

CHAPTER X

JEHOVAH'S CONTROVERSY
WITH HIS PEOPLE

Chapters six and seven are composed of a series of lamentations, threatenings and denunciations. These are directed against all classes of people in Israel and Judah, whereas those which introduce each of the three earlier cycles (chapters 1-3) are directed against the upper classes only. The themes struck there are extended here.

We are pressed to conclude that, just as the sins of society's leaders filter down through all classes so the judgements of God upon those sins are also applied to all classes of people. This is a lesson which is much needed today among revolutionaries who are critical of those in authority. Too many times protests against "the system" are merely "the pot calling the kettle black."

FORGOTTEN ACTS OF SALVATION . . . Micah 6:1-8

RV . . . Hear ye now what Jehovah saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, Jehovah's controversy, and ye enduring foundations of the earth; for Jehovah hath a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Ballaam the son of Beor answered him; remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah. Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee but, to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?

LXX . . . Hear now a word; the Lord God has said; Arise, plead with the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and ye valleys even the foundations of the earth: for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee? or wherein have

I troubled thee? or wherein have I grieved thee? answer me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage, and sent before thee Moses, and Aaron, and Mariam. O my people, remember now, what counsel Balac king of Moab took against thee, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from the reeds to Galgal; that the righteousness of the Lord might be known. Wherewithal shall I reach the Lord, and lay hold of my God most high? shall I reach him by whole-burnt-offerings, by calves of a year old? Will the Lord accept thousands of rams, or ten thousands of fat goats? should I give my first-born for ungodliness, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Has it not been told thee, O man, what is good? or what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and love mercy, and be ready to walk with the Lord thy God?

COMMENTS

The first controversy of Jehovah against His people is occasioned by their having forgotten His saving activities on their behalf in times past. Centuries later, Stephen would level the same charge against them. To him this was the story of their national life. (Cf. *Acts, chapter 7*) *Arise . . . contend . . . (plead your case) before the mountains . . . vs. 1-2*

The judgments pronounced against both the northern and southern kingdoms in the three cycles which compose chapters 1-3 of Micah are harsh. The denunciation of the nation, the casting off of the race *per se* which is evidenced in the promised blessings to the remnant (chapters 4-5) are sure to be decried as unfair by those who are to be cast off. To prove His fairness in these things, God calls the prophet to set the sins of the people before them.

Because the fulfillment of the covenant will issue in God's blessing all the nations of the earth, this controversy is to be before the whole of creation. Thus the prophet comes full circle, connecting this final section of his prophecy to the first (see comment on 1:2-ff). As the justice of God's judgments against the leaders of the nation was established before all people and nations in the opening cycle, so the fairness of His complaints against the people will now be openly seen of all. The equity of God's cause will be pleaded and sinners themselves forced to confess that God's ways and judgments are fair.

O MY PEOPLE WHAT HAVE I DONE . . . vs. 3-5

In these verses the complaint of God is made. In 6:9—7:6, the case will be judged.

(Verse 3) The cry of verses 3-5 is not the stern judicial pronouncement of chapters 1-3 against broken law. Here we have rather the plea of a broken heart. "What have I done unto thee?" "Wherein have I wearied thee?" They have sinned against His love as well as His law.

(Verse 4) "I brought thee up . . ." The nation of Israel did not exist until the mercies of God brought an enslaved race out of a foreign land because of the covenant of blessing made with their father! (Cp. *Exodus* 2:24) It was the law, given them through Moses and the priesthood instituted in Aaron that turned the race into a nation . . . the very law whose flaunting now occasioned the heart-break of their God at the necessity of judging His people.

O MY PEOPLE, REMEMBER NOW WHAT BALAK KING OF
MOAB DEvised AND WHAT BALAAM THE SON OF
BEOR ANSWERED HIM . . . v. 5(a)

Micah's allusion here is to *Numbers, chapters* 22-24. The prophet places himself in the position of Balaam and asks those to whom he speaks to see the parallel.

Israel, drawing near the promised land had encamped on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho on the east bank of the Jordan. Balak, king of Moab, seeing what Israel had done to the Amorites, was terrified and sent to Pethor near the Euphrates to the prophet Balaam with the request that he come and curse Israel.

When Balaam went before God for direction, he was directed not to return with Balak's messengers, the elders of Moab.

Balak, assuming that Balaam could be bribed, sent ambassadors of higher rank with greater gifts. Again Balaam went to God in prayer and this time was instructed to go with the princes of Moab but to say only what God gave him to say.

Next morning Balaam went with the princes toward Moab. And God was angry, apparently because Balaam had been tempted enough by the bribe to question His first instruction.

As Balaam rode toward Moab, an angel appeared to his ass, but not to him. The animal, seeing the angel block her way, turned aside into a field, whereupon Balaam beat her.

Again the ass saw the angel and, instead of obeying Balaam, crushed his foot against a wall, and Balaam beat her a second time.

A third time the animal saw God's angel blocking the way, and this time she balked, for which Balaam struck her with his rod.

Then the Lord opened the ass's mouth and she asked her master

what she had done to be beaten. When Balaam answered it was because she had provoked and ridiculed him and wished for a sword to kill her, the animal reminded him that she had served him well all her life and asked if this had ever happened before.

Then Balaam's eyes were allowed to see the angel standing in the way with drawn sword. He fell on his face before the angel and was asked why he had beaten his ass when the angel had come to stand against him.

The prophet then confessed he had sinned in attempting to force his way past the angel of the Lord.

Understanding that he had done wrong in asking again and again for permission to curse Israel, Balaam asked for instructions and was told to go on to Moab but to say only what the Lord would instruct him to say.

Seeing Balaam coming, Balak rushed to meet the prophet assuming he was going to curse Israel.

Balaam ignored the king's rebuke for not having come at once and warned him he would say only what the Lord gave him to say.

Balak took Balaam to Kireath-huzoth, overlooking the outskirts of Israel's encampment. There the Moabite offered sacrifices and sent portions of the sacrifice to Balaam.

Next day Balak took Balaam to the high places of Bamoth-Baal from which he could see the Israelites.

The prophet required the king to again build altars and sacrifice. When this was done, he instructed Balak to wait by the sacrifices while he inquired of God.

God met Balaam and gave him a message, "*How can I curse those God has not cursed. How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?*"

Hearing this, Balak took Balaam to yet another high place, to the top of Mount Pisgah, hoping he would be permitted to curse Israel from this vantage point. Again Balaam waited on the message of God.

This time the message was, "*God is not a man that He should tell or act a lie nor feel compunction for what He has promised, I have received His command to bless Israel.*"

Then follows Balaam's discourse to Balak concerning God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. (*Numbers 23:22-26*)

Seeing Balaam would not curse Israel, Balak requests that he neither curse nor bless her, to which Balaam answered, "*All the Lord speaks I must do.*"

Again Balak took Balaam to another high place in a last effort to

have his way against Israel. But Balaam no longer looked for signs of God's permission to curse His people. Instead he looked the other way.

Then God's Spirit came upon Balaam and the prophet blessed Israel in Balak's presence. Upon this, the king of Moab became angry. In answering Balak's anger, Balaam said, "*I cannot go beyond the command of the Lord to do either good or bad of my own will, but what the Lord says, that I will speak.*" (Numbers 24:13, Emphasized Bible)

It is Balaam's progressive willingness and final determination to speak only what the Lord gave him to say that Micah here appropriates to himself. He too has said what his listeners do not want to hear. His reply is, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him . . ."

Micah is also determined to say, good or bad, only what the Lord gives him to say.

" . . . REMEMBER FROM SHITTIM TO GILGAL, THAT YE MAY KNOW THE RIGHTEOUS ACT OF JEHOVAH . . ." v. 5(b)

After God had steadfastly forbidden Balaam from cursing Israel and had actually brought this alien prophet to bless Jehovah's people, the people themselves turned to idols! (Numbers 25:1-ff)

Having settled down in Shittim the people "began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab . . . (and) so Israel joined himself to Baal of Peor." (Numbers 25:1-3, Emphasized Bible)

As a result, God's anger had been kindled against Israel so that He had instructed Moses to hang their leaders and 24,000 Israelites were smitten.

Micah again asks that those to whom he speaks remember God's past dealing with Israel. He has formerly punished her for unfaithfulness. If they will recall this truth, they will see the validity of Micah's warning of the same wrath. Again Micah's message is timely in our day.

WHEREWITH SHALL I COME BEFORE JEHOVAH . . . v. 6-7

Micah's question is simply whether he, as Balak, shall continually, with animal sacrifices, attempt to alter the will of God. Having placed himself in the way of Balaam's determination to do God's will, whether good or bad, he now implies that his hearers are in the same position as Balak, king of Moab!

... SHALL I GIVE MY FIRST-BORN FOR MY TRANSGRESSION
... v. 7(b)

Micah pursues the issue further, insinuating they would have him turn to Baal in their behalf. It was one of the abominable practices of Baal worship that the first born son of the worshipper be tossed into the fiery bowels of the idol to atone for the parent's sin . . . would they have him resort to this despicable practice to atone for having pronounced the judgment of God against them? The sarcasm is scathing!

HE HATH SHOWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND
WHAT DO TH JEHOVAH REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUST-
LY, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBL Y WITH
THY GOD . . . v. 8

Here is one of the classic questions of Scripture. It ranks with that of the Lord, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own life?" (*Matthew 26:16*) And the Hebrew writer's "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" (*Hebrews 2:1-4*)

For such questions there is no answer.

God's insistence upon faithfulness is not unreasonable, particularly when His past blessings and present promises are remembered. Nor is His punishment for unfaithfulness unreasonable when one remembers that it is His purpose through such faithfulness to benefit not only the faithful but all man-kind.

"*What doth Jehovah require of thee?*" The Law set down innumerable requirements. From the direct catalogue of eternal mortality in the decalogue to the detailed requirements of Sabbaths and sacrifices, the sum and substance of such requirements is that God's worshippers shall "do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." Failure to keep the commandments and precepts expressed in outward forms inevitably leads to failure to do these simple yet profound elementals: do justly, love kindness, walk humbly.

The Septuagint text contains three terms whose meanings shed much light on this verse: literally "to be doing the justice;" "love mercy;" and "to be ready, in reference to the go (as on a journey) with your Lord, God."

What is described here is the "life style" required by God. To be doing justice is to have just actions as the habit or style of one's life.

But what is justice? It has to do with the keeping of God's law . . . His commandments and ordinance. Far from removing the necessity for keeping God's commandments, this passage states in simple, yet forceful, terms the necessity to do so.

But to obey the commandments formally—to go through the motions of conformity to God's law without any corresponding effect on one's life makes such obedience a hollow mockery and an affront to God. The second requirement is to love mercy.

Again the Greek of the Septuagint is clear. (And since the Septuagint is the Bible quoted by Jesus and His apostles, it behooves us to understand.) The phrase, "rendered mercy," means—literally, to have pity, to have compassion.

This latter is mentioned as an attribute of God. (*Exodus 33:19* cp. *Romans 9:15*) To have compassion is to place ones' self in the sufferer's situation . . . to suffer with him. This God does.

Micah is not claiming this is required of God's people. Obviously, it is an ideal to be sought, but what is *required* is pity, a feeling sorry for, objectively.

We are to love such mercy! Here is one of those rare pre-Christian uses of the word love—the love of the will, not the emotions. The love that is deliberate self-giving. God requires deliberate giving of self to pity, the objective concern for others. Without this all formal religious obedience is hollow.

Jesus said as much, "These (the keeping of specific commandments) ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other (justice, mercy, trust) undone." (*Matthew 23:23*)

The church member today who is meticulously correct in "doctrinal matters" and unconcerned for mercy where there is human suffering has missed the mark as far as those to whom Micah promised God's wrath missed it.

The third requirement of God is that His people live constantly in an attitude of readiness to go with God as Lord. The phrase "to walk", means literally, proceed or go one's way.

God requires His people to be alert to His authority. As we go our way, we are to do so in the awareness that God is our Lord. This attitude is imperative to the accomplishment of the first two requirements listed by Micah.

The Psalmist tells us that "God trieth the minds and hearts." (*Psalm* 7:9) *Proverbs* 20:27 describes the lamp of Jehovah "searching all His innermost parts." In *Psalm* 139:23 the Psalmist prays, "search me, O God, and know my heart." In *I Chronicles* 28:9 David informs Solomon, ". . . Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."

God does not require by simply issuing commands and edicts. The heart of God's ordinances is His intimate knowledge of the hearts and minds of men. It is for this reason that outward form must always express inner reality, and both must proceed from a constant alertness to the Lordship of Him with Whom we have to do.

GOD'S JUSTICE DEMANDS THE WICKED BE PUNISHED . . .

Micah 6:9-16

RV . . . The voice of Jehovah crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a scant measure that is abominable? Shall I be pure with wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies; and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound; I have made thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee: and thou shalt put away, but shalt not save; and that which thou savest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil; and the vintage, but shalt not drink the wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I may make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing; and ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

LXX . . . The Lord's voice shall be proclaimed in the city, and he shall save those that fear his name: hear, O tribe; and who shall order the city? Is there not fire, and the house of the wicked heaping up wicked treasures, and that with the pride of unrighteousness? Shall the wicked be justified by the balance, or deceitful weights in the bag, whereby they have accumulated their ungodly wealth, and they that dwell in the city have uttered falsehoods, and their tongue has been exalted in their mouth? Therefore will I begin to smite thee; I will

destroy thee in thy sins. Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied; and there shall be darkness upon thee; and he shall depart from thee, and thou shalt not escape; and all that shall escape shall be delivered over to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt press the olive, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with oil; and shalt make wine, but ye shall drink no wine; and the ordinances of my people shall be utterly abolished. For thou hast kept the statutes of Zambri, and done all the works of the house of Achaab; and ye have walked in their ways, that I might deliver thee to utter destruction, and those that inhabit the city to hissing; and ye shall bear the reproach of nations.

COMMENTS

Verses 9-12 . . .

The prophet, speaking with the voice of the Lord, calls upon the city, Jerusalem, to see the reason why He must punish her wickedness.

"WISDOM SHALL SEE THY NAME . . ." v. 9

The Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac texts all have "fear" rather than "see." *Proverbs 9:10* tells us "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom."

The course of wisdom is to seriously heed God's warnings. He is God and is therefore perfectly capable of doing what He says He will do.

"HEAR THE ROD . . ." v. 9(b)

The warning has been given. Micah entreats the people to hear the rod before it falls, before they feel it. They are also entreated to hear Him Who has appointed this punishment for His children.

God's messengers are ever required to explain God's providences and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons taught by them.

". . . SHALL I BE PURE?" vs. 10-12

Those who had wealth and power abused it. Those who did not have such advantages found other means of defrauding those with whom they dealt. If they could not use force and violence they used fraud and deceit. False weights and measures and deliberate lies were common devices for making a "good bargain." They even spoke falsely concerning God. (Cp. *Ezekiel 8:12*)

How can God remain pure and yet withhold righteous judgment

from such people? Can He be pure and "go along" with such ethics? This is ever the dilemma of God's justice and mercy.

It is very popular today to believe a God of mercy is not capable of stern judgment. There have been other times (eg. the Puritan era) when it seems to have been believed that a just God could not possibly be merciful.

To the informed Christian, or for that matter the informed Jew, the answer has always been God's Messiah. This is the message of *Romans 3:21-26*. It is also the message of Micah as he alternately warns of judgements and promises Messiah's coming.

Verses 13-16 . . .

THEREFORE I ALSO HAVE SMITTEN THEE . . . v. 13

The persistent fact of sin is a prime factor in Micah's message. He did not see it as mere maladjustment or even failure to attain to some objective religious standard. Sin is against the person of God. It is unfaithfulness to His covenant, it is disloyalty to His purpose, it is disobedience to His authority. Exploitation of the poor, bribery, drunkenness, harlotry, idolatry are evil because they are an affront to a moral, ethical God!

The God Who cannot give countenance to sin will not save from destruction those who persist in it.

He will not abandon His mercy. The remnant will be redeemed and received by the Messiah.

But aside from the Messiah, and until He comes, God's rebellious people can expect to reap the consequences of their own evil ways.

. . . EAT . . . NOT BE SATISFIED

As they have swallowed down the riches of ill-gotten gain, so they shall vomit them up again. (Cp. *Job 20:15*) Their unethical affluence will not bring them satisfaction.

Such affluence never does. We are experiencing unparalleled social dissatisfaction in the midst of plenty in our time, largely because those who have have been unconcerned for those who have not . . . and because much of our affluence has been gotten at the expense of the poor.

THY HUMILIATION SHALL BE IN THE MIDST OF THEE . . .

v. 14(b)

Their country will not harbor and protect them. God can cast a nation down by what is in the midst of them. They shall not be

able to preserve what they have by force nor recover what they will lose. Their tainted wealth shall be removed by a foreign sword.

THOU SHALT SOW . . . BUT SHALL NOT DRINK WINE . . .

v. 15

Either their crops will be blasted and withered until there is nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap what they have sown. When they are carried away captive they will not return to harvest what they have tilled.

THE STATUTES OF OMRI ARE KEPT . . . THE WORKS OF
AHAB . . . v. 16(a)

Here Micah alludes to the idolatrous reign of Omri (*1 Kings 16:21-f*) as symbolic of the current unfaithfulness of the people. Omri had become king in the north, in the dynastic line of Jeroboam. He consolidated his power by defeating Tibni.

Omri reigned six years in Tirzah, after which he bought and fortified the hill of Samaria as his capital city.

It is said he did more evil than all his predecessors, beginning with Baal worship, "that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah."

After a six year reign in Samaria, Omri died and was succeeded by his son, Ahab. Micah here refers to the "works of the house of Ahab." What Bible student could be unfamiliar with "the works of Ahab?" It was he who married the infamous Jezebel whose missionary zeal for her god, Baal, puts the Israelites to shame in their apathetic neglect of Jehovah.

Micah here accuses Jerusalem of following the same idolatrous course as Omri and Ahab. In so doing, he presents us with another evidence that the chief concern of the prophet is to call the people away from idolatry and back to the covenant. There was all sorts of evil rampant in both kingdoms, but the root of it all—the fundamental reason for God's wrath against them—was their going off after Baal and in so doing breaking their covenant with Jehovah.

The Law which made Israel a nation was primarily designed to preserve the covenant and to move it forward toward the time when God, in the fullness of time, would bless all the nations of the earth in Abraham's seed. The gross violations of the law which brought about the preaching of the pre-exilic prophets were simply symptoms of the much deeper and more significant unfaithfulness to the covenant.

DESOLATION . . . HISSING . . . REPROACH

The desolation mentioned here is described vividly in *Micah 3:12*.

The proud city of Jerusalem will lay in ruins for the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, and never again regain the splendor of her former glory.

The term "hissing" is reminiscent of *Lamentations* 2:15-f. There the prophet depicts the sad wonder of those who pass by Jerusalem in her desolation. They clap their hands and suck their breath through closed teeth in expression of their amazement of the sad state of the city once called "the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth."

Because of their haughty claim to be God's only people, while failing in their covenant relationship to Him, the Jews will bear the reproach which comes from such a claim. Because of their disgraceful use of the Law of Jehovah, that which should have been a great honor, *ie.* their "chosen people" status, shall become the occasion of their being despised by the peoples of the earth.

Here, it would seem, is at least a partial key to the historic phenomena mistakenly called "anti-semitism."

MICAH LONGS FOR GODLINESS . . . Micah 7:1-6

RV . . . Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the first-ripe fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; the prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen, even thy visitation, is come; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in a neighbor; put ye not confidence in a friend; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

LXX . . . Alas for me! for I am become as one gathering straw in harvest, and as one gathering grape-gleanings in the vintage, when there is no cluster for me to eat the first-ripe fruit; alas my soul! For the godly is perished from the earth; and there is none among men that orders his way aright: they all quarrel even to blood: they grievously afflict every one his neighbour: they prepare their hands for mischief; the prince asks a reward, and the judge speaks flattering words; it is the desire of their soul: therefore I will take away their goods as a

visitation. Woe, woe, thy times of vengeance are come; now shall be their lamentations. Trust not in friends, and confide not in guides; beware of thy wife, so as not to commit anything to her. For the son dishonours his father, the daughter will rise up against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: those in his house shall be all a man's enemies.

COMMENTS

WOE IS ME . . . THE GODLY MAN IS PERISHED . . . v. 1-2(a)

Chapter seven begins with a cry of despair from the lips of the prophet. His soul is hungry for the fellowship of godly men. In this he is disappointed as a man physically hungry who comes first to the vineyard and then the orchard and finds nothing to relieve his hunger.

Micah sees beyond the confines of the little kingdoms of Israel and Judah. If there are no godly men among the covenant people, then godliness has perished from the earth! Turning to idolatry, as the world worshipped idolatry, the chosen people had brought about a moral situation similar to that which would prevail if there were no God at all!

The statement, "there is none upright . . ." reminds us of David's affirmation concerning those fools who say there is no God. In *Psalms* 14:1, David wrote "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works . . ." This is repeated in *Psalms* 53:1 with the additional statement "there is none that doeth good." The fifth and one hundred fortieth *Psalms* echo this thought and expand it.

In the case of the Psalmist it was the professed atheist who is described in vivid terms as grossly immoral. Micah says that because of the idolatry of the children of Israel the same is now true of the whole world!

In *Romans* 3:9-18, Paul establishes this ungodliness as the universal state of man outside of Christ. There the apostle uses a catena, or chain of references, to prove that the Jews are in no better fix than Gentiles, for all are under sin.

Micah and Paul seem ready to say as Elijah in his time, "I, even I only, am left." (*1 Kings* 19:10) *Their hands are upon that which is evil . . . v. 2(b)—4(a)*

There are, says Micah, not only none who do good, but multitudes that do positive hurt. "They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every

man his brother . . . " They have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin.

The magistrates, office patrons and protectors of right are the practicers and promoters of wrong. The prince and judge may be hired for bribes to exert all their power to carry out wicked purposes. The great man who has wealth and the power to do good but who desires to do evil does not utter the evil desire of his soul lest his conspiring with the prince and judge become evident.

"The best of them is a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge . . ." They prick and injure all with whom they come in contact. (Cp. *II Samuel 23:6-7, Isaiah 55:13, Ezekiel 2:6*)

THE DAY OF THE WATCHMAN . . . v. 4(b)

This is the day of the watchman. Just as a policeman comes upon a criminal to arrest him, so the true prophet, God's watchman, comes upon the false prophet and his corrupt followers. The party is over, the piper must be paid. God's wrath is at hand.

TRUST YE NOT . . . vs. 5-6

Here follows a list of those whom honest men (if indeed there were any) could not trust. The list includes "a neighbor," "a friend," "her that lieth in thy bosom," *ie.* one's own wife, "the son," "the daughter," "the daughter-in-law." Such a society in indeed corrupt . . . ready for the wrath of God.

Jesus quotes verse 6(b) in connection with those He expected to persecute the new covenant people. (*Matthew 10:35-36 cp. Luke 12:53*)

THE PROPHET LOOKS TO GOD . . . Micah 7:7-13

RV . . . But as for me, I will look unto Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Jehovah will be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of Jehovah, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgement for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then mine enemy shall see it and shame shall cover her who said unto me, Where is Jehovah thy God? Mine eyes shall see my desire upon her; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. A day for building thy walls! in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day shall they come unto thee from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. Yet shall

the land be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

LXX . . . But I will look to the Lord; I will wait upon God my Saviour: my God will hearken to me. Rejoice not against me, mine enemy; for I have fallen yet shall arise; for though I should sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he make good my cause: he also shall maintain my right, and shall bring me out to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. And she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shall clothe herself with shame, who says Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall look upon her: now shall she be for trampling as mire in the ways. It is the day of making of brick; that day shall be thine utter destruction, and that day shall utterly abolish thine ordinances. And thy cities shall be levelled, and parted among the Assyrians; and thy strong cities shall be parted from Tyre to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. And the land shall be utterly desolate together with them that inhabit it, because of the fruit of their doings.

COMMENTS

(Verse 7) From the stench of social injustice and personal immorality brought on by false worship, Micah lifts his eyes to God. Like Joshua, when he was confronted with the people's attraction to false gods, (*Joshua 24:14-15*) so the prophet in the face of popular apostasy takes his stand on the side of the Lord.

Not only will he look to the Lord, he will wait "*for the God of my salvation.*"

Here is a timely lesson for anyone who would serve God. Whether it be Elijah, despairing in loneliness because of the unfaithfulness of God's people, or Joshua standing like an oak, alone if necessary but steadfast, or Micah declaring his trust to a faithless generation, he who would serve God faithfully must be able to differentiate between God Who is faithful and His people who too often are not. Micah is unshaken in his conviction that "my God will hear me!"

REJOICE NOT AGAINST ME . . . vs. 8-10

Truth is ever in the minority. Error is ever on the throne . . . and with this unnatural imbalance the wicked always boast and scoff and rejoice in the discomfort of God's people. But their joy is as hollow as it is destined to be short-lived.

Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced and put to shame.

Here is another eternal truth, spoken first in the Old Testament and re-affirmed in the New. *Romans 8:31-39* asks and answers the same question. "If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!"

The enemies of God's faithful may rejoice for a season in God's chastening of His people, but their joy is to be brief. Micah sees his own plight, as does every true worshipper see such circumstances as a result of sin. Micah confesses himself a sinner (*v. 9*) and stands ready to bear the indignation of Jehovah. This is a common attitude among spiritual giants. David, in his great guilt, felt abandoned by God, yet he knew God had heard and would deliver him. (*Psalms 22 compare vs. 1 and 24.*)

Paul cried out in recognition of his own sin, "wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death" and immediately rejoiced in the answer "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (*Romans 7:24-8:1*)

A DAY FOR BUILDING THY WALLS . . . vs. 11-13

Having stated his trust in God, accepted his discomfiture as the just result of his own sin, and rejoiced in the sure hope of deliverance, Micah now transfers this entire process to the people. Beyond the anticipated exile the prophet sees the decree for deliverance and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. (Cp. *Amos 9:11* and *Zechariah 12:6*)

. . . FROM ASSYRIA . . . EGYPT . . . TO THE RIVER

. . . ESA TO SEA . . . v. 12

In the day of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, following the fall of Babylon, the Jews now to be scattered shall return from throughout the surrounding nations.

THE LAND . . . DESOLATE . . . v. 13

The returning exiles will not find, as did their forefathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Rather the land will be desolate, the temple, the walls of the cities in ruins. They must recognize this as "the fruit of their doings." The history of the rebuilding of their lands by the returned remnant is one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of this stiff-necked people. (It is recommended that the reader

interrupt the study of Micah here long enough to re-read Ezra and Nehemiah.)

THE PROPHET PRAYS FOR HIS PEOPLE . . . Micah 7:14-17

RV . . . Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thy heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto them marvellous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places; they shall come with fear unto Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of thee. LXX . . . Tend thy people with thy rod, the sheep of thine inheritance, those that inhabit by themselves the thicket in the midst of Carmel: they shall feed in the land of Basan, and in the land of Galaad, as in the days of old. And according to the days of thy departure out of Egypt shall ye see marvellous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed; and at all their might they shall lay their hands upon their mouth; their ears shall be deafened. They shall lick the dust as serpents crawling on the earth, they shall be confounded in their holes; they shall be amazed at the Lord our God, and will be afraid of thee.

COMMENTS

If one requires proof of Micah's highest motives in writing the scathing denunciations against his people which make up the greater part of this book, his prayer for the returning remnant certainly provides it amply.

CARMEL . . . BASHAN . . . GILEAD . . . THE DAYS OF THEIR
COMING FORTH OUT OF EGYPT . . . vs. 14-15

When Joshua and Caleb returned to Moses after having spied out the promised land, they reported it was a land flowing with milk and honey. Micah's prayer is it shall be that way again when the people return.

One can stand today among the lush forests in the plain of Megiddo at the foot of Mount Carmel and marvel at the beauty of the land as it has recently been reclaimed by today's returnees from exile. They found the region a miserable swamp and turned it into a garden. So does the prophet pray that God's people after Babylon shall reclaim their land.

Bashan was famous for its cattle, Gilead for its healing balm. Micah asks God on behalf of the remnant that it may be so again.

THE NATIONS SHALL SEE AND BE ASHAMED . . . v. 16-17

This prediction concerning the neighbors of Israel is easily seen demonstrated both in ancient and modern times. Just as those who returned from Babylon set about to rebuild, so the modern Israeli loves his land. Hillsides once eroded through neglect and poor husbandry are covered with verdant vegetation. What was formerly barren wilderness now is home for the unique farming communes of Israel.

The nations who mistreated this land, both in ancient and modern times have ample reason to be ashamed. (v. 16)

PRAYER OF PROPHETIC PRAISE . . . Micah 7:18-20

RV . . . Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in lovingkindness. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

LXX . . . Who is a God like thee, cancelling iniquities, and passing over the sins of the remnant of his inheritance? and he has not kept his anger for a testimony, for he delights in mercy. He will return and have mercy upon us; he will sink our iniquities, and they shall be cast into the depths of the sea, even all our sins. He shall give blessings truly to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham, as thou swarest to our fathers, according to the former days.

COMMENTS

Micah is overwhelmed by the knowledge that, though He must now punish His people for their utter faithlessness, He will not only deliver a remnant, but will bless their lands and humiliate their enemies.

Jehovah is praised for His great glory, His readiness to forgive and His faithfulness to the ancient promises of the covenant.

Although He is just and does punish, He "delighteth in lovingkindness." No one who knows Micah's God can possibly see any contrast between Him and the God of Love revealed in the New Testament.

Chapter X—Questions

Jehovah's Controversy With His People

1. Micah chapters six and seven are composed of a series of _____.
2. Just as the sins of society's leaders filter down through all classes so _____ are applied to all people.
3. Jehovah's first controversy with His people is occasioned by their having forgotten _____.
4. God's controversy with His people is before all creation because _____.
5. How does Micah connect the final section of his book to the first section?
6. In *Micah* 6:3-5 the _____ is made.
In 6:9—7:6, the case will be _____.
7. The cry of *Micah* 6:3-5 is the plea of a _____.
8. Explain Micah's reference to Balaam. (*Micah* 6:5)
9. Why "remember from Shittim to Gilgal"? (*Micah* 6:5(b))
10. Show how *Micah* 6:1-5 is timely in our day.
11. What is alluded to by "shall I give my first-born for my transgression"? (*Micah* 6:7(b))
12. Discuss *Micah* 6:8 in connection with *Matthew* 26:16 and *Hebrews* 2:1-4.
13. God's insistence upon faithfulness is not unreasonable when we remember _____ His _____ and _____.
14. How does Micah answer the question, "what doth Jehovah require of thee?" (*Micah* 6:8)
15. The _____ is the Bible quoted by Jesus and the apostles.
16. *Micah* 6:8 does not claim that _____ an attribute of God's character is required of God's people.
17. Rather than compassion, Micah insists that we are required to _____.
18. Discuss *Micah* 6:8 in connection with *Matthew* 23:23.
19. Why must the outward forms of obedience always be expressive of inner reality?
20. Compare *Micah* 6:9 and *Proverbs* 9:10.
21. What is the significance of "shall I be pure?" *Micah* 6:10-12
22. The persistent fact of _____ is a prime factor in Micah's message.
23. Compare *Micah* 6:14 and *Job* 20:15.
24. What is meant by *Micah* 6:15?

25. What are "the statutes of Omri"? *Micah* 6:15(a)
26. Compare *Micah* 6:16(b) and *Micah* 3:12.
27. Discuss the historic phenomena known as "anti-semitism" in light of *Micah* 6:16.
28. Compare *Micah* 7:1-2(a) and *Psalms* 14:1-2.
29. Discuss *Micah* 7:1-2 in light of *Romans* 3:9-18.
30. *Micah* 7:2(b)—4(a) refers to _____.
31. Compare *Micah* 7:2(b)—4(a) with *II Samuel* 23:6-7, *Isaiah* 55:13, and *Ezekiel* 2:6.
32. Who are listed as those whom honest men cannot trust? (*Micah* 7:5-6)
33. Discuss *Micah* 7:5-6 in connection with *Matthew* 10:35-36 and *Luke* 12:53.
34. Discuss *Micah* 7:7 in connection with *Joshua* 24:14-15.
35. Despite the wickedness of his time, Micah is unshaken in the conviction that _____.
36. Discuss *Micah* 7:8-10 in light of *Romans* 8:31-39.
37. Compare *Micah* 7:9 to *Psalms* 22:1-24 and *Romans* 7:24-8:1.
38. What is meant by "a day for rebuilding thy walls"? (*Micah* 7:11-13)
39. If one requires proof of Micah's highest motives in writing his prophecies, his prayer for _____ provides it amply.
40. The nations shall see *what* and be ashamed?