

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH 6

This chapter contains reproofs of the people of Israel for their sins, threatening them with punishment for them. The prophet is bid to tell them of the controversy the Lord had with them, which he did, (³¹⁰Micah 6:1,2); and the Lord calls upon them to declare if they had any thing to object to his attitude towards them, (³¹⁰Micah 6:3); and then puts them in mind of the favours they had received from him, in bringing them out of Egypt, and giving them such useful persons to go before them, lead and instruct them, as he had, (³¹⁰Micah 6:4); and also reminds them of what passed between Balak, king of Moab, and Balaam the soothsayer; the questions of the one, and the answer of the other; whereby the designs of the former against them were frustrated, (³¹⁰Micah 6:5-8); but since the voice of the Lord by his prophet was disregarded by them, they are called upon to hearken to the voice of his rod, (³¹⁰Micah 6:9); which should be laid upon them for their fraudulent dealings, injustice, oppression, lies, and deceit, (³¹⁰Micah 6:10-12); and therefore are threatened with sickness and desolation, and a deprivation of all good things, the fruit of their labours, (³¹⁰Micah 6:13-15); and that because the statutes of Omri, the works of Ahab, and their counsels, were observed by them, (³¹⁰Micah 6:16).

Ver. 1. *Hear ye now what the Lord saith*, etc.] Here begins a new discourse, and with an address of the prophet to the people of Israel, to hear what the Lord had to say to them by way of reproof for their sins now, as they had heard before many great and precious promises concerning the Messiah, and the happiness of the church in future time; to hear what the Lord now said to them by the prophet, and what he said to the prophet himself, as follows:

arise; O Prophet Micah, and do thine office; sit not still, nor indulge to sloth and ease; show readiness, diligence, activity, zeal, and courage in my service, and in carrying a message from me to my people:

contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice; open the cause depending between me and my people; state the case between us

before the mountains and hills; and exert thyself, and lift up thy voice loudly, and with so much vehemence, that, if it was possible, the very mountains and hills might hear thee; the Lord hereby suggests that they would as soon hear as his people; thus upbraiding their stupidity, as he elsewhere does; (see ²⁰⁰²Isaiah 1:2 ²¹⁰²Jeremiah 2:12 ²²⁰²22:29). Kimchi and Ben Melech render it, to the mountains, which is much to the same sense with our version; call and summon them as witnesses in this cause; let the pleadings be made before them, and let them be judges in this matter; as they might be both for God, and against his people: the mountains and hills clothed with grass, and covered with flocks and herds; or set with all manner of fruit trees, vines, olives, and figs; or adorned with goodly cedars, oaks, and elms; were witnesses of the goodness of God unto them, and the same could testify against them; and, had they mouths to speak, could declare the abominations committed on them; how upon every high mountain and hill, and under every green tree, they had been guilty of idolatry. The Targum, and many versions^{f184}, render it, “with the mountains”; and the Vulgate Latin version, and others, “against the mountains”^{f185}; the inhabitants of Judea, that being a mountainous country, especially some parts of it. Some by “mountains” understand the great men of the land, king, princes, nobles; and, by “hills”, lesser magistrates, with whom the Lord’s controversy chiefly was; they not discharging their offices aright, nor setting good examples to the people. Some copies of the Targum, as the king of Spain’s Bible, paraphrase it,

“judge or contend with the fathers, and let the mothers hear thy voice;”

which Kimchi thus explains, as if it was said, let the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, hear what their children hath rendered to the Lord; let them be, as it were, called out of their graves to hear the ill requital made to the Lord for all his goodness.

Ver. 2. *Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth,* etc.] These are the words of the prophet, obeying the divine command, calling upon the mountains, which are the strong parts of the earth, and the bottoms of them the foundations of it, to hear the Lord’s controversy with his people, and judge between them; or, as some think, these are the persons with whom, and against whom, the

controversy was; the chief and principal men of the land, who were as pillars to the common people to support and uphold them:

for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel; his people Israel, who were so by choice, by covenant, by their own avouchment and profession: they had been guilty of many sins and transgressions against both tables of the law; and now the Lord had a controversy with them for them, and was determined to enter into judgment, and litigate the point with them; and dreadful it is when God brings in a charge, and pleads his own cause with sinful men; they are not able to contend with him, nor answer him for one of a thousand faults committed against him; (see ^{<200>}Hosea 4:1,2).

Ver. 3. *O my people*, etc.] These are the words of the Lord himself by the prophet, expressing his strong affection to the people of Israel, of which his goodness to them was a full proof, and this was an aggravation of their ingratitude to him; they were his people, whom he had chosen for himself above all people of the earth; whom he had redeemed from the house of bondage, had distinguished them by his layouts, and loaded them with his benefits, and yet they sinned against him:

what have I done unto thee? what evil things, what injuries to provoke to such usage? “what iniquity have you”, or “your fathers, found in me”, to treat me after this manner? have I been “a wilderness”, or “a land of darkness”, to you? (^{<205>}Jeremiah 2:5,31); have I withheld or denied you anything that was for your good? The Targum is,

“O my people, what good have I said I would do unto thee, and I have not done it?”

all that the Lord had promised he had performed; not one good thing had failed he had spoken of; how much good, and how many good things, had he done for them? nay, what good things were there he had not done for them? and what more could be done for them than what had been done? and yet they sinned against him so grossly; (see ^{<204>}Isaiah 5:4);

and wherein have I wearied thee? what heavy yoke have I put upon thee? what grievous commandments have I enjoined thee? is there anything in my service, any duty, too hard, severe, or unreasonable? are the sacrifices required burdensome? “have I caused thee to serve with an offering, and wearied thee with incense?” is there any just reason to say of these things, “what a weariness is it?” (see ^{<203>}Isaiah 43:23 ^{<3013>}Malachi 1:13);

testify against me; declare it publicly, if any good thing has been wanting, or any evil thing done: thus the Lord condescends to have the case fairly debated, and everything said that could be said in their favour, or against him: astonishing condescension and goodness!

Ver. 4. *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, etc.] Instead of doing them any wrong, he had done them much good; of which this is one instance, and he was able to produce more: this a notorious, plain, and full proof of his goodness to them, which could not be denied. It may be rendered, as it is by some, “surely I brought thee up”^{f186}, etc. this is a certain thing, well known, and cannot be disproved; it must be allowed to be a great favour and kindness to be brought up out of a superstitious, idolatrous, Heathenish people, enemies to God and true religion, and who had used them in a barbarous and cruel manner:

and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; or, “out of the house of bondage”; as the same words are rendered, (^{Exodus} Exodus 20:2); that is, out of hard service, in which their lives were made bitter; out of cruel bondage and slavery; which made them cry to the Lord for help and deliverance, and he heard them, and sent them a deliverer; by whose hand he redeemed them from this base and low estate in which they were, and for which they ought ever to have been thankful, and to have shown their gratitude by their cheerful and constant obedience. Some take “the house of servants” to be descriptive, not of the state of the children of Israel in Egypt, but of the character of the Egyptians themselves; who, being the posterity of Ham, were inheritors of his curse, that he should be a servant of servants; and so it is an aggravation of the blessing, that Israel were redeemed from being servants to the servants of servants. This sense is mentioned by Kimchi and Abarbinel:

and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; not to bring them the news of their deliverance out of Egypt, before they came out of it, as Kimchi; but to be their guides to conduct and direct them in all matters, civil and religious. Moses was their lawgiver, leader, and commander; Aaron was their priest to offer sacrifice for them, and to intercede on their behalf; and Miriam was a prophetess; and they were all very useful and beneficial to them; and a very great blessing it is to a people to have a good constitution, civil and ecclesiastic, and to have good magistrates, and good ministers of the word. The Targum is,

“I sent before thee three prophets, Moses to teach the tradition of the judgments, Aaron to make atonement for the people, and Miriam to instruct the women.”

Ver. 5. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted,* etc.] What a scheme he had laid; what contrivances he had formed; what consultations he had with a soothsayer or diviner he sent for to curse Israel; how he sought to get the God of Israel on his side, and to set him against them, that he might be rid of them, and they be ruined and destroyed. The Moabites were the descendants of Moab, a son of Lot, by one of his daughters; when they first set up their kingdom is not certain; nor who their kings in succession were before Balak: it appears there was a former king, whom the king of the Amorites fought with, and took away his land from him, (^{<0023>}Numbers 21:26); who probably was Zippor, the father of Balak, and whom he succeeded; the kingdom being recovered by him, or by this his son; however, he was on the throne when Israel was upon the borders of his kingdom, which threw him into a panic; upon which he sent messengers to a neighbouring magician next mentioned, to advise with him what to do in this his extremity; and the Jews have a tradition, that, because of the multitude of sacrifices he offered, he was worthy to have Ruth, the descendant from him; who, they say, was the daughter of Eglon, the grandson of Balak, king of Moab^{f187}:

and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; this man is called a soothsayer, (^{<0632>}Joshua 13:22); The Jews say he was first a prophet; and so the Apostle Peter calls him, (^{<0016>}2 Peter 2:16); and afterwards became a diviner^{f188}: they differ very much about him, who he was, and from whom he descended. Beor his father is sometimes said to be the son of Laban^{f189}; and, at other times, Balaam himself is said to be Laban the Syrian^{f190}, whose soul they suppose transmigrated into Balaam, as it afterwards did into Nabal, according to them. Some^{f191} take him to be the same with Elihu, who interposed in the dispute between Job and his friends; and others say that he was one of the eunuchs, counsellors, and magicians of Pharaoh, both when Moses was a child, and when he wrought his miracles in Egypt; and that Jannes and Jambres, of whom the Apostle Paul makes mention, (^{<0018>}2 Timothy 3:8); were his two sons^{f192}: he was an inhabitant of Pethor, which was situated on the river Euphrates, thought by Junius to be the Pacoria of Ptolemy: he seems to have been a Mesopotamian, though some say a Midianite; but, whether one or the other, he did not live at any great distance from the king of Moab: he was slain by the sword the

children of Israel, in the times of Joshua, (^{f193}Joshua 13:22); and, as the Jews say ^{f193} he was, when he was but thirty three or thirty four years of age; they observing upon it, that bloody and deceitful men do not live out, half their days; but this does not seem so well to agree with other things they say of him; however, this soothsayer and sorcerer Balak sent for to curse Israel; whose heart and tongue, though a wicked man, and would fain have done according to Balak's wish and desire, were so overruled by the power of God, that instead of cursing Israel he was obliged to bless them, and to prophesy of their future happiness and prosperity, and of the Messiah, that should spring from them; see history of all this in (^{f194}Numbers 22:1-24:25);

from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord; here something must be supplied to make sense of the words; either, “remember what good things I did for you” ^{f194}, from Shittim to Gilgal”; the former was the place where the children of Israel committed whoredom and idolatry, and was on the other side Jordan; and the latter was the place they came to when they had passed over Jordan, where the covenant of circumcision was renewed, and the first passover kept; now they are called upon to remember the goodness of God unto them from one place to another, and what were done between them; how that at Shittim, though they provoked the Lord to anger, yet he did not cut them all off, but spared a number of them, to enter and possess the land of Canaan; and though Moses died by the way, yet he raised up Joshua to go before them, and in a miraculous manner led them through the river Jordan, and brought them to Gilgal--favours ever to he had in remembrance. So the Targum,

“were not great things done for you in the plain of Shittim unto the house of Gilgal, that the righteousness of the Lord might be known?”

both his justice in punishing offenders at Shittim, and his bounty and kindness, as well as his truth and faithfulness, in sparing others; bestowing his favours on them, and bringing them into the promised land: or it may be supplied thus, as by some, “remember what Balak consulted” ^{f195} from Shittim to Gilgal”; that is, with Balaam, and what answer and advice he gave him; which was to send beautiful women among the Israelites, and so tempt them to adultery, and by that means to idolatry; and which scheme and consultation took place at Shittim, by means of which several thousands were slain; and the device was to have continued the temptation

even to Gilgal, which, had it not been prevented, in all likelihood would have issued in the destruction of that people; and therefore they had reason to know, own, and acknowledge the goodness and faithfulness of God unto them: or rather, taking the phrase “from Shittim to Gilgal” to be a proverbial one^{f196}, of going from place to place, it may have respect to Balak’s having Balaam from place to place, to take a view of the people, and curse them; or how he might set the God of Israel against them, and gain him over to him; and then the sense is this,

“remember how Balak consulted Balaam from place to place, and what answers he returned him; all which was done, that “he (Balak) might know the righteousness of the Lord”;

and so the Syriac version renders it, and it will bear to be so rendered: the thing which Balak chiefly consulted was, how he should get the God of Israel on his side; as it was usual with Heathen princes, when at war, to attempt to get the gods of their enemies from them, and on their side; and inquires of Balaam how this was to be effected; what righteousness it was the Lord required; what duties of religion to be performed; what rites or sacrifices were acceptable to him; and the sum of his questions on this head, and Balaam’s answer to them, are contained in the following verses.

Ver. 6. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord*, etc.] These are not the words of the people of Israel God had a controversy with, and now made sensible of their sin, and humbled for it; and willing to appease the Lord, and make it up with him at any rate; for there are such things proposed by them as do by no means suit with persons of such a character, nay, even suppose them to be hypocritical; and much less are they what were put into their mouths by the prophet to say, as some suggest; but they are the words of Balak king of Moab, which, and what follow, are questions he put to Balaam, who had told him that he could do nothing without the Lord, nor anything contrary to his word: now he asks what he must do to get the good will of this Lord; in what manner, and with what he must appear before him, serve and worship him, as the Targum; that so he might have an interest in him, and get him to speak a word to Balaam in his favour, and against Israel; (see ⁴⁰²¹⁸Numbers 22:8,18,38 ⁴⁰²¹²23:12,15,26);

[and] bow myself before the high God? the most high God, the God of gods, whose Shechinah or Majesty is in the high heavens, as the Targum: his meaning is, with what he should come, or bring with him, when he paid

his homage and obeisance to him, by bowing his body or his knee before him; being willing to do it in the most acceptable manner he could:

shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? such as he had been used to offer on the high places of Baal to that deity. Sacrifices of this kind prevailed among the Heathens, which they had received by tradition from the times of Adam and Noah; (see ^{<0214>}Numbers 22:41).

Ver. 7. *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,* etc.] If single burnt offerings of bullocks and heifers will not do, will rams, and thousands of them, be acceptable to him? if they will, they are at his service, even as many as he pleases; such creatures, as well as oxen, were offered by Balak, (^{<0231>}Numbers 23:1,2,4,29,30);

[or] with ten thousands of rivers of oil? for meat offerings, as Jarchi, in which oil was used: this is a hyperbolical expression, as Kimchi rightly observes; suggesting that he was willing to be at any expenses, even the most extravagant, if he could but gain his point, and get the God of Israel on his side. Some render it, “ten thousands of fat valleys”^{f197}; abounding with corn, and wine, and oil; the produce of which, had he so many, he could freely part with, could he but obtain his end; (see ^{<1817>}Job 20:17);

shall I give my firstborn [for] my transgression, the fruit of my body [for] the sin of my soul? his Son, his firstborn, his own flesh and blood, to make atonement for his sins and transgressions; this betrays the person speaking. The people of Israel, though they were sometimes guilty of this horrid, unnatural, and abominable sin, in the height of their degeneracy and apostasy, as to sacrifice their children to Moloch; yet when convinced of their sins, and humbling themselves before God for them, even though but in a hypocritical way, could never be so weak and foolish, so impious and audacious, as to propose that to God, which they knew was so contrary to his will, and so abominable in his sight, (^{<1812>}Leviticus 18:21); but this comes well enough from a Heathen prince, with whom it was the, height of his devotion and religion, and the greatest sacrifice he thought he could offer up to God; for there is a climax, a gradation in the words from lesser things to greater; and this is the greatest of all, and what was done among the Heathens, (^{<2171>}2 Kings 17:31); and was afterwards done by a king of Moab, (^{<1171>}2 Kings 3:26,27).

Ver. 8. *He hath showed me, O man, what [is] good,* etc.] This is not the answer of the prophet to the body of the people, or to any and every one of the people of Israel; but of Balaam to Balak, a single man, that consulted with him, and put questions to him; particularly what he should do to please the Lord, and what righteousness he required of him, that would be acceptable to him; and though he was a king, he was but a man, and he would have him know it that he was no more, and as such addresses him; and especially when he is informing him of his duty to God; which lay not in such things as he had proposed, but in doing that which was good, and avoiding that which was evil, in a moral sense: and this the Lord had shown him by the light of nature; which is no other than the work of the law of God written in the hearts of the Heathens, by which they are directed to do the good commanded in the law, and to shun the evil forbidden by it; (see ^{<4124>}Romans 2:14,15);

and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly; or “judgment”^{f198}; to exercise public judgment and justice, as a king, among his subjects; to do private and personal justice between man and man; to hurt no man’s person, property, and character; to give to everyone their due, and do as he would desire to be done by; which as it is agreeable to the law of God, so to the light of nature, and what is shown, required, and taught by it:

and to love mercy; not only to show mercy to miserable objects, to persons in distress; to relieve the poor and indigent; to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry; but to delight in such exercises; and which a king especially should do, whose throne is established by mercy, and who is able, and should be munificent; and some Heathen princes, by their liberality, have gained the name of benefactors, “Euergetes”, as one of the Ptolemies did; (see ^{<4225>}Luke 22:25); such advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, a Heathen prince, as agreeable to the light of nature; (see ^{<4007>}Daniel 4:27);

and to walk humbly with thy God? his Creator and Benefactor, from whom he had his being, and all the blessings of life, and was dependent upon him; and therefore, as a creature, should behave with humility towards his Creator, acknowledging his distance from him, and the obligations he lay under to him; and even though a king, yet his God and Creator was above him, King of kings, and Lord of lords, to whom he owed his crown, sceptre, and kingdom, and was accountable to him for all his administrations: and this “walking humbly” is opposed to “walking in pride”, which kings are apt to do; but God can humble them, and bring

them low, as Heathen kings have been obliged to own; (see ^{<1721>}Daniel 2:21 ^{<1787>}4:37).

Ver. 9. *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city*, etc.] The Lord having bid his prophet call to the mountains and hills to hear his voice, and the prophet having obeyed his will, and the Lord having by him addressed his people Israel, and expostulated with them about their ingratitude, observing to them many instances of his goodness; here informs them, that this voice of his, whether in his prophet, or in his judgments, was directed to the city, either Samaria or Jerusalem, or both, and even to all the cities of Israel and Judah, the singular being put for the plural; that is, to the inhabitants of them. Cities being populous, and where persons of the highest rank and figure, as well as of the best sense, dwell, and generally very wicked, though favoured with greater advantages; all which are reasons why the voice of the Lord, in his word and providences, particularly cries to them to repent of their sins, and reform from them, as might be expected from such persons; and so doing would set a good example to those who live in the country. Some render it, “the Lord's voice crieth to awake”^{f199}; or to “stir up”; it calls upon men asleep to awake out of sleep; to arouse from their carnal security; to attend to their sins, their danger, and their duty; to repent of their sins, and so avoid the danger they were in through them, and perform their duty they had such a voice as this, see in (^{<1854>}Ephesians 5:14); this reading of the words is mentioned by Kimchi;

and [the man of] wisdom shall see thy name; not the mere natural man, or who is possessed only of natural wisdom, though he may have ever so great a share of it; for as he sees not the things of the Spirit of God, the things of the Gospel, so neither the name and perfections of God in his judgments on the earth; much less the man that is wise to do evil, full of wicked subtlety, and makes a jest of everything religious and serious; nor such as are wise in their own opinion, or have only a superficial share of wisdom; but such who have a share of solid and substantial wisdom, a man of “substance”, as the word^{f200} sometimes signifies; (see ^{<1821>}Proverbs 8:21); such who have true wisdom in the hidden part, that which comes from above, and is pure and peaceable, and makes men wise to salvation; such men see and discern the power and providence of God in all the judgments that are in the earth; his attributes and perfections; his severity on some, and goodness to others; his sparing grace and mercy, and his special lovingkindness, and even all his perfections, for he is known to such by the judgments he executeth; (see ^{<1816>}Psalm 9:16 ^{<1873>}107:43); and such, “fear”

his “name” also, as some render the words^{f201}; they not only fear the Lord and his goodness, but have an awful sense of his judgments, and tremble at them. Some read the words, “thy name sees that which is”^{f202}; so the margin of our Bibles; that is, the Lord seeth that which is done in the city, though ever so secret and private, and therefore his voice cries to it;

hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it; these are the words of the man of wisdom, as Kimchi observes; who, seeing the name and perfections of God in his judgments on the earth, upon others, and exhorts them to hear the voice rod, of the rod of correction and affliction, the rod of judgment and vengeance, as held in the hand of God, and shook over a city or nation; which has a voice in it to men, reproving them for their sins; commanding them to return from them; calling them to repentance and humiliation; teaching and instructing them in their duty; and giving cautions and warnings to others, lest the like should befall them; and this is the voice that is to be attended to: audit should be considered, that there is no affliction, calamity, or judgment, but is appointed by the Lord, the kind and nature, measure and duration, of it; what its end, issue, and use; and he that has appointed it is all wise and all knowing, unchangeable and invariable, all powerful, and able to put his purposes and decrees into execution; nor can they be frustrated. The Targum of the whole is,

“with the voice the prophets of the Lord Cry to the city; and teachers fear the name (of the Lord); hear, O king and rulers, and the rest of the people of the land.”

Ver. 10. *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness the house of the wicked?* etc.] There are; they continue there. This is the voice of the Lord by the prophet, and the language of the rod of correction to be heard, exposing the sins of the people, for which the Lord had a controversy with them; particularly their mammon of unrighteousness, the vast wealth, riches, and treasures, collected together by very wicked and unlawful ways and means; and which, instead of restoring them to the persons they had defrauded of them, they retained them in their houses, notwithstanding the reproofs of the prophets, and the corrections of the Almighty. Some render it, “is there not fire?” etc.^{f203}; that is, in the house of the wicked, because of the treasures of wickedness, that which consumes them; but Gussetius^{f204} interprets it of fornications and adulteries. Others render it, “is there yet a man?” etc.^{f205}; an honourable man, as Aben Ezra, who continues in his iniquity, after the Lord’s voice cries to the city; but Abendana interprets it

of the prophet himself, continuing to reprove the wicked for their treasures of wickedness, and their other sins;

and the scant measure [that is] abominable? or “the ephah of leanness provoking to wrath”^{f206}; that is, a deficient measure, less than it should be; the “ephah” was a dry measure, and it was made small, as in (^{<308F>}Amos 8:5); and held less than it should; and this brought leanness and poverty upon those to whom they sold by it, as well as ruin upon themselves in the issue; for such practices as they were abominable and detestable to God; they stirred up his wrath, and brought destruction on those that used them. The Targum is,

“false measures that bring a curse.”

Ver. 11. *Shall I count [them] pure with the wicked balances,* etc.] These are the words either of the prophet, or rather of God, signifying that he could not, and would not, allow, countenance, and approve of persons that used false scales or balances; or justify and reckon them just, as they would be thought to be, but condemn them, and pronounce them very wicked men, and deserving of punishment here and hereafter:

and with the bag of deceitful weights? or “stones”^{f207}; which were used in weighing goods, and which were deceitful, when a heavier was used in buying, and a lighter in selling. So the Targum,

“and with the bag, in which are weights greater and lesser;”

condemned in (^{<325I>}Deuteronomy 25:13,14).

Ver. 12. *For the rich men thereof are full of violence,* etc.] That is, the rich men of the city, to whom the voice of the Lord cried, (^{<308D>}Micah 6:9). Jerusalem or Samaria, or any or all the cities of Israel and Judah; the rich men of these cities, who had enough of the world, and were under no temptation to do an ill thing, to get money; and yet their hands and their houses, and their treasuries, as the Targum, were full of goods gotten by violent measures, by the oppression of the poor and needy:

and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies; the rest of the inhabitants, who were not so rich as others, and who had it not in the power of their hands to oppress as others had; yet used deceitful and fraudulent methods to cheat their neighbours in buying and selling; and, to do this, did not stick to tell downright deliberate lies:

and their tongue [is] deceitful in their mouth; say one thing, and mean another; deceive their neighbours with their tongues in trade and commerce; averting things for truth they know to be false.

Ver. 13. *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee*, etc.] With the rod to be heard, (³⁰⁸⁹Micah 6:9); by sending among them some of his sore judgments, as famine, pestilence, the sword of the enemy, internal wars, and the like; which should cause their kingdom, and state, and families, to decline and waste away, as a sickly and diseased body. So the Targum,

“and I brought upon thee illness and a stroke.”

The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “and I began to smite thee”; as by Hazael, king of Syria, and Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, who had carried part of them captive;

in making [thee] desolate because of thy sins; went on, not only to make them sick, and bring them into a declining state, but into utter desolation; as by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who carried Israel captive; and by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who led Judah captive, because of their sins of idolatry, injustice, and oppression, with others that abounded among them.

Ver. 14. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied*, etc.] Either not having enough to eat, for the refreshing and satisfying of nature; or else a blessing being withheld from food, though eaten, and so not nourishing; or a voracious and insatiable appetite being given as a curse; the first sense seems best:

and thy casting down [shall be] in the midst of thee; meaning they should be humbled and brought down, either by civil discords and wars among themselves, or through the enemy being suffered to come into the midst of their country, and make havoc there; which would be as a sickness and disease in their bowels. So the Targum,

“thou shalt have an illness in thy bowels.”

The Syriac version is,

“a dysentery shall be in thine intestines;”

a secret judgment wasting and destroying them;

and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and [that] which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword; the sense is, that they should take hold of their wives and children, and endeavour to save them from the sword of the enemy, and being carried captive: or should “remove” them^{f208}, as the word is sometimes used, in order to secure them from them; or should “overtake”^{f209}; the enemy, carrying them captive; but should not be able by either of these methods to save them from being destroyed, or carried away by them; and even such as they should preserve or rescue for a while, yet these should be given up to the sword of the enemy, the same or another. Aben Ezra and Kimchi interpret this of their women conceiving, and not bringing forth; and, if they should, yet what they brought forth should be slain by the sword^{f210}. But the Targum and Jarchi incline to the former sense.

Ver. 15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap*, etc.] Either that which is sown shall not spring up, but rot in the earth; or if it does spring up, and come to maturity, yet, before that, they should be removed into captivity, or slain by the sword, and their enemies should reap the increase of their land, their wheat and their grain:

thou shalt tread the olives; in the olive press, to get out the oil:

but thou shalt not anoint with oil; as at feasts for refreshment, and at baths for health, this becoming another’s property; or, it being a time of distress and mourning, would not be used, it being chiefly at festivals, and occasions of joy, that oil was used:

and sweet wine; that is, shalt tread the grapes in the winepress, to get out the sweet or new wine:

but shalt not drink wine; for, before it is fit to drink, the enemy would have it in his possession; (see ^{<ORIG>}Leviticus 26:16 ^{<RSV>}Deuteronomy 28:30); these are the punishments or corrections of the rod they are threatened with for their sins.

Ver. 16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept*, etc.] Who of a captain of the army was made king of Israel, and proved a wicked prince; he built Samaria, and set up idolatrous worship there, after the example of Jeroboam, in whose ways he walked, and, as it seems, established the same by laws and edicts; and which were everyone of them observed by the Israelites, in the times of the prophet, though at the distance of many years from the first making of them, which aggravated their sin; nor would it be

any excuse of them that what they practised was enjoined by royal authority, since it was contrary to the command of God; for the breach of which, and their observance of the statutes of such a wicked prince, they are threatened with the judgments of God; (see ~~11166~~ 1 Kings 16:16,24-26);

and all the works of the house of Ahab; who was the son of Omri, and introduced the worship of Baal, and added to the idolatry of the calves, which he and his family practised; and the same works were now done by the people of Israel:

and ye walk in their counsels; as they advised and directed the people to do in their days:

that I should make thee a desolation; the city of Samaria, the metropolis of Israel, or the whole land, which was made a desolation by Shalmaneser, an instrument in the hand of God; and this was not the intention and design of their walking in the counsels and after the example of their idolatrous kings, but the consequence and event of so doing:

and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; either of Samaria, or of all the land, who should become the scorn and derision of men, when brought to ruin for their sins:

therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people; that which was threatened in the law to the people of God, when disobedient to him; or shameful punishment for profaning the name and character of the people of God they bore; or for reproaching and ill using the poor among the people of God; and so it is directed to the rich men before spoken of, and signifies the shame and ignominy they should bear, by being carried captive into a foreign land for their sins.