

THE BOOK OF MICAH

Lesson 10, Chapters 5 and 6

At the end of our previous Micah lesson, we had just begun to look at chapter 5 verse 9. That's where we'll start now. Before we read more in Micah, however, I'll set the context that chapter 5 verses 9 – 14 (that ends this chapter) is a unit that needs to be taken as a whole. Importantly, we also need to see this unit as a balance to the first verses of the previous chapter, chapter 4. So, let's open our Bibles and look first to chapter 5, then we'll compare it to chapter 4.

RE-READ MICAH CHAPTER 5:9 - 14

Chapters 4 and 5 taken together... as they always ought to be... are regularly called the Book of Visions or something similar. These verses we just read are given as a vision of a time when Israel will be both avenged for what the nations have done to them, and they will be purified and cleansed from their sins and transgressions against Yehoveh. Let's now recall what Micah 4:1 – 5 had to say that provides that balance I spoke about.

CJB Micah 4:1-5 *But in the acharit-hayamim it will come about that the mountain of YEHOVEH's house will be established as the most important mountain. It will be regarded more highly than the other hills, and peoples will stream there. ² Many Gentiles will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the mountain of YEHOVEH, to the house of the God of Ya'akov! He will teach us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For out of Tziyon will go forth Torah, the word of YEHOVEH from Yerushalayim. ³ He will judge between many peoples and arbitrate for many nations far away. Then they will hammer their swords into plow-blades and their spears into pruning-knives; nations will not raise swords at each other, and they will no longer learn war. ⁴ Instead, each person will sit under his vine and fig tree, with no one to upset him, for the mouth of YEHOVEH-Tzva'ot has spoken. ⁵ For all the peoples will walk, each in the name of its god; but we will walk in the name of YEHOVEH our God forever and ever.*

These passages from chapters 4 and 5 each present their own End Times scenario. The balance between them is that the message from the chapter 4 verses has to do with the End Times treatment and response of gentiles and their nations, while chapter 5 has to do with the End Times treatment and response of the Israelites and their nation (Israel). These things will be happening more or less concurrently.

What is striking about these final 6 verses of chapter 5 is that they are essentially a list of things that God will “cut-off” from Israel. “Cut-off”, **kareth** in Hebrew, is nearly always used in a negative sense, the result of some grievous sin. **Kareth** implies destruction and punishment. So, for example for one to be **kareth** from his people means to have one’s identity destroyed and as a punishment be separated from his community. Here, however, the things God is going to **kareth** from Israel will nearly certainly feel like some type of punishment from God to the Israelites who will be battling for their existence, but in fact it is the positive precursor to God doing something great and miraculous for the benefit and blessing of Israel.

So, the list is prefaced in this way in verse 9 (verse 10 in some Bible versions):

CJB Micah 5:9 ***"When that day comes," says Yehoveh, "I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy your chariots."***

There is an interesting background to this action Yehoveh is taking, and we need to grasp it in order to better understand what is being prophesied. First: to the ancient Hebrews in the era of the Kings and then forward (and I use the terms Hebrews and Israelites interchangeably even though there is a small nuance in the difference between the technical meaning of the two), when they envisioned prophetic fulfillments of the Latter Days or the End Times (again, two terms that are mostly interchangeable, but do have small nuances that when used technically make them slightly different), they saw it as return to the Golden era of Israel’s existence. How so? Israel was at its greatest wealth, influence, independence, and power after David took over the throne from the 1st king of Israel, Saul. David unified all 12 tribes into a confederation

ruled by a single king, and in the process expanded the extent of Israelite territory and control to the greatest it ever held.

David's son, Solomon, followed him and brought in an era of relative peace and tremendous prosperity that made Israel the envy of the known world. By the time he died, Israel was large, wealthy, powerful, respected, at peace, and had a huge and well-armed military. For Israel, this was the Israel that they felt was ideal. However, it is that final aspect of Solomon's Israel... their military... that God found most unacceptable and therefore Solomon's Israel was certainly not God's ideal of Israel. Solomon had introduced and accumulated the most powerful and frightening military weapons of his time: chariots and horses. However, this is something God had specifically prohibited.

CJB Deuteronomy 17:14-16 ¹⁴ *"When you have entered the land YEHOVEH your God is giving you, have taken possession of it and are living there, you may say, 'I want to have a king over me, like all the other nations around me.'* ¹⁵ *In that event, you must appoint as king the one whom YEHOVEH your God will choose. He must be one of your kinsmen, this king you appoint over you- you are forbidden to appoint a foreigner over you who is not your kinsman.* ¹⁶ *However, he is not to acquire many horses for himself or have the people return to Egypt to obtain more horses, inasmuch as YEHOVEH told you never to go back that way again.*

Egypt was the earlier and chief developer of chariots for warfare (going back to before the time of Moses). Chariots relied on horses to power them, and so Egypt became famous for their breeding and training of horses for military use. Solomon was at heart a lover and not a fighter. He was a diplomat. He married literally scores and scores of wives, not on account of romance but rather each representing the formation of an official alliance with a foreign dignitary or national leader. So, he made a similar alliance with Egypt and used it for the purpose of purchasing lots of horses and chariots to build up Israel's military might. On the one hand, it made a lot of sense in that era, just as today it makes a lot of sense for the free nations of the world to have strong defenses to discourage or counteract the militaries of tyrants who have

empire building and world dominance in mind. On the other hand, this did not represent the ideal Israel that God intended, and what Solomon did wrongly was based on a direct Torah Law violation.

Just as God did not intend for Israel to have human kings, He also did not intend for Israel to have a powerful, professional standing military. They were to rely on militias to be called up as needed should they ever be attacked. They were to rely on Yehoveh as their sovereign king and protector against aggressors, and on the Law of Moses as their civil and moral law code. Even though Israel felt blessed by God due to their prosperity and might, by the end of Solomon's reign, they had veered far away from all these divine intentions and commands. It all led, century by century, to an ever-increasing manmade version of Israel, run by politicians, for the benefit of the royalty and the wealthy elite, and dependent upon powerful military leaders who were good at warfare.

Thus, returning to Micah 5:9 -14, God is telling His people through Micah that He is re-setting this entire paradigm that Israel had built for itself, including the new modern Israel that came to life in 1948. As Micah and other prophets tell us, step one for Yehoveh is to incite the nations to attack Israel. Step two is for Israel to try to defend itself from massive invasion, using their powerful military, but God intervening to deprive Israel of the technically superior battlefield weapons they had developed (this is what the horses and chariots symbolize). Why? So God can step in and decisively destroy the nations' militaries in such a way that not only Israel, but the world will see that Yehoveh controls all, is above all, favors Israel, and no one can defeat Him. The result will be so obvious that both the gentiles and Israel will fall down in awe before God, give Him all the glory, and turn to Him as the King of the World. Step three is to purify Israel and restore them from their many centuries of rebelling against Him.

Since God's first action is to deny Israel their use of powerful military weapons, we find His next action in verse 10.

CJB Micah 5:10 ***I will cut off the cities of your land and lay waste your strongholds.***

This verse is most difficult to apprehend its sense. Since what God is doing is NOT punishing Israel, and not intending to be negative towards them, then why this polemic against Israel's cities and strongholds? I can only speculate, based on everything we have learned from Micah thus far. I think these cities were probably ones in which idolatry, religious corruption, and social injustice were at their peak. In other words, this divine action is part of the cleansing process of Israel that is occurring. The idea of laying waste to Israel's strongholds seems that it must be the places where the militaries are stationed and especially where their horses and chariots are stabled. In fact, there is a short list of cities in the era of the Kings that were literally called "Chariot cities", of which Lachish was one of the more famous. It might even include the large walled cities that relied on those walls to keep the enemy out. If it is not this (and I acknowledge it might not be), then I'm at a loss.

CJB Micah 5:11 ***I will cut off sorceries from your land; you will no longer have soothsayers.***

As part of the purifying process, seers and sorcerers of all kinds will be banished from Israel. In fact, in the Torah we read this:

CJB Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ***¹⁰ There must not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through fire, a diviner, a soothsayer, an enchanter, a sorcerer, ¹¹ a spell-caster, a consulter of ghosts or spirits, or a necromancer. ¹² For whoever does these things is detestable to Yehoveh, and because of these abominations Yehoveh your God is driving them out ahead of you.***

So, none of these professional mystics were supposed to be operating in Israel, but (sadly) there was never a time when they weren't, because it was customary and usual practice for Middle Easterners to employ such people and to routinely rely on them for information.

As I think about the future, and what this might look like when it comes about, I cannot help but wonder about how this is going to manifest itself in the End Times. These people listed here aren't really used any longer except by a few

individuals who go to palm readers and the like and, so far as I know, certainly not as intelligence resources militaries and governments use to make decisions. So, I assume this could be speaking of the disruption of all the digital and virtual information systems and sources of knowledge that are used in our modern era. Might it be that satellites, data banks, AI, cloud services, etc. will be what is cut off? Or, on the other extreme, might it be talking about the matter from a spiritual perspective, and therefore it is about cutting-off people in Israel that pray to a god, or a saint, or to an angel, or to someone other than Yehoveh? For the Israelites, such people were regularly thought to be empowered to do what they do by Satan or some other spiritual entity. Other Israelites were so deceived they thought some of these folks indeed were communicating with the God of Israel. Either way, these mystics were all fakes and abominations in God's eyes and were directly in violation of His covenants with the Hebrews, so, they had no place in a restored or divinely ideal Israel.

CJB Micah 5:12 ***I will cut off your carved images and standing-stones from among you; no longer will you worship what your own hands have made.***

If one goes to Israel today, you are going to be a little startled at what you see. Many symbols of Judaism... especially of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism... will confront you. Go to the tombs of the same of the most famous Rabbis of centuries ago located in Beit She'arim and you'll find sarcophagi decorated with decidedly pagan symbols. Then there are the Islamic symbols everywhere. Not to mention such Christian places as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem that is decadent to a fault and uses all kinds of icons and symbols that are against what is Torah prescribed. I could go on for a few more minutes listing these, but you get the picture.

Ancient Israel never gave up its idolatrous use of pagan symbols. They just holy-fied and repurposed them. Catholicism is quite industrious about using statues and pictures of people that have been anointed by their leadership as holy, along with all kinds of icons and implements that have been given a more visible presence in their faith. Christianity mixes their pagan things with what the Catholics and Judaism adherents do but have decided they can just

consider these formerly pagan objects and practices as baptized by Jesus into Christian use.

I've spoken before that the key to understanding the problem that God is addressing is the idea that human hands were involved in the creation of sacred objects. How holy can something be if it took human hands to make it? God commanded an altar to be built for sacrificing to Him; and yet, it was to be of natural stones without any use of tools to make the stones more refined. God was always reluctant to have a Temple built; but He allowed it. Even so, only an essence of Himself that became present in it (The Glory) could cleanse it sufficiently enough to endow it with legitimacy and purity, and even then, primarily only the inner sanctuary.

The extermination of every kind of heathen idolatry was needed, and only God could do it because Israel couldn't even make the distinction between the truly holy and fake-holy any longer. I have no doubt that when the Day of the Lord finally arrives, such an inability of both Israel and the religious gentile institutions to discern between the holy and the profane will be even greater.

CJB Micah 5:13 *I will pull up your sacred poles from among you and destroy your enemies.*

These sacred poles of verse 13 are incorrectly translated by the CJB, however modern people don't understand their significance and the more modern-day equivalents of them anyway. The correct translation is Asherah. These were small fir trees (sometimes fir poles that were then decorated) and placed next to pagan altars, which were standard sacred objects used at just about every pagan religious gathering and sometimes even for private or family use. They were first and foremost fertility symbols, and Israel used them too, especially in the more ancient times. Now, many centuries later, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all use some form of ancient fertility symbols such as Easter bunnies and decorated eggs, Christmas trees and Yule logs, the Hamsa of Islam, and others. God has never allowed a repurpose of what was, and remains, pagan in order to worship Him.

God saying He will destroy Israel's enemies is quite a mouthful, said very succinctly. God is going to destroy all those attacking enemy nations and will do so using Israel with but a minimum of people, materials, and weapons. It will be a kind of Gideon-and-the-300 scenario. It will be a combination of the cosmically miraculous plus Israel's human remnant fighting with courage and skill, but empowered by God, to be so much greater than humanly possible.

Verse 14 sums up God's purpose for "cutting-off" this short list of things from Israel that He found offensive:

CJB Micah 5:14 ***I will wreak vengeance in anger and fury on the nations, because they would not listen."***

Why is God wreaking wrath on the nations? Because they would not listen... listen, to what? Listen to God's Word. Listen to God telling the world that Israel is His especially chosen people and especially chosen land. Listen to God telling the world that He is the divine Creator and sovereign not just of Israel, and of Heaven, but also of earth and the Universe. How do you suppose God feels that Christendom says that they have replaced Israel as God's chosen? That they have chosen to write their own laws and commands, and refuse to listen to His by declaring that God's commands are abolished? And that Christendom in large measure is anti-Semitic top to bottom?

Israel doesn't need superior weapons or walled cities to take on the nations in the End Times: God will do it Himself for His own reasons. Israel doesn't need magicians and sorcerers, pagan cult images and idols, or the feeble and wrong attempts of Israeli religion to use such things as means to approach or communicate with God. Rather, as God said to end verse 13 and to begin verse 14, He Himself will inflict grave damage to all these gentile nations.

Israel had put all their trust in everything but God. The perversion of trusting things manmade... from weapons systems to strong buildings and walls, to invented worship objects, to consulting Tarot cards, or using human intelligence to devise clever plans... is demeaning to God since these are His own set-apart people that are doing it. All these things create a false... or at least, overblown... sense of security for Israel. Then of course we have the

greatest perversion of the 18th, 19th, 20th and now especially the 21st century: a worship of one's self as the greatest intellect and power in the Universe along with a denial of the influence or even existence of God. It began with the intellectual elite of the European Enlightenment and has grown into several forms of secular humanism especially in the West. Our trust is placed firmly in ourselves, our wealth, our education, in science, and in our governments. This is idolatry. It of course has infected Israel, and this secular humanism will be proved futile when the End Times arrive, and the nations seek to crush Israel. Yet, instead, the nations of the world are crushed under the overwhelming weight of God's anger. Only then will the survivors turn to God, and the first thing He demands is for all to go to Jerusalem and learn the Torah in order to walk in His ways. It is the end of both secularism *and* religion, Jewish *and* gentile.

Chapter 5 ends with miracles. Without doubt the most impressive one is that Israel once again repents and comes to God in the fullest and most sincere measure of trust they have ever displayed. Let's move on to chapter 6. But goodness: the suffering and carnage and deprivation it has taken to get there when it never had to be this way!

READ MICAH CHAPTER 6 all

The final 2 chapters are sometimes called The Book of Contention and Conciliation (or something similar), and it has much to do with what the Lord requires of us. It is presented in the form of a controversy between God and His rebellious people.

Usually, scholars say that we are reading something structured like a trial. That's true to a large degree, but it misses a critical point. This is all about a **covenant** dispute, call a *rib* in Hebrew. When the accusations revolve around God's covenants, then we must turn to those covenants to see if the accusation holds true. And if a conviction occurs, then we also see if the punishment is just and proper, because for each violation of Torah law a specific consequence is assigned.

Consider what this means in application. When Christianity questions if we ought to be obeying God's covenants, that is a *rib*. Should we celebrate the 7th day Shabbat? That's a dispute over God's covenants. Should we observe the biblically appointed times and festivals or is it OK to create new manmade ones? That's a dispute over God's covenants. Or, as generally practiced by the Church since its inception in the 4th century, should we obey *any* of the Law of Moses and instead declare it defunct? That's a dispute over God's covenants. This is what we witness in chapter 6, and this is also what Constantinian Christianity has been doing for 1600 years.

This is important because no one who claims to worship the God of Israel has any standing to do so outside of God's covenants. Those covenants set down the terms and conditions for any and every human who wants a relationship with God. When we attempt to approach that hoped-for or claimed relationship with Him on some other basis, we do so on self-definition and self-reliance. Or, most often today, we attempt to establish that relationship based on the Christian definitions set down by Bishops and Pastors, or on Judaism definitions set down by Rabbis. Thus, too often God and man talk right by each other when we dispute. We attempt to talk to God and dispute with Him based on our religious dogma, while He speaks to us, and hears us, and judges us, based on the covenants He set down with the Hebrews. Until we can submit to that basic principle, all of God's disputing with us and us with Him... all of His reasons for calling some our behaviors sin and others as righteous... will be completely confused and misunderstood.

I can easily recall several times in my younger years sitting in a denominational Church, hearing a Pastor say that what we practice when we come to his church is not a religion (meaning something negative), but rather a relationship. Sounds good; but what he failed to say was, that in his eyes that relationship is not based on Holy Scripture, God's Word, but rather on ancient and modern Church doctrines. In fact, history emphatically proves that the Church is nothing more nor less than a manmade gentile religion ordered into being by a Roman politician: the Emperor Constantine. How do I know that? Because God's Word tells us over and over again that we may only operate in relationship with God within the confines and boundaries of His covenants, and nothing else. All else is human hubris and folly, which well

represents Constantine's Church that abolished all of God's relationship criteria replacing it with their own.

Yeshua changed none of that because that's not what He came to do, nor what He attempted to do, nor what He did. John the Baptist who came before Him to pave the way, told Israel to repent. Repent from what? Not to repent from **obeying** God's covenants, but to repent from **disobeying** them. Yeshua came not to abolish those covenants, but rather to pay the price due from His people for disobeying and disregarding them.

Just as Christians and Jews have done today, so did ancient Israel attempt to form their relationships with God on their own terms consisting of ambivalence, subjectivity, and newly created and evolving dogmatic doctrines. Here, in chapter 6, God is calling Israel to come forward and state their case against Him in this dispute. He will respond with His case against them. The **rib**, the covenant dispute, begins with God's call for witnesses. So, we can mentally divide this chapter for the sake of study in this way: verses 1 -8 contain no formal indictment against Israel. Uniquely for prophetic speech, Yehoveh asks about His own conduct, inviting Israel to state their complaints against Him in verses 1 – 5, with Israel responding to Him in verses 6 and 7. Verses 9 – 12 shift its tone and content to a list of charges against Israel, and then 13 – 16 bring on the appropriate threats of punishment. Naturally, because this is a covenant dispute and not a civil court of law, then the punishments are rightly called curses because curses are covenant language for the justice that comes from covenant violations.

CJB Micah 6:1 ***So listen now to what Yehoveh says: "Stand up and state your case to the mountains, let the hills hear what you have to say."***

What have mountains and hills got to do with anything? What role can they play in figurately speaking of them as witnesses in this case? Listen to what God says in His Torah.

CJB Deuteronomy 30:19 ***"I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing***

and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants,

The mountains and hills represent “earth”. The thing to take notice of is that historically and biblically, for virtually every ancient society in the known world, mountains and hills were considered as visible, present, cosmic foundations and primordial witnesses because they never die or forget. They would always be there to act as witnesses to what one god or another said, and for what a king or even commoners did. It is important that we understand that mythological speech such as this is often present in the Bible, without meaning that God is in someway validating those beliefs. It is simply cultural expression about things the ancient world didn’t understand, and so for them it was mysterious. All God can ever do to effectively communicate with us, is to do so in our current cultural ways and vocabulary because otherwise we can’t possibly understand what He’s saying. The Israelites understood the common symbolism (throughout nearly all peoples) of mountains and hills being earthly cosmic witnesses, and the heavens as the Universe’s (somewhat mystical) cosmic witnesses to the speech of God. As an aside, the reason you won’t find things like stepped pyramids in Israel is because they had high hills and mountains. Pyramids of all kinds, whether built upon the sands of Egypt, or as the Ziggurats of Mesopotamia, or in the jungles of Central and South America, are viewed as nothing more than artificial mountains that embodied the same sort of concept that I’m explaining to you. Cosmic significance was attached to both these manmade mountains and to natural mountains by the ancients.

So, as Micah chapter 6 opens, we are hearing the words of Yehoveh as recorded by Micah, as opposed to hearing Micah speak. Since this entire matter is about a holy covenant dispute, then it would be right to call verse 1 an invocation. This opening and what follows are based on an immutable governing factor that cannot be set aside. It is this: clearly, the relationship between God and Israel based on the covenants is still intact and in operation, although Israel is no longer in harmony with its terms and conditions, and therefore no longer in harmony with God. How critical it is that we get this. Even though the covenants require much rectification on Israel’s part, in no way have they been changed, displaced, or terminated. And, because we are

continuing in Micah's somewhat unique style of Hebrew poetry, then there is a kind of built-in tension between this dispute that uses both covenant and judicial vocabulary, over and against the highly emotionally charged wording that is used to describe it all.

Now that all parties necessary are present (as called for in verse 1), verse 2 moves us along to God issuing instructions to the mountain witnesses.

CJB Micah 6:2 *Listen, mountains, to Yehoveh's case; also you enduring rocks that support the earth! Yehoveh has a case against his people; he wants to argue it out with Isra'el:*

Using a typical Hebrew poetic couplet, God also calls the mountains "rocks", with rocks being just another word for mountains. And, invoking the typical ancient understanding of cosmic matters, He calls them "enduring", and that these mountains are what supports the earth. In the end, because of the symmetry of Hebrew poem, then the entirety of verse 1 and verse 2 form a couplet. That is, two things said slightly differently, but essentially meaning the same thing.

In verse 3, God asks Israel a question.

CJB Micah 6:3 *"My people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!*

Here is confirmation for what I said earlier. God addresses Israel as "My people", thus proving that the relationship between them is still intact despite Israel's repeated violations to the covenant terms of that relationship. I think in modern Western English terms, I'd like to modify this to say: "Why have you grown tired of Me?" What happens when we grow tired of something? We distance ourselves from the thing that has become unimportant, even boring to us and adopt something new and more interesting. So, God is asking what about their relationship with Him seems, now, to be lacking or no longer relevant to their lives. Israel has pulled away from Yehoveh, and from the terms of the covenants He has with them. Why? Was it something He did? No,

of course not; this is essentially rhetorical as God, has not changed His covenant terms and conditions nor done something that violates them.

I won't spend much longer with this, but I want to emphasize that most commentators and Bible teachers will rightly say that Israel broke the covenant. However, *incorrectly* the conclusion is that this means the covenant has been terminated and thrown away as a result, much the way that if you break a water glass you sweep up the pieces and throw it in the trash, the glass essentially no longer existing. This thought process of Israel breaking the covenant meaning it's the end of it is fundamental to Christendom. And therein lies the fundamental flaw in Christendom. It is built nearly entirely on a false premise, with all their doctrines based upon, and flowing back to, that false premise. A premise that the Bible disputes over and over again... just as like here in Micah 6.

After asking the semi-rhetorical question of His supposed wrongdoing against Israel, God demands "Answer Me!". The Hebrew says that what He said was ***aneh-bi***, which more means "testify against Me" ...a wording more appropriate for this setting since testimonies are at the center of the proceedings.

The implication behind all that we are reading is that these proceedings are happening because in so many words it is Israel that wants this confrontation. It is Israel that has a laundry list of complaints against Yehoveh. So, the tone of God's response is, that they need to substantiate these charges against Him as their reasons for walking away from Him. One of things we have seen throughout our study of the Minor Prophets is that no matter how many times God tells Israel they are behaving wickedly, or that they are not being faithful towards Him, their response is: "No, that's not so". Denial. Only when disaster strikes do they begin to confess their wrongdoing. Such is the way of humanity that has not been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and even then, it remains a struggle. We'll pick up next time at verse 4.