
MICAH 6: 1 Listen now to what the LORD says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear what you have to say.

This chapter reproves and threatens. The manner of raising the attention by calling on man to urge his plea in the face of all nature, and on the inanimate creation to hear the expostulation of Jehovah with his people, is awakening and sublime. The words of Jehovah follow, Mic 6:3-5. And God's mercies having been set forth to his people, one of them is introduced, in a beautiful dramatic form, asking what his duty is towards a God so gracious, Mic 6:6, Mic 6:7. The answer follows in the words of the prophet, Mic 6:8; who goes on to upbraid the people of his charge with their injustice and idolatry, to which he ascribes want of success in their lawful undertakings, and those heave calamities which are now impending, Mic 6:9-15.

Verse 1

Arise, contend thou - This chapter is a sort of dialogue between God and the people. God speaks the five first verses, and convicts the people of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The People, convinced of their iniquity, deprecate God's judgments, in the sixth and seventh verses. In the eighth verse God prescribes the way in which they are to be saved; and then the prophet, by the command of God, goes on to remonstrate from the ninth verse to the end of the chapter.

MICAH 6: 2 Hear, you mountains, the LORD's controversy, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

Verse 2

Hear ye, O mountains - Micah, as God's advocate, summons this people into judgment, and makes an appeal to inanimate creation against them. He had spoken to the priests, to the princes, to the people. He had done every thing that was necessary to make them wise, and holy, and happy; they had uniformly disobeyed, and were ever ungrateful. It was not consistent with either the justice or mercy of God to permit them to go on without reprehension and punishment. He now calls them into judgment; and such was the nature of their crimes that, to heighten the effect, and show what reason he had to punish such a people, he appeals to inanimate creation. Their ingratitude and rebellion are sufficient to make the mountains, the hills, and the strong foundations of the earth to hear, tremble, and give judgment against them. This, then, is the Lord's controversy with his people, and thus he will plead with Israel.

MICAH 6: 3 My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me!

Verse 3

O my people, what have I done unto thee? - They are called to show why God should not pronounce sentence upon them. This condescension is truly astonishing! God appears to humble himself to his

creatures. You have acted basely, treacherously, and ungratefully to me; this had already been proved by the prophets. What cause have I given you for such conduct? I have required a religious service from you; but have I wearied you by a fatiguing round of difficult duties? If I have, now testify against me; and you shall be first heard, and your plea received, if it be reasonable and good. They are silent; and God proceeds, and states what he has done for them.

MICAH 6: 4 For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage. I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Verse 4

I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt - Where you were slaves, and grievously oppressed; from all this I redeemed you. Was this a small benefit? I sent before thee Moses, my chosen servant, and instructed him that he might be your leader and lawgiver. I sent with him Aaron, that he might be your priest and transact all spiritual matters between myself and you, in offerings, sacrifices, and atonements. I sent Miriam, to whom I gave the spirit of prophecy, that she might tell you things to come, and be the director of your females. To this sense the Chaldee, "I have sent three prophets before you; Moses, that he might teach you the tradition of judgments, Aaron, that he might make atonement for the people; and Miriam, that she might instruct the females."

MICAH 6: 5 My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

Verse 5

Remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted - He sent for Balaam to curse your fathers; but by my influence he was obliged to bless them. See Numbers 22 (note) and Numbers 23 (note), and the notes there, where this subject is largely considered.

From Shittim unto Gilgal - From the encampment at Shittim, Num 25:1, on the way to that of Gilgal, Jos 4:19. Balaam gave different answers in the interval between these places. We may suppose that the encampments of Israel advanced slowly to that part of Jordan which was opposite to Gilgal. The Chaldee has, "Were there not wonderful things done in your behalf from the valley of Shittim to the house of Gilgal?" See Jos 3:1; Jos 4:20. Thus there will be a reference to the miraculous passage over Jordan. See Newcome.

That ye may know the righteousness - The just, equitable, and merciful dealing of the Most High. Recollect those things, that ye may have a proper impression of this. There are many interpretations given of this rather obscure clause; what I have proposed seems to me the most simple.

This is the sum of the address; and here the case of the plaintiff terminates, the prisoners being called to show why the sentence of the law should not be pronounced. I make no apology for using any forensic terms, as the passages before us refer to a case brought into a court to be judged, and the terms in the original are all such as are proper for a court of justice; and the thing itself is called the Lord's controversy, ריב יהוה rib Yehovah, Jehovah's suit at law. And hence it is said, He will plead, litigate, with Israel.

MICAH 6: 6 How shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

Verse 6

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord - Now the people, as defendants, appear; but instead of vindicating themselves, or attempting to dispute what has been alleged against them, they seem at once to plead guilty; and now anxiously inquire how they shall appease the wrath of the Judge, how they shall make atonement for the sins already committed.

Bow myself before the high God - They wish to pray, and to make supplication to their Judge; but how shall they come before him? They have no right to come into his presence. Some offering must be brought; but of what kind, or of what value? Their sin is unprecedented, and usual methods of access will not avail. They are distracted in their minds, and make a variety of proposals to themselves, some rational, some absurd and impossible, and some even sinful.

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings - This is reasonable, and according to the law; but this will be insufficient.

MICAH 6: 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams? With tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my disobedience? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Verse 7

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams - These might be procured, though with difficulty; but conscience says neither will these do.

With ten thousands of rivers of oil - This is absurd and impossible; but could even these be procured, could they all make atonement for such guilt, and ingratitude, and rebellion?

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression - This was sinful and wicked; but such offerings had been made by the Phoenicians, and their successors the Carthaginians, and this very custom was copied by the corrupt Israelites. See some cases of such offerings, 2Kgs 3:27 (note); Lev 20:27 (note).

The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? - This clause is an explanation of the former. Shall I make the first-born, the best and goodliest of my children, **חַטָּאת** *chattath*, a Sin-Offering for my soul? And thus the original is used in a multitude of places.

When they had put all these questions to their reason and conscience, they found no satisfaction; their distraction is increased, and despair is about to take place, when Jehovah, the plaintiff, in his mercy interposes:

MICAH 6: 8 He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does the LORD require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Verse 8

He hath showed thee, O Man, what is good - All the modes of expiation which ye have proposed are, in the sight of God, unavailable; they cannot do away the evil, nor purify from the guilt of sin. He himself has shown thee what is good; that which is profitable to thee, and pleasing to himself. And what is that? Answer, Thou art: -

I. To do justly; to give to all their due.

1. To God his due; thy heart, thy body, soul, and spirit; thy Wisdom, understanding, judgment. "To love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." This is God's due and right from every man.

2. Thou art to give thy neighbor his due to do to him as thou wouldst that he should do to thee, never working ill to him.

3. Thou art to give to thyself thy due; not to deprive thy soul of what God has provided for it; to keep thy body in temperance, sobriety, and chastity; avoiding all excesses, both in action and passion.

II. Thou art to love mercy; not only to do what justice requires, but also what mercy, kindness, benevolence, and charity require.

III. But how art thou to do this? Thou art to walk humbly with thy God; הַצַּנְעָה hatsnea, to humble thyself to walk. This implies to acknowledge thy iniquity, and submit to be saved by his free mercy, as thou hast already found that no kind of offering or sacrifice can avail. Without this humiliation of soul there never was, there never can be, any walking With God; for without his mercy no soul can be saved; and he must be Thy God before thou canst walk with him. Many, when they hear the nature of sin pointed out, and the way of salvation made plain through the blood of the Lamb, have shut their eyes both against sin and the proper sacrifice for it, and parried all exhortation, threatening, etc., with this text: "God requires nothing of us but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him." Now I ask any man, Art thou willing to stand or fall by this text? And it would cost me neither much time nor much pains to show that on this ground no soul of man can be saved. Nor does God say that this doing justly, etc., shall merit eternal glory. No. He shows that in this way all men should walk; that this is the duty of Every rational being; but he well knows that no fallen soul can act thus without especial assistance from him, and that it is only the regenerate man, the man who has found redemption through the blood of the cross, and has God for His God, that can thus act and walk. Salvation is of the mere mercy of God alone; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

The manner of raising attention, says Bp. Newcome, on Mic 6:1, Mic 6:2, by calling on man to urge his plea in the face of all nature, and on the inanimate creation to hear the expostulation of Jehovah with his people, is truly awakening and magnificent. The words of Jehovah follow in Mic 6:3-5. And God's mercies having been set before the people, one of them is introduced in a beautiful dramatic form; asking what his duty is towards so gracious a God, Mic 6:6, Mic 6:7. The answer follows in the words of the prophet, Mic 6:8. Some think we have a sort of dialogue between Balak and Balaam, represented to us in the prophetic way. The king of Moab speaks, Mic 6:6. Balaam replies by another question in the two first hemistichs of Mic 6:7. The king of Moab rejoins in the remaining part of the verse; and Balaam replies, Mic 6:8. Bps. Butler and Lowth favor this. I cannot agree.

MICAH 6: 9 The LORD's voice calls to the city, and wisdom sees your name: "Listen to the rod, and he who appointed it.

Verse 9

The Lord's voice crieth unto the city - No man is found to hear; but the man of wisdom will hear, תושיה tushiyah; a word frequent in the writings of Solomon and Job, signifying wisdom, wealth, substance, reason, essence, happiness; any thing that is complete; or that which is substantial, in opposition to vanity, emptiness, mere show, unsubstantiality. When God speaks, the man of common sense, who has any knowledge of God or his own soul, will see thy name; but instead of יראה yireh, will see, the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic, with twelve of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., have read יראי yirey, they that Fear. The Vulgate reads: -

Et salus erit timentibus nomen tuum. "And thou shalt be salvation to them that fear thy name."

The Septuagint - και σωσει φαβουμενους το ονομα αυτου.

And he shall save those who fear his name. -

This the Arabic copies.

The Targum has, "And the teachers shall fear the name." That is, יהוה Yehovah.

The French Bible is very strange: -

Car ton nom volt comme il va de tout. "For thy name sees how every thing goes."

The word תושיה tushiyah, mentioned above, which occasions all the difficulty, has been read with an ע ain by the Vulgate and Septuagint, as coming from the root ישע yasha, to be saved; and it is very likely that this was the original reading. The two last letters in the word, יה, might have been easily mistaken in the MS. for the letter ע where I may suppose the word stood thus, תושע, shall be saved; and as several MSS. read יראי yirey, they who fear, instead of יראה yireh, he shall see, the whole clause might have been just what it appears in the Vulgate and Septuagint. It is also necessary to remark that the word in dispute has various forms in some MSS., which is a strong presumption against its authenticity. See Kennicott and De Rossi.

MICAH 6: 10 Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a short ephah that is accursed?

Verse 10

Are there yet the treasures of wickedness - Such as false balances and deceitful weights. See on Hos 12:7 (note). This shows that they were not Doing Justly. They did not give to each his due.

MICAH 6: 11 Shall I be pure with dishonest scales, and with a bag of deceitful weights?

MICAH 6: 12 Her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their speech.

Verse 12

For the rich men thereof are full of violence - This shows that they did not love mercy.

The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies - This shows that they did not humble themselves to walk with God.

MICAH 6: 13 Therefore I also have struck you with a grievous wound. I have made you desolate because of your sins.

Verse 13

Will I make thee sick in smiting thee - Perhaps better, "I also am weary with smiting thee, in making thee desolate for thy sins." They were corrected, but to no purpose; they had stroke upon stroke, but were not amended.

MICAH 6: 14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied. Your humiliation will be in your midst. You will store up, but not save; and that which you save I will give up to the sword.

Verse 14

Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied - All thy possessions are cursed, because of thy sins; and thou hast no real good in all thy enjoyments.

And thy casting down - For וישחך veyeshchacha, "thy casting down," Newcome, by transposing the ו and ש, reads וישחך veyechshach, "and it shall be dark;" and this is probably the true reading. The Arabic and Septuagint have read the same. "There shall be calamity in the midst of thee." It shall have its seat and throne among you.

MICAH 6: 15 You will sow, but won't reap. You will tread the olives, but won't anoint yourself with oil; and crush grapes, but won't drink the wine.

Verse 15

Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap - Thou shalt labor to amass property, but thou shalt not have God's blessing; and whatever thou collectest, thy enemies shall carry away. And at last carry thyself into captivity.

MICAH 6: 16 For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab. You walk in their counsels, that I may make you a ruin, and her inhabitants a hissing; And you will bear the reproach of my people."

Verse 16

The statutes of Omri are kept - Omri, king of Israel, the father of Ahab, was one of the worst kings the Israelites ever had; and Ahab followed in his wicked father's steps. The statutes of those kings were the very grossest idolatry. Jezebel, wife of the latter, and daughter of Ithobaal, king of Tyre, had no fellow on earth. From her Shakespeare seems to have drawn the character of Lady Macbeth; a woman, like her prototype, mixed up of tigress and fiend, without addition. Omri Ahab, and Jezebel, were the models followed by the Israelites in the days of this prophet.

The inhabitants thereof a hissing - לִשְׂרָקָה lishrekah, "for a shriek;" because those who should see them should be both astonished and affrighted at them.

There are few chapters in the prophets, or in the Bible, superior to this for genuine worth and importance. The structure is as elegant as it is impressive; and it is every way worthy of the Spirit of God.