

## General Comments on Micah 6-7

Chapters 6 and 7 can be read together as the Lord's accusation and explanation as to why He is punishing Israel (ch. 6) and penitent Israel's confession of guilt (ch. 7). These chapters are intended to address those people characterized in ch. 2. Micah's contemporaries do not think they deserve to be punished (cf. 2:6-7) and false prophets preach lies (cf. 2:11). Here, Micah presents the Lord's case against Israel in an indisputable fashion and illustrates the affect the punishment will have on Israel. It will strip her of pride and cause her to rely on the Lord.

## Comments on Micah 6

This chapter forms a lawsuit speech where the Lord summons Israel into a legal proceeding and asks them to judge fairly as evidence is presented (v. 1-2). The same type of rhetorical device is used in Isaiah 41:1. The rest of the chapter forms a tight inverted parallelism where physical worship (v. 6-7) and spiritual worship (v. 8-9) are compared and contrasted using Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac as a type (v. 7). The underlying theme of the Sinai Covenant again appears as the history and blessings are recounted (v. 3-5) and contrasted with rebellion and curses heaped upon Israel (v. 9b-16). The overall theme is the Lord will chasten Israel for worshiping Him with empty physical works while being spiritually bankrupt.

The text can be arranged as follows (the Jewish Publication Society translation verse number varies slightly from the KJV):

Summons using Lawsuit Speech rhetoric:

1 Hear what the Lord is saying:  
Come, present [My] case before the mountains,  
And let the hills hear you pleading.  
2 Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord  
You firm foundations of the earth!  
For the Lord has a case against His people,  
He has a suit against Israel.

Argument:

A - 3 "My people!  
What wrong have I done you?  
What hardship have I caused you?"

Testify against Me.

B - 4 In fact,  
I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
I redeemed you from the house of bondage,  
And I sent before you  
Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 "My people,  
Remember what Balak king of Moab  
Plotted against you,  
And how Balaam son of Beor  
Responded to him.

[Recall your passage]  
From Shittim to Gilgal  
And you will recognize  
The gracious acts of the Lord."

C - 6 With what shall I approach the Lord,  
Do homage to God on high?  
Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings,  
With calves a year old?  
7 Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
With myriads of streams of oil?

D - Shall I give my first-born  
for my transgression,

D - The fruit of my body  
for my sins?

C - 8 "He has told you, O man, what is good,  
And what the Lord requires of you:  
Only to do justice  
And to love goodness,  
And to walk modestly with your God;  
9 Then will your name achieve wisdom."

A - Hark! The Lord  
Summons the city:  
Hear, O scepter;  
For who can direct her 10 but you?  
Will I overlook, in the wicked man's house,  
The granaries of wickedness  
And the accursed short ephah?  
11 Shall he be acquitted despite wicked balances  
And a bag of fraudulent weights?  
12 Whose rich men are full of lawlessness,  
And whose inhabitants speak treachery,  
With tongues of deceit in their mouths.

B - 13 I, in turn, have beaten you sore,  
Have stunned [you] for your sins:  
14 You have been eating without getting your fill,

And there is a gnawing at your vitals;  
You have been conceiving without bearing young,  
And what you bore I would deliver to the sword.  
15 You have been sowing, but have nothing to reap;  
You have trod olives, but have no oil for rubbing,  
And grapes but have no wine to drink.  
16 Yet you have kept the laws of Omri,  
And all the practices of the House of Ahab,  
And have followed what they devised.  
Therefore I will make you an object of horror  
And her inhabitants an object of hissing;  
And you shall bear the mockery of peoples.

Summary:

Summons (v. 1-2)

Argument (v. 3-16)

A - (v. 3) How has the Lord wronged Israel?

B - (v. 4-5) Covenant blessings given Israel

C - (v. 6-7b) Physical worship?

D - (v. 7c) Firstborn for transgression?

D - (v. 7d) Children for sin?

C - (v. 8) No, spiritual worship!

A - (9-12) Israel has wronged the Lord

B - (13-16) Covenant curses heaped on Israel

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.

v1-2 The Lord summons all to hear His case against Israel.

v2 "Hear ye, O mountains" summoning the mountains as witnesses is reminiscent of the covenant at Sinai where the heavens and earth were called as witnesses of Israel acceptance of the Lord, cp. Deut. 4:26, Deut. 30:19, Deut. 31:28, Deut. 32:1, Ps. 50:4, Isa. 1:2, Jer. 2:12-13. Mountains are that which is of the earth which is also in the heavens, hence their symbolic use for temples.

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. 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.

v3-5 The Lord asks Israel how it is He has afflicted them (v. 3) when in fact He has blessed them so greatly (v. 4-5).

v3 It is not the Lord who has wearied Israel, it is Israel who has wearied the Lord, Isa. 46:3-4. Whenever the Lord has afflicted Israel it is because of her own rebellions, and they are designed only to make her repent.

v4-5 These verses recount major events in Israel's History wherein the Lord has carried Israel: The Exodus from Egypt, the inspired leadership of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and the curse turned blessing from Balak. All of these events emphasize the Lord's regard to keeping His side of the covenant in delivering, guiding, and protecting Israel. However, Israel has not kept up her side of the covenant.

v5 "from Shittim unto Gilgal", Shittim was the name of the valley in the land of Moab wherein the Israelites had their run in with the Midianite women at Peor, cf. Num. 25:1. Gilgal was the first place Israel camped upon entering into the Promised Land, cf. Joshua 4:19-20. The message is the Lord dealt mercifully with Israel when He would have been justified in destroying them for the sins they committed. He did not though, and so they were delivered into the Promised Land as He had promised.

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? 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?

v6-8 The Lord asks Israel what the correct means of worshiping Him is, is it through physical sacrifices (v. 6-7)? No, true worship is spiritual: to be just, and kind, and humble (v. 8).

v7 Clearly a reference to the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The symbolism indicates that sacrifice in and of

itself is not a means of expiating sin, no matter how great the sacrifice, cp. Num. 23:19, 1 Sam. 15:22, Isa. 1:11-15, Isa. 66:1-3, Jer. 7:22-23, Amos 5:22-24, Hosea 6:6, Ps. 40:6, Ps. 51:16-19.

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.

10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure [that is] abominable? 11 Shall I count [them] pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? 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.

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

v9-16 The word of warning to Israel (v. 9) is that as Israel only worships physically, and not spiritually (v. 10-12), the Lord will curse her per the terms of the Sinai Covenant (v. 13-16).

v9 The prophet, the voice of the Lord, calls out to Jerusalem, and the wise man will realize that the prophet does so in the Lord's name and therefore bears His authority. The prophet's warning? The rod of judgement is being wielded by the Lord.

"hear ye the rod", the word of the Lord is a tool of gentle guidance (cf. 7:14) as well as judgement and punishment (cf. 5:1, Isa. 10:5, Isa. 11:4, Isa. 30:31).

v11 Dishonesty in business dealings, here represented by a self-serving set of weights and measures, is explicitly prohibited by the Law, cf. Lev. 19:35-36, Deut. 25:13. It is likewise condemned in the wisdom literature, cf. Prov. 16:11, Prov. 20:10, Prov 20:23. See also Ezek. 45:9-10, Amos 8:4-6.

v13-16 A series of covenant curses paraphrased from Lev. 26 and

Deut. 28.

v16 While Israel will not keep the Law of the Lord, they will keep the statutes enacted by their wicked kings Omri and Ahab, cf. 1 Kings 16. For this the Lord will punish them.

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