

# Micah 6-7 • The Lord's Case Against His People

## Introduction

Of course, God as the supreme Judge does not have to justify Himself to anyone. Because He is incapable of anything less than the truth, if He decrees someone guilty there is no room for doubt that the person, organization, or nation so indicted is anything but 100% guilty. But God chooses to communicate these things in terms by which humans can comprehend and know for themselves. And when it comes to His people and their backslidden nature, it is worth noting that God often proves their disobedience to heavenly things by their disobedience to earthly things. In this study, pay particular attention to how God proves that a lack of love for others on earth is actually the proof of a lack of love for Him Whom we think of in heaven.

<sup>1</sup>Hear now what the LORD is saying,  
“Arise, plead your case before the mountains,  
And let the hills hear your voice.  
<sup>2</sup>Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the LORD,  
And you enduring foundations of the earth,  
Because the LORD has a case against His people;  
Even with Israel He will dispute.

## [Read 6:1-2]

### **Q: Why might these opening verses sound familiar to Old Testament Israelites?**

A: Because they are very similar to Moses' call for a witness against Israel in his own time (Deut. 31:28-29), it has similarities to the opening verse of “The Song of Moses” (Deut. 32:1), and is similar to the opening of Isaiah, a prophet who lived and ministered during Micah's ministry. (Is. 1:2)

**Point:** It is by the Law given through Moses that Israel bound itself in a covenant relationship with God, and by the same Law the case for their unfaithfulness is brought against them by God.

### **Q: Why do you suppose that God is telling the prophet Micah to bring what amounts to a lawsuit for breaking the contract of the covenant before the mountains?**

A: It was these entities who were called as witnesses at the time the covenant agreement was made. Unfortunately it is also a way of stating that sin among God's people has become so extensive that the number of those who will respond to God's message through Micah are so small that he might as well be talking to the mountains.

*“Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel,  
For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land,  
Because there is no faithfulness or kindness  
Or knowledge of God in the land.”  
– Hosea 4:1*

<sup>10</sup>Is there yet a man in the wicked house,  
Along with treasures of wickedness  
And a short measure that is cursed?  
<sup>11</sup>Can I justify wicked scales  
And a bag of deceptive weights?  
<sup>12</sup>For the rich men of the city are full of violence,  
Her residents speak lies,  
And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

## [Read 6:10-12 & 7:1-6]

### **Q: Based on this list of things comprising God's case against Israel, how might you characterize the overall case He brings against them?**

A: Each of these things are not really sins of the “1<sup>st</sup> Tablet” which are requirements for a right relationship with God, but violations of the “2<sup>nd</sup> Tablet” which are requirements of a right relationship with people. In biblical terms this is the very definition of “wickedness”, people's ill-treatment of people.

### **Q: Can you list each act of wickedness in these verses?**

1. (6:10-11) “Wicked scales” and “deceptive weights” describes “ill-gotten gains”, when one person financially cheats another.
2. (6:12) They didn't merely engage in “white lies” but something best described as “violent lying” by which greed corrupted not just their speech but their actions. They would say and do anything to get what

<sup>1</sup>Woe is me! For I am  
Like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers.  
There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,  
Or a first-ripe fig which I crave.

<sup>2</sup>The godly person has perished from the land,  
And there is no upright person among men.

All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;  
Each of them hunts the other with a net.

<sup>3</sup>Concerning evil, both hands do it well.  
The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe,  
And a great man speaks the desire of his soul;

So they weave it together.

<sup>4</sup>The best of them is like a briar,  
The most upright like a thorn hedge.  
The day when you post your watchmen,  
Your punishment will come.

Then their confusion will occur.

<sup>5</sup>Do not trust in a neighbor;  
Do not have confidence in a friend.  
From her who lies in your bosom  
Guard your lips.

<sup>6</sup>For son treats father contemptuously,  
Daughter rises up against her mother,  
Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
A man's enemies are the men of his own household.

<sup>3</sup>My people, what have I done to you,  
And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.

<sup>4</sup>Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt  
And ransomed you from the house of slavery,  
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>My people, remember now  
What Balak king of Moab counseled  
And what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
And from Shittim to Gilgal,  
So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD”

<sup>6</sup>With what shall I come to the LORD  
And bow myself before the God on high?  
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,

they wanted.

- (7:1) Biblically the proof of righteousness is derived by inspecting one's fruit. This poetic language is a very severe way of stating that not a single piece of fruit can be found in the whole vineyard, a way of stating that not a shred of goodness exists between people. By Law they were supposed to leave part of their crop available as a ministry to those less fortunate than themselves, but in their greed they share nothing.
- (7:2) Their unrighteousness towards others is so corrupted that they actually seek to shed the innocent blood of others.
- (7:3) The legal system has been corrupted so they can exploit others. They bribe authorities and work to take from others what is not theirs and is not fair.
- (7:4) They have become so wicked in their personal relationships that all contact with others becomes harmful, as harmful as “a briar” and “a thorn hedge”. In the end this same harm will be turned around to entangle and cut them.
- (7:5-6) Their wickedness has become so ingrained that it is practiced not just against strangers or foreigners, but even against family and friends. Their wickedness extends to even their most personal relationships.

**Q: Why should this sound very familiar to New Testament ears?**

A: When Jesus explains how the “sheep” are divided from the “goats” at the end of the Tribulation, nothing is mentioned about anything to do with the Law pertaining to the “1<sup>st</sup> Tablet” and loving God; the only thing He mentions is their repeated failure where the “2<sup>nd</sup> Tablet is concerned, their failure to love others. (See Mt. 25:31-46). The same judgment is applicable to God's people whether they are under the Old Covenant or the New.

**Application:** In a covenant relationship with God one must keep the **WHOLE** covenant. God often provides the proof that someone does not love Him by the fact that they don't love others. No one can keep the Law pertaining to the “1<sup>st</sup> Tablet” to love God if they don't keep the Law pertaining to the “2<sup>nd</sup> Tablet” to love others.

**Point:** God's legal case against Israel is that the wickedness resulting from their treatment of others proves the true nature of their relationship with Him.

**[Read 6:3-9]**

**Q: In v.3-5, what is God reminding His people of in general?**

A: He reminds them of His compassion for Israel in the past.

- “...I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you...from slavery...” (v.4) God saved them from the old life into a new one.
- “...I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam...” (v.4) God provided quality spiritual leadership.
- The references to Balak and Balaam is God's rescue from spiritual attack. (Numbers 22-24)
- “...from Shittim to Gilgal...” This reminds them of the place of Balaam's wicked counsel (Shittim) whereby Israel merited destruction but for God's mercy contrasted to Gilgal, the first encampment of Israel in the Promised Land where God then renewed the covenant with Israel by circumcision. (Josh. 5:2-11) This is the ultimate contrast of spiritual unfaithfulness (Shittim) to spiritual faithfulness (Gilgal).

With yearling calves?  
<sup>7</sup>Does the LORD take delight in thousands  
of rams,  
In ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I present my firstborn for my  
rebellious acts,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my  
soul?  
<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justice, to love kindness,  
And to walk humbly with your God?  
<sup>9</sup>The voice of the LORD will call to the  
city—  
And it is sound wisdom to fear Your  
name:  
“Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its  
time?”

<sup>13</sup>So also I will make you sick, striking  
you down,  
Desolating you because of your sins.  
<sup>14</sup>You will eat, but you will not be  
satisfied,  
And your vileness will be in your midst.  
You will try to remove for safekeeping,  
But you will not preserve anything,  
And what you do preserve I will give to  
the sword.  
<sup>15</sup>You will sow but you will not reap.  
You will tread the olive but will not  
anoint yourself with oil;  
And the grapes, but you will not drink  
wine.  
<sup>16</sup>The statutes of Omri  
And all the works of the house of  
Ahab are observed;  
And in their devices you walk.  
Therefore I will give you up for  
destruction  
And your inhabitants for derision  
And you will bear the reproach of  
My people.”  
<sup>13</sup>And the earth will become desolate  
because of her inhabitants,  
On account of the fruit of their deeds.

**Point:** Whereas God's reminder of what He did to rescue them from Egypt is a picture of the working of salvation to reconcile **unbelievers** to Him, the reminder of what He did in spite of their succumbing to Balak's and Balaam's deception is the working of God to reconcile backslidden **believers** to Him.

**Q: How do v.6-7 fit in with the discussion to this point?**

A: They don't seem to realize that because their personal relationships and treatment of others is so corrupt and wicked that the offerings they bring in order to keep a right relationship with Him are worthless and have no effect from God's point of view.

**Q: What is the remedy God says they need to make to set things right?**

A: According to v.8 the admonition to “do justice, to love kindness” is a call to first change their behavior with others as proof that they are working on the right behavior toward God.

**Q: How is v.9 a kind of exclamation point by Micah to this message as a whole?**

A: It is a dramatic way in the language of his day to state that this is not some kind of sermon written by Micah the man, but a direct Word of God through Micah God's prophet. It's not Micah lamenting man's treatment of man, but God Himself.

**Application:** Just the same as when Christ separates the sheep from the goats, the case presented against those who remained faithful versus those giving in to apostasy (falling away from the faith), everything provided to maintain spiritual faithfulness, will be proven to have its root rejection in the quality of personal relationships.

**[Read 6:13-16 & 7:13]**

**Q: Having made His case against Israel, what can they now expect to come from God?**

A: God's chastening of Israel.

**Q: How will He chasten them in 7:13?**

A: Their land as a whole will become empty and desolate.

**Q: How will He chasten them in 6:13?**

A: Physical sin will result in physical illness. Spiritual consequences will crossover into the physical realm for each of them individually.

**Q: How will He chasten them in 6:14-15?**

A: Their efforts to achieve satisfaction by the pursuits of the things of this life will not only fail them, but the earthly benefits will actually be enjoyed by others who did not work for them. This example of futility in the present life is supposed to warn them of the worthlessness of what they are on the road to earning for the next life.

**Q: Why will He chasten them in 6:16?**

A: Omri was the 6<sup>th</sup> king of the northern kingdom of Israel, the one who laid the foundation for the construction of Samaria, the counter-capital to Jerusalem. His son Ahab came to symbolize the worst counterfeit of Judaism in being seduced by his wife Jezebel and giving everything over to Baal worship. God is stating that Judah, who lasted longer than Israel because she was supposed to be more spiritually faithful, has become as bad if not worse than her unfaithful sister Israel symbolized in the

characters of Omri and Ahab.

**Application:** In order to restore their trust in Him, the backslidden must be separated from the things they've come to trust in instead of Him.

<sup>11</sup>It will be a day for building your walls.  
On that day will your boundary be extended.

<sup>12</sup>It will be a day when they will come to you

From Assyria and the cities of Egypt,  
From Egypt even to the Euphrates,  
Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.

<sup>13</sup>And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,  
On account of the fruit of their deeds.

<sup>14</sup>Shepherd Your people with Your scepter,

The flock of Your possession  
Which dwells by itself in the woodland,  
In the midst of a fruitful field.

Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead  
As in the days of old.

<sup>15</sup>As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,

I will show you miracles.”

<sup>16</sup>Nations will see and be ashamed

Of all their might.

They will put their hand on their mouth,  
Their ears will be deaf.

<sup>17</sup>They will lick the dust like a serpent,  
Like reptiles of the earth.

They will come trembling out of their fortresses;

To the LORD our God they will come in dread

And they will be afraid before You.

<sup>18</sup>Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity

And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?

He does not retain His anger forever,  
Because He delights in unchanging love.

<sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us;  
He will tread our iniquities under foot.

Yes, You will cast all their sins  
Into the depths of the sea.

<sup>20</sup>You will give truth to Jacob  
And unchanging love to Abraham,  
Which You swore to our forefathers  
From the days of old.

### [Read 7:11-17]

**Q: To what future event does Micah speak when Israel will experience complete spiritual and physical reconciliation to God?**

A: The Millennial Reign.

**Q: What does God promise will be accomplished for them at that time?**

1. (7:11) Their cities will be rebuilt.
2. (7:12) Honor will come to them from the nations.
3. (7:14) The language and imagery used in this verse is an Old Testament description of peace and prosperity.
4. (7:15-17) Their foes will tremble before them.

**Point:** This speaks of a physical restoration of everything which was ultimately taken away from Israel. The Millennial Reign matches their reconciled spiritual status with the restoration of their physical state.

### [Read 7:18-20]

**Q: How do these verses provide a basis of hope for God's people?**

A: Micah provides a five-fold description of the awesome character of the God of Israel who, because He has proven Himself in the past, will assuredly bring everything to completion in the future.

1. (7:18a) “Who is a God like You...” God is unique.
2. (7:18-b) “...who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious acts..does not retain anger...” God is merciful.
3. (7:18c) “...delights in unchanging love.” God is loving.
4. (7:19) “...will again have compassion...will tread on our iniquities...will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” God does away with sin.
5. (7:20) “You will give truth...and unchanging love...” God establishes truth and grace as the normative standard.

**Application:** These are all qualities God begins to share within the course of this life, which He brings to full term in the next.

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<sup>7</sup>But as for me, I will watch expectantly  
for the LORD;  
I will wait for the God of my salvation.  
My God will hear me.  
<sup>8</sup>Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.  
Though I fall I will rise;  
Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a  
light for me.  
<sup>9</sup>I will bear the indignation of the LORD  
Because I have sinned against Him,  
Until He pleads my case and executes  
justice for me.  
He will bring me out to the light,  
And I will see His righteousness.  
<sup>10</sup>Then my enemy will see,  
And shame will cover her who said to me,  
“Where is the LORD your God?”  
My eyes will look on her;  
At that time she will be trampled down  
Like mire of the streets.

### **[Read 7:7-10]**

**Q: Through Micah God previously addressed the past and the future. What is being expressed through Micah’s personal admission of his own course of action?**

A: Micah is addressing what needs to be done in the present to properly respond to the case God has made against His people, the actions He will take to chastise them, and their eventual reconciliation.

**Q: What is Micah expecting? Will everything be corrected to Micah’s satisfaction in the here and now?**

A: “...I will watch expectantly...I will wait...I will bear the indignation of the LORD...” (v.7, 9) Micah expects that the consequences of iniquity will have to be endured.

**Q: When does Micah state that things will change?**

A: “Until He pleads my case...” (v.9) God the Judge executes His decree for sin but ultimately executes His grace.

**Q: What are the tangible results of God’s ultimate work?**

A: “...bring me out to the light, and I will see His righteousness...” (v.9)

**Application:** *The ultimate benefits God’s people look forward to aren’t the physical blessings He has promised, but the greater spiritual blessings which they represent.*

**Q: Why do you suppose Micah looks forward to a time when “she will be trampled down”?**

A: He characterizes believers’ biggest problem as a woman, that being the repeated biblical symbol of a spiritual seductress to represent what is actually our biggest problem in the course of this life. What Satan first employed in the Garden of Eden and repeatedly used throughout history to attack God’s people will finally and ultimately be eradicated. The number one problem for God’s people will finally be removed.

### **Overall Application**

*Without a doubt there is a literal application of this message for the nation Israel, and we are seeing these very things taking place in their lives. And eventually we will see everything mentioned here realized on their behalf by God one day. But there is also the general application of this teaching for believers of all ages. For those who become entangled in the things of this life, especially to the point where they do not care about the consequences for others, they will inevitably be disciplined by God in an effort to restore them spiritually. As with both literal Israel as expressed by the term “Jacob” (physical descendants) and spiritual Israel expressed by the term “Abraham” (all spiritual descendants by faith) in v.20, the only time we’re assured that our physical state will be equal to our spiritual state is in His Kingdom yet to come, not necessarily while enduring this world’s present kingdom.*