LORD's will for Israel in three points: 1) to enforce justice (doing what's right); 2) to love mercy (being ready to forgive others); 3) to walk humbly with their God (submitting themselves to obey His will instead of their own). The LORD wanted genuine righteousness from His people and not just going through religious motions without sincerity (vs. 6-7).

Verses 9-12: The LORD lists the wickedness that is among His people, such as businessmen cheating their customers with fake weights and scales and those who have become wealthy through violence and deceit.

13 Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, in making *thee* desolate because of thy sins.

“Therefore also will I make *thee* sick [weak from illness or injury] in smiting [to strike; to attack] *thee*” – This statement is likely referring to the rod mentioned in v. 9 that was the voice of God declaring His judgment. He will inflict harm (physical, economic, political, etc.) on the people as punishment for their sins.

“in making *thee* desolate because of thy sins” – The LORD's punishment will make them desolate because of their sins.

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.

“Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down [emptiness] *shall be* in the midst of thee” – The LORD tells them what form this desolation will take. Their food will not satisfy and they will be continually hungry.

“and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and *that* which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword” – They will attempt to keep their possessions safe from enemy invaders but they will be unsuccessful, no matter how hard they “take hold” to keep them.

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.

The LORD will prevent them from enjoying the fruit of their labors. They will be unable to harvest what they have planted, unable to use the olive oil they worked so hard to produce, and unable to drink the wine they have made.

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 an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

“For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels” – Omri and Ahab were two notably wicked kings of Israel and the people were following their sinful example.

“that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing” – The people were following the examples of Omri and Ahab because they thought that it would benefit them. However, the LORD says that the results of doing this will be their desolation and cause the people of other nations to scorn and ridicule them (“an hissing” – refers to whistling as a form of derision).

“therefore ye shall bear the reproach [shame; disgrace] of my people” – The shame and disgrace of Israel will be the fault of those who are guilty of these sins.

Micah 7

7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

In verses 1-6, Micah complains about the lack of good men in the land, pointing out that the nation’s leaders were looking for bribes and that you couldn’t even trust your own family members. Only the LORD was trustworthy and could be depended on for help in times of trouble. The Hebrew word translated “salvation” means “safety” or “rescue.” Micah trusted that the LORD would hear and respond in his time of need. Micah may be speaking for Israel as well.

8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me.

“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise” – Micah’s enemies should not celebrate if they see him fall because the LORD will help him recover and get back up. Any supposed victory they might have over Micah would be short lived.

“when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me” – When Micah’s situation is the darkest, the LORD will illuminate him so that he will be encouraged and can find his way out.

9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.

“I will bear the indignation [rage; anger] of the LORD, because I have sinned against him” – Micah acknowledges that he deserves to be punished by the LORD when he sins and that the LORD is just in doing so.

“until he plead [to contend; to present a case] my cause [quarrel; dispute], and execute judgment [justice] for me” – Returning to courtroom language, Micah is confident that the LORD will also give him justice against his enemies.

“he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness” – The LORD will restore him like a prisoner being set free from a dark dungeon so that he can see the daylight once again. Thus Micah will be a witness to the righteousness of the LORD.

Verses 10-17: Micah describes the effects on their enemies that will result when the LORD’s judgment on Israel has passed and He again shows His favor toward them. Their enemies will be ashamed and will no longer be victorious over them.

18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy.

Micah now celebrates the mercy of the LORD, Who is always willing to forgive and show mercy when we repent of our sin. The LORD prefers to be good to us rather than to punish us. Our lack of repentance is what prevents His forgiveness.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

“He will turn [to return; to turn back] again, he will have compassion upon us” – The LORD will turn back from His wrath and again have compassion on us. Instead of punishment, He will pour out blessings because He loves His people.

“he will subdue [bring into bondage; dominate] our iniquities [perversity; guilt]” – We cannot get rid of our guilt ourselves nor rid ourselves of our propensity to sin. Only the LORD can take away our guilt and our sinful nature.

“and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” – The LORD will do what we cannot, casting away our sin and guilt into a place where we will never see them again.

20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

The LORD will keep the promises that he has made to Jacob (Israel), accomplishing the mercies that He promised that He would give to Abraham’s descendants. The LORD has not given up on Israel! **Rom. 11:1a** “*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.*”