

THE BOOK OF MICAH
Lesson 12, Chapter 6 Continued

Micah chapter 6 verses 1-8 make us witness to a biblically historical oddity: a confrontation between God and Israel concerning their covenant failures, and who between the two parties is to blame. This narrative is mixed with poetry. Without doubt verse 8 is one of the greatest and most compelling in the entire Bible.

CJB Micah 6:8 Human being, you have already been told what is good, what Yehoveh demands of you- no more than to act justly, love grace and walk in purity with your God.

As we discussed last week, we have little choice but to face that Christendom has essentially voided this and said that now ONLY “love” matters. Acting justly (that is, our behavior) is of little if any account for a Believer as concerns our relationship with God; and the Church essentially has abolished the duty to “walk with God” when Yeshua arrived on earth and died for our sins. Why? Because justice and walking are things that, to the Church, are bound up in rules. And rules are works, and works are generally negative, because the doctrine is that a person doing works is trying to work their way to Heaven rather than relying on the free gift of salvation. Therefore, there no longer exists any kind of objective code of morality or behavior within Christianity.... we each have the liberty to decide within our own consciences how to “love”.

This was worth repeating from our previous lesson not just because this core Christian doctrine is in error, but because it is destructive and it must be confronted. We are reading in Micah how destructive this notion was for Israel’s relationship with Yehoveh, since that they decided to walk in the ways of their forefathers’ Traditions rather than in the pure ways of God. Probably better nuanced, Israel *thought* that by walking in their Traditions, they *were* walking in the ways of God. It is the same for Christians. Further, just as the Israelites argued with God that He was wrong about them, so does the Church. How could this happen to God fearing people, Jew and gentile, who sincerely love God? Because they chose to believe their leadership and their

own manmade doctrines rather than God's Word. Over and over in the Prophets when God warns and threatens Israel, He always instructs them to turn away from those doctrines, and from the leaders who teach them those doctrines, and turn back to the Torah.

One final thing and we'll move on. While the CJB says to "walk in purity", that is a poor translation. Rather, it is to "walk humbly" with God. The Hebrew word is *tsana*, and it means to be lowly, or modest... humble. That is, this is not a command to go about attaining ritual purity (even though it is a given that one ought to do so). Rather, each of these three instructions... to do justice, to love, and to walk... are all related to one another, interconnected, and together are self-defining. Please note: the Hebrew language that formulates the statements that we find in the Bible about love, do not speak of love as some hazy pool of abstractions or as feelings. Love is an action word; not a thought. Certainly, merely carrying out what is commanded in a wooden way is not enough; it must reflect something that BEGINS as a thought, but does not just leave it there, unfulfilled. It must lead to action and behavior. Even so, the weight is upon us **to do**, and not **to merely think or to contemplate**. Unfortunately, this largely has been turned on its head, and reverses what the Bible teaches. The doctrine about love is indeed so hazy and abstract and meant to live primarily internally within us, that outward expression becomes entirely secondary, such that when at times love *needs* to be put into action it can be most difficult to define what it is we are to do... and often it is wrong. Part of the reason for that conundrum comes from the popular companion-belief that the Holy Spirit gives each of us a customized definition of what love is to amount to in our own personal, individual life.

I'll boil this down. It is not possible to live-out the commands of the Law as a person who is yet to be regenerated. Only God's spirit enables us to fulfill the righteousness of the Law, in the spirit it is intended. Let's move on to verse 9, but first we'll re-read from verse 9 to the end of the chapter.

RE-READ MICAH 6:9 – end

Now that the first 8 verses firmly place blame where it belongs... on unfaithful Israel, not on perfectly faithful Yehoveh... for violating the covenant terms

(which are there to establish the basis for the relationship between God and Israel), verse 9 continues with some other accusations and the curses that the covenant calls for, for Israel's violations of it. Looking at it another way, while verse 8 reminds Israel what it is that God expects from them (but they are not doing), no solution has been offered. Verse 9 sets us on the road to a resolution.

We're told that God calls to "the city". In this case the city is Jerusalem, which is meant to be the center of holiness and piety, but in reality, it has become the center of infidelity and rebellion against Him. Since the beginning of chapter 6, there hasn't been a lot of help for us to definitively discern who is speaking at any given time. Is it God? Is it Micah? Is it collective Israel? We have a number of speeches, but we are kind of on our own to determine from whose mouth they come. It's not that we can't probably get it right; but it sure would have been nice had the structure of these passages been clearer in telling us who is who. We have to rely mostly on context to differentiate who the speaker is, and who the listeners are.

So, here is who I think is talking in verse 9. It starts out with Micah speaking, and remains so until the final words, which are "listen to the rod and to Him who has commissioned it". Upon those final words it is Yehoveh speaking or, at least, Yehoveh that is being quoted by Micah. Let's hear another translation to see how it explains this verse.

YLT Micah 6:9 *A voice of Jehovah to the city calleth, And wisdom doth fear Thy name, "Hear ye the rod, and Him who appointed it."*

From the 30,000 ft. view, the book of Micah is the Prophet telling the story of Yehoveh's quarrel with Israel. So, Micah doesn't really insert himself as a participant. He's mostly a witness or a historian who recounts what it is he personally witnessed. No doubt a fair amount of what we read in Micah is him speaking his own words as a Prophet, because that's what a Prophet does. So, we need not get too fixated on the problem of precisely who is speaking when. What is said in verse 9 is a threat, whether it is God speaking or Micah speaking God's words. The idea is that a person with wisdom (in the immediate case this person is Israel, but in time it is all God-worshippers)

ought naturally to pay attention to God, reverently fear Him, and take appropriate action based on what God says. The wise person takes it seriously and behaves accordingly. The message is “hear the rod, and Him who appointed it”. The word hear is *shema* and means to listen to what is said and then obey it. It has two components: listen and then obey what you heard. The rod is a standard biblical icon for justice. By itself, it just indicates authority. Used as it is here, it means doling out punishment... that is, the authority enacting the curses for breaking the covenant. Another thing happens when the wise person hears and heeds what God speaks: he learns about God’s nature and character. So, if a person will watch and pay attention to what God is doing, and why He is doing it, it will reveal to you who He is such as Yehoveh is a God of patterns.

This is why reading the Prophets and believing them is so terribly important. Not only do we find God’s nature revealed in those pages, but we find out what God expects of humans and what He is going to do about all the rebellion against Him. We learn invaluable things about His character. On the other hand, when we read and absorb the Prophets concerning coming events, we can also properly interpret the world around us and why what is happening, is happening, and that none of it is random or meaningless. There is sense and purpose; there is a sense of an unfolding destiny we are hurtling towards. We live in an age of prophetic fulfillment; fulfillments of wonderful things, awesome things, and of terrible things. God’s Word offers insight and brings clarity to it. But, if even as Believers we don’t know nor properly interpret those prophetic words, then we remain as confused about it all as non-Believers, and so, we have no means to make heads nor tails from the deterioration of societies around the globe, the endless wars, rampant wickedness, chaos and confusion, deprivations, and both the re-emergence of Israel as well as the irrational hatred towards them that has resulted.

The phrase “Him who appointed it” (that is, the one appointed the rod) is interesting to me. When God appoints (not the same as anoints) it always includes the element of time or timing. So, while some think the rod actually means a person (that is, a person... like an enemy leader) who bears the rod of punishment at God’s order, I doubt that because the word would much more likely have been anoint and not appoint. Therefore, the Bible speaks of

Sabbath and the Biblical Feast Days, for example, as **appointed** times (and not anointed times). As a common illustration of the meaning, we can think about making appointments with Doctors. That is, the appointed event is going to the Doctor, but it inherently includes the element of when... of time. So, God not only is sending the rod of punishment towards Israel, He appointed a specific time for it ... be it now or later. He determines it all.

CJB Micah 6:10 *Are there still ill-gotten gains in the house of the wicked? still the detestable short eifah-measure?*

Or as in the YLT more literal version explains:

YLT Micah 6:10 *Are there yet in the house of the wicked Treasures of wickedness, And the abhorred scanty ephah?*

The speaker of verses 10, 11, and 12 must be Yehoveh. He speaks of specific sins, but they are also examples, or references to, other sins of similar nature. They all involve deceit and cheating. Because we are dealing with poetry, we get the lilting couplet of "in the house of the wicked, the treasures of wickedness". It's a play on words for poetic purpose. In the first use of the term wicked where it is applied to the house, the Hebrew is **rasha**. In the second use where wickedness describes the treasures or the winnings of the cheaters, the word is **resha**. This theme of intentionally cheating others is a regular one in the Bible, and God makes it clear than even though one may atone for it through a sacrifice, He despises such activity.

CJB Proverbs 20:10 *False weights and false measures- Yehoveh detests them both.*

The house of the wicked (**beit rasha**) more means (in modern English) the family of the wicked and all who belong to it. So, even after God telling humans, universally, what is good in His eyes (and therefore what is wicked), still even His own people (Israel) do wickedness. Thus, Israel is personified as a community (a house) of wickedness that is full of the things they acquired dishonestly. The first specific example of wickedness is a dishonest measure. An ephah is a measure of dry volume, like a bushel. So, merchants would

have two sets of ephah baskets. One that was more than a bushel for when they bought, and one that was less than an ephah for when they sold. The deception was in making those false measures look real and correct; they were created with the idea to steal and cheat. It wasn't by momentary impulse; it was premeditated and even a way of life for those that did this. This leads to verse 11.

CJB Micah 6:11 *Should I declare innocent wicked scales and a bag of fraudulent weights?*

A better translation than "wicked scales" would be "scales of wickedness" because rather than *rasha* we read *resha* in the Hebrew. "Scales of wickedness" is intended by Micah to balance against another common epithet of his era, "scales of righteousness", which means proper and fair scales or simply fairness in general. Scales, of course, are made for a measurement of weight, and a shekel was the unit of weight that was typical. That is, a shekel of something is like a pound or a gram of something (although a shekel is far less than a pound and more than a gram). And, finally, verse 12.

CJB Micah 6:12 *The rich men there are full of violence, the inhabitants tell lies, with tongues of deceit in their mouths.*

The implication is that it is the presence of the wealthy that has made Jerusalem violent and full of wickedness. It is not that we are to understand that a rich person is to automatically be considered as violent and evil merely due to fact that they *are* wealthy, nor is this a diatribe against wealth. However, it is that it has become a characteristic that goes hand in hand with the wealthy that they are violent and deceitful as the means to attain their wealth. A "tongue of deceit" is the equivalent expression of "house of wickedness". That is, the house of wickedness is designed and intended to be that way and so only knows how to do wicked things and not good things. The tongue of deceit means that when conducting commerce, or even common everyday interactions among the regular folks, the inhabitants of Israel from the wealthy to the poor only know how to lie and never to tell the truth, because they find it more profitable or beneficial to lie than to be truthful. So, verses 10 – 12 express that this cheating and violence and lying has become

so rampant in Jerusalem that it is the general nature of the population there. What should be the holy city is now sin city. Why? How? It is as verse 8 explained. God has told mankind, and especially Israel, what is good. But the people and the leaders have elected to ignore it and make up their own rules and standards, even calling the wicked things they do, good. And God is saying that you, Israel, are even asking Me to go by your standards and ways, and that's not going to happen.

Beginning with Moses, Yehoveh gave to Israel the court system, and an orderly government in general, to keep society in line and flowing in a good and just direction. Because humans are generally tempted to do evil and whatever is self-serving, God even provided Prophets to wave a flag of warning to tell Israel when they are straying away from God and from truth and the danger that puts Israel in. In Micah's day (and for a long time, really) the court system had devolved into favoritism and bribery, the government had sunk to be based on power, money and corruption, and there were many times more false Prophets running around than true Prophets, who were telling people what they wanted to hear: that everything was OK, God was happy with them, and to expect only abundance and protection. No wonder Yehoveh was in process of bringing down His wrath upon them, and about to exile them away from their land.

Verse 13 begins what God intends to do about this untenable situation that demands divine justice.

CJB Micah 6:13 ***"Therefore, I am starting to strike you down, to destroy you because of your sins.***

I prefer the better and clearer translation proved by the YLT.

YLT Micah 6:13 ***And I also, I have begun to smite thee, To make desolate, because of thy sins.***

The YLT especially helps to get the first few words correct. That is, God is not just... right now... beginning to enact covenant curses upon them. He had already begun even before Micah the Prophet told the people of this prophecy.

Why would God tell the people of Israel something that was obvious to them? Because, they hadn't recognized that their troubles were God's doing. And God was punishing them for their pretenses and sins. He asked in a previous verse, and I paraphrase, "are you asking Me to bless you for the way you cheat one another?" That is, "I am causing bad results from all your cheating. Do you not notice that your lying, cheating, and corruption haven't done you much good?"

When a new thought begins with "therefore" or "also", that means that what is about to be said is the result of what was just discussed. So, as a result of those general and specific sins that were listed in the previous verses, inescapable punishment has already begun. Things have been bad, but now, because of God's curses, the future doesn't hold much hope. Things are only going to get worse; more and worse effects are on the way (such as invasion of their land and exile).

Most Bible versions will say that Israel will be made "desolate" as opposed to the CJB saying "destroy". Desolate is the much better translation for the Hebrew "**shamem**". To destroy is a verb that means to demolish or to wipe out something physical. Desolate is an adjective that means to describe a condition of a landscape or a people. It speaks of being in despair or facing a bleak situation... it involves an emotional and mental state of hopelessness or confusion. So, this hopeless mental and emotional condition of the people has already begun, and will continue even in greater degree, several years before Assyria invades the northern kingdom, and then more than a century after that, Babylon invades the remaining southern kingdom. In both cases, exile is the end result with physical destruction as part of the reason for the peoples' ultimate desolation. While the people would have well understood the nature of this threat, clearly (especially on those living in the northern kingdom of Ephraim/Israel) they paid no heed to the warning. They were simply too far down the road in their wickedness to repent.

What, exactly, is going to be the result of God's retribution against Israel is stated in the following verses to conclude chapter 6. The next two verses need to be read together as they are a single continuous thought.

CJB Micah 6:14-15 ***¹⁴ You will eat but not be satisfied, with hunger gnawing inside you. You will conceive but not give birth; if you do give birth, I will give him to the sword. ¹⁵ You will sow but will not reap, you will press olives but not rub yourself with oil, likewise you will press grapes but not drink the wine***

It is essential to proper Bible study and comprehension that we recognize these verses as being specific covenantal based curses. These repercussions are not random or newly decided by Yehoveh. They fall firmly within the structure of the covenants of Abraham and Moses, and especially of Moses, because that is where we get specific commands and instructions concerning our behaviors. If the law says to do thus and so, but you don't, or if it says never to do this or that, but you do, then a particular pre-determined curse is exacted upon you, the violator. None of this has any meaning outside of the covenants. That is, if, as Christianity insists, none of the old covenants or their terms exist any longer, then none of what is the result of breaking any of those covenant terms matters. Thus, when we see Israel being punished according to an exact curse outlined for any particular violation, it is proof of itself that the covenant continues to exist, remain relevant, and Israel is still firmly God's covenant people. Further, when we see in the New Testament God threatening punishment to His followers of every race and ilk, these punishments are always based on those same covenant terms. So, the mantra that is foundational to the very existence of the Church that The Covenant of Moses is dead and gone, loses all objective validity. The wrongness of it becomes self-evident once the nature and operation of a Covenant is actually known.

What this curse promises is pretty straightforward. While you won't be starving to death, you'll have to ration, so, you won't get the satisfying variety of foods you used to have available, and you will never have enough food to be fully satisfied. What comes after that we must turn to a different Bible version to unpack. I'm sorry to say that the CJB has made a real mess of their translation of this verse and it practically not worth reading it. Here is a far better rendering.

YLT Micah 6:14-15 ***¹⁴ Thou -- thou eatest, and thou art not satisfied, And thy pit is in thy midst, And thou removest, and dost not deliver, And that which thou deliverest, to a sword I give. ¹⁵ Thou -- thou sowest, and thou dost not reap, Thou -- thou treadest the olive, And thou pourest not out oil, And new wine -- and thou drinkest not wine.***

The words “thy pit is in thy midst” is speaking of your condition of desolation. The focal Hebrew word is **yeshach**, and it means emptiness. The Israelites will have a continual feeling of emptiness of soul, of purpose, of lack of joy. I’d say a good modern equivalent is a constant low-level depression and/or pessimistic outlook on life. While the final half of this verse is quite difficult the essence of it is this: it won’t matter that when Israel hears of that the invaders are coming that they attempt to store away and hide their provisions from the enemy; the enemy will find them and take them, leaving you in an impossible position. Famine will overtake the land. There will not be enough olive oil to anoint their skin or use for cooking. The vineyards will produce few grapes, and so the quality of the wine will be poor, and the quantity will be insufficient. The staples of food and drink will not be enough to satisfy normal demand. Some will have to do without, altogether, and of course prices will jump as happens when there is scarcity.

I just made the point that all that is happening is within the sphere of... is entirely based upon... the terms of the covenant. That is, as continuing members of the covenant, punishments for breaking some of its terms are what will happen to Israel. To help make my point, here is part of the Law that speaks to this matter.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:37-45 ***³⁷ You will be so devastated as to become a proverb and a laughingstock among all the peoples to which Yehoveh will drive you. ³⁸ "You will carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, because locusts will devour it. ³⁹ You will plant vineyards and dress them but neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. ⁴⁰ You will have olive trees throughout your territory but not anoint yourself with the oil, because your olives will fall off unripe. ⁴¹ You will father sons and daughters, but they won't belong to you, because they will go into captivity. ⁴²***

The bugs will inherit all your trees and the produce of your land. ⁴³ "The foreigner living with you will rise higher and higher while you sink lower and lower. ⁴⁴ He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he will be the head and you the tail. ⁴⁵ "All these curses will come on you, pursuing you and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you didn't pay attention to what Yehoveh your God said, observing his mitzvot and regulations that he gave you.

Just as God earlier said, you (Israel) have long-known what is good (so a person has no excuse for doing what is wicked), so it is that Israel has long-known (or should have known) exactly what the consequences are for their rebelliousness. That they are ignorant of this is on them; not on God. And so, it remains that way for us all, until Heaven and Earth pass away. If we choose not to know God's laws and commands; or if we do know but choose to go our own way and create our own traditions and doctrines, then there is no excuse for our actions, and we can expect only divine condemnation.

CJB Micah 6:16 For you keep the regulations of 'Omri and all the practices of the house of Ach'av, modeling yourselves on their advice. Therefore I will make you an object of horror, the inhabitants of this city a cause for contempt; you will suffer the insults aimed at my people."

This verse has all sorts of grammatical issues that can make it challenging. Even the use of the names Omri and Achav are odd. However, once we know history we can extract meaning. Omri was a king of Israel... a pretty bad and notorious one. He formed a new dynasty, and Achav was part of that dynasty. Achav was Omri's son (possibly, but not as likely, he was Omri's grandson). Either way, one would think we would read not of the house of Achav but rather the house of Omri in which Achav was part. In other words, one would not speak of Jacob and Naftali as the house of Naftali. Rather it would be the house of Jacob, with Naftali being part of Jacob's house. But, indeed, the point is that Achav was a descendant of Omri, and they both were wicked.

So, God's accusation to Israel is that they live based on the corrupt ways and practices of Omri and Achav, instead of walking in Yehoveh's ways. Once

again, it is framed as a conscious, intentional, matter of choice. Israel could follow God's ways, but they prefer Omri and Achav's ways. Omri was singled out because he was a king over the northern kingdom, with its capital of Samaria. It was that kingdom's first king, Jeroboam, that started the 10 tribes of Israel who lived there on a path of wickedness and idolatry. Listen to this excerpt from 1Kings that tells the story of Jeroboam.

CJB 1 Kings 12:25-33 ***²⁵ Then Yarov'am built up Sh'khem in the hills of Efrayim and lived there. After that, he left and built up P'nu'el. ²⁶ Nevertheless Yarov'am said to himself, "Now the rulership will return to the house of David. ²⁷ For if these people continue going up to offer sacrifices in the house of ADONAI in Yerushalayim, their hearts will turn back to their lord, Rechav'am king of Y'hudah. Then they will kill me and return to Rechav'am king of Y'hudah." ²⁸ After seeking advice, the king made two calves of gold and said to the people, "You have been going up to Yerushalayim long enough! Here are your gods, Isra'el, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" ²⁹ He placed one in Beit-El and the other in Dan, ³⁰ and the affair became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one [in Beit-El and] all the way to Dan [to worship the other]. ³¹ He also set up temples on the high places and made cohanim from among all the people, even though they were not descended from Levi. ³² Yarov'am instituted a festival in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, similar to the festival held in Y'hudah; he went up to the altar in Beit-El to sacrifice to the calves he had made; and he placed in Beit-El the cohanim he had appointed for the high places. ³³ He went up to the altar which he had set up in Beit-El on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had chosen on his own, and instituted a festival for the people of Isra'el; he went up to the altar to burn incense.***

Jeroboam created an entirely new religion, made to be separate from Judah and from the religion the Israelites had always historically practiced. Oh, yes, he kept a few parts of the old religion, but the vast bulk he simply made up. He kept just enough to tell his people that this was the true religion God wanted, and that the one from the past was dead and gone. Why? From a political standpoint he wanted a full break from Judah. I hope this sounds

familiar. This is precisely what Constantine did. He created a new entity called the Church of Rome. It had a couple of principles taken from those Jews who believed in Yeshua as the biblical Messiah, but the vast majority of it was simply made-up. It was designed from its beginning to separate this new religion called Christianity from its Hebrew heritage, and from the people that God had given His laws and commands to, the Israelites, as it had been practiced for a few hundred years. Just as Jeroboam made his new religion only for his kingdom to practice, so Constantine made it only for his empire to practice. New temples were built, new priests were appointed, new festivals and holy days replaced the old ones. Even a new God was anointed; whereas Yehoveh reigned now His Son took over and changed all the rules. The capital of the religion was changed from Jerusalem to Rome. On and on it goes with tragically parallel attributes to what Jeroboam had done.

Omri, as king of Ephram/Israel, and then his son Achav, continued with the ways of Jeroboam and made even more religious laws that were corrupt and further away from Yehoveh and truth. Here's the point: all of this history was common knowledge among the Israelite people of Micah's day. They knew what had happened because a goodly portion of them were still living in the northern kingdom under the same kind of rulers who followed after Achav. Yet, they happily went along with it, feeling fully justified to do so. What was God's response after decades of calling them out for it, telling them to return to the true faith, and to go back to the Torah as their source of truth?

CJB Micah 6:16 ...Therefore I will make you an object of horror, the inhabitants of this city a cause for contempt; you will suffer the insults aimed at my people."

Here, due to the reference to Omri and Achav, the term "this city" means Samaria. Their idolatry was imported to Jerusalem from Samaria. This was utterly hateful to God. Now, both Samaria and Jerusalem were guilty, and both would feel God's wrath. There is no bright side when it comes to sin. It never escapes the gaze of Yehoveh, we can't redefine it, and it will be dealt with at some point. In this case, Samaria was dealt with first, and then 130 years later it was dealt with in Jerusalem.

I have a pretty good idea when it is going to be dealt with in Constantinian Christianity, because the Bible tells us. But that is for another time. Right now, let me once again set before you the warning that a remnant is beginning to hear and heed, but the vast majority still dismisses it.

CJB Revelation 18:4-5 ***⁴ Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues, ⁵ for her sins are a sticky mass piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.***

We'll begin chapter 7 of Micah, next time.