

**Indictment
Conditions Required for Parole
Micah 6: 1 – 8**

Scripture quotations are taken from the following translations:

ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB),
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. www.Lockman.org**

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com> All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

The Good News Translation Bible (GNB) text used in this product is being used by permission. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version® Release 2.0. (ISV) Copyright © 1996–2011 by the ISV Foundation. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY

Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV), Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. All rights reserved

**Scripture taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).
Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.**

We wrapped up the second of three messages from Micah last time we were together, now we have arrived at the third message Micah has from the Lord for the people of Israel and Judah. It isn't good news either.

We will discover an indictment, a warning, and an opportunity for unwarranted undeserved forgiveness and grace.

As with the other two messages, we witness here the same instructions to His people as before; to hear.

YAHWEH proceeds in this third message “to point out the way to salvation, by showing that they bring punishment upon themselves by their ingratitude and resistance to the commandments of God, and that it is only through sincere repentance that they can participate in the promised covenant mercies.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 333)

Parole is available and possible, if one would only take advantage of the conditions.

Parole - Early release of a prisoner who is then subject to continued monitoring as well as compliance with certain terms and conditions for a specified period.

For Israel, repentance brings them back in to the covenant which they would still be required to follow. Thus, my use of the term parole.

As New Testament believers, we are not paroled, we are totally and completely forgiven because Jesus paid the price for us. He suffered the penalty and because of that, we are free. All OT believers are also now free for the same reason, Jesus.

Micah 6:1–2

“Hear now what the LORD is saying, “Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice. Listen, you mountains, to the indictment by the LORD, And you enduring foundations of the earth, Because the LORD has a case against His people; And He will dispute with Israel.” (NASB 2020)

The case, YAHWEH vs Israel, begins. But at the beginning of the case, we are not told who exactly the defendant is. This keeps the audience listening to what is said because they want to know about this court case involving YAHWEH.

The covenant lawsuit followed cultural patterns of the court where witnesses were called, evidence was presented against the accused, a defense was given, and a verdict reached. (Smith 1994, 113)

As the people listen in to Micah, he clearly, as with the other two messages, issues the command to hear and that he is speaking on behalf of YAHWEH. This comes straight from the top; he has been to the divine council and some decisions have been made. As he starts though, he doesn't just yet identify the defendant.

The call to hear is to the entire planet since Micah does not limit this to only the Jewish people. The yet unknown defendant is invited to plead their defense.

The case is to be plead before the mountains and the hills. Could He be addressing the nations of the world? Possible. We may also want to think that the Lord is using personification here and that is indeed the case in verse 1. But in verse 2, a different figure of speech is used; Bullinger identifies this type of speech as apostrophe.

The figure is so called when the speaker turns away from the real auditory whom he is addressing, and speaks to an imaginary one. It is a sudden breaking off in the course of speech, diverting it to some new person or thing. (Bullinger 1898, 901)

That might indeed be the case, but it could also mean something else. When the Lord tells the defendant to plead your case in verse 1 or tells the mountains to listen in verse 2, who is He talking to? Could He also be addressing someone else?

The Bible contains a tradition of the Mountain as a holy place (see the terminology of the Holy Mountain for Jerusalem and Mt Zion) and the seat of hierophanies. Mountains are often considered more ancient than creation itself (Job 15:7; Prov 8:25); they will exist forever (Gen 49:26; Hab 3:6). Their sacrality and holiness can be explained on the basis of a widespread symbolism, also known outside the borders of the ancient Near Eastern religious traditions. (Pardee and Xella 1999, 605)

“Deities are associated with mountains (e.g., Baal [Baalzephon] with Mount Zaphon or Mount Casius in Phoenicia [see Ps. 48:2]; Yahweh with Horeb [see Exod. 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; etc.] or Sion [Pss. 2:6; 48:3; 99:9; Isa. 11:9; etc.]). Moreover, mountains are an important symbol in the political religions of the eastern Mediterranean as sites of political-religious temples. Consider the temples in Babylon, Delphi, Gerizim, and Zion. Indeed, in the Hebrew language the same word (hêkāl) means both temple and palace. Similarly, mountains distant from inhabited areas are considered places of divine abode (e.g., Olympus, Zaphon, Sinai). Finally, these notions also attach to humanly constructed “mountains” with political-religion symbolism: ziggurats and pyramids.” (Pilch 2012, 16)

In other words, the Lord may be encouraging the defendant(s) to plead their case to their false gods since they believe that those gods can do something to help them. That is possible and would be consistent with the worldview of the area and the time.

People in the ancient Near East thought of mountains as divine abodes because they were extremely remote. They rarely ascended mountains unless required by the grazing cycles of their livestock; hence, mountain dwellings allowed gods to remain separate from humanity. This perception was so widespread that people in areas without natural mountains (such as Mesopotamia or Egypt) created artificial ones. For example, in Mesopotamia, the human-made ziggurat was a mountain-temple where the gods met humanity. (Barry, et al. 2012, 2016)

The picture being drawn is that each nation of the world would have their own mountain as the home of their particular god or gods. When Micah relates YAHWEH saying to plead your case before the mountains, He is saying to plead your case before the nations of the planet and the gods who are associated with each of those nations. But here is the thing, by using this term, something else is potentially being asserted.

Some say it is simply poetic language.

It is preferable to view the literary associations with mountains in the OT as mythopoeic, as Israel's poets employ standardized images. They all agree that Yahweh is absolutely independent of and prior to creation, and that mountains are contingent on him. Though not thinking in categories of *creatio ex nihilo*, one psalmist speaks of the birth of mountains (Ps 90:2) in relationship to Yahweh's eternity (cf. Ps 65:6). (VanGemeren 2008, 481)

In other words, the false gods and the nations as represented by the mountains and hills, all owe their existence to YAHWEH, the one who is calling on the defendant to state their defense. God is the one who created everything, and He is saying to try telling your story to those who are subservient to Him. As if they could help. In the surrounding nations, it would be common for the mountains, as the abode of their god, to be invoked. They all believed their god resided on mountain at the center of the universe, where we have already been treated to the picture, by Micah, that the true cosmic mountain of the universe is Zion (Micah 4:1 – 2).

In the ancient world these primordial elements are not quite on an equal footing with other gods, but do form part of the fundamental cosmic framework. The rather standard list occurring in the Hittite treaties derives from cosmogonic tradition. Reconstructed from variants, it is: "All the former gods: Nara, Napshara, Minki, Ammunki, Tuhushi, Ammizzadu, Alalu, Anu, Antum, Apantum, Enlil, Ninlil, the mountains, the rivers, the springs, the great deep, heaven and earth, the winds, the clouds." (Hillers 1984, 77)

Also, a reference to mountains would be something that a Jew would be familiar with because of the activity seen in Genesis 6.

Genesis 6:1–4

"When the human race had spread all over the world, and daughters were being born, some of the heavenly beings saw that these young women were beautiful, so they took the ones they liked. Then the LORD said, "I will not allow people to live for ever; they are mortal. From now on they will live no longer than a hundred and twenty years." In those days, and even later, there were giants on the earth who were descendants of human women and the heavenly beings. They were the great heroes and famous men of long ago." (GNB)

This took place on Mount Hermon and describes "an episode from the time of Noah and the Flood when "angels" sinned. That sin, which precipitated the Flood, was sexual in nature; it is placed in the same category as the sin that prompted the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:1 – 11, Jude 7). (Heiser 2017, 14)

Again, fallen divine beings and false gods would be addressed. All these ideas would arise with the usage of the terms YAHWEH uses here. They are the ones doing the lying and misleading.

The forms of middle eastern jurisprudence are being carefully followed by YAHWEH. He has invited the gods of the nations but disses them without ever even having to invoke their names. These are the fallen divine beings who He created and condemned (Psalm 82). The defendant has been told to try pleading your case to those who have already demonstrated even the lack of ability to answer the charges made by YAHWEH against them (Isaiah 41:21 – 24). Mountains and hills.

YAHWEH announces who the charges are against, “His people.” More specifically, His dispute is with Israel.

Micah 6:2–3

“Listen, you mountains, to the indictment by the LORD, And you enduring foundations of the earth, Because the LORD has a case against His people; And He will dispute with Israel. “My people, what have I done to you, And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.”” (NASB 2020)

Now we understand why He says, “you mountains.” All of the appropriate legal formalities having been observed, Yahweh turns to the defendant, previously identified as Israel, and lays out a question containing the kernel of the charges against them.

YAHWEH is asking His people what has He done to break the covenant? This is a rhetorical question since He answers it Himself giving examples to how He has remained faithful while they have not. He expects an answer as verse 3 ends with the imperative, “Answer Me.”

The God of the universe is asking His own people what He has done to break the covenant and He commands them to answer, they either are unwilling to or incapable of providing that answer. The reason is simple, YAHWEH has never broken the covenant.

You hear the heart of God, His love for His people and His broken heart as He commands them to answer. The silence to this love is deafening. They are still His people, He said that when He asked, “My people.”

God outlines what He has done for them. Since they won’t tell Him what He has done, He does. He will perfect the case against them by demonstrating the lengths He has gone to showing them grace and upholding His end of the covenant.

Micah 6:4–5

“Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of slavery, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab planned And what Balaam son of Beor answered him, And what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

God is going to reference some events from Jewish history that all good Jews would know. The problem is, as New Testament believers, not all of us do. So, lets do a bit of digging to understand this.

God begins to explain how He exhibited His grace. Point one, Egypt and slavery, remember that?

- I brought you out of Egypt
- I redeemed you
- I gave you leadership to bring you out of Egypt and slavery
- Moses – friend of God, prophet
- Aaron – high priest, prophet
- Miriam – prophetess

That we get. Plagues, Passover, Red Sea crossing, Mount Sinai. Got it.

The word used for redeemed is “pdh (“redeem”) signifies “to ransom,” that is, to transfer or free someone from another’s ownership through the payment of a price. In the legal sphere, especially in marriage laws, it pertains to transferring a slave (woman) from one master to another or to freedom (cf. Exod 21:7–11; Lev 19:20). In the cultic sphere it takes on the more technical meaning to redeem the firstborn of humans and animals by compensation. (Waltke 2007, 380)

Still, in that time period of being in the wilderness, there were some other events that took place after the high of the nation taking down Sihon and Og, the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan River.

- I protected you from misguided family members
- Balak wanted them cursed of God
- I protected you from false prophets
- Balaam – prophet for hire, employee of Balak, King of Moab (Numbers 22 – 24), author of the Baal Peor problem

So, what is it about this Balak guy? He was the King of Moab on the east side of the Jordan. He was family through Lot, in other words, the people of Moab are distant cousins. He was a bit concerned when 2 million Jews showed up on his front door after they defeated the Amorites, Sihon and Og. He needed help and went way out of his way to get it, the Euphrates River and a guy named Balaam.

Balak wanted Israel to be cursed which, according to his understanding, would then place God under the obligation to do what he (Balak) wanted and curse His own people. It didn’t quite work out that way for him.

He sent for Balaam. Balaam is supposed to be a prophet and connected with God. But after a confrontation with the Angel of the Lord and a long talk with his donkey, followed by a chat with the Angel of the Lord, we understand that Balaam isn’t as keyed into the supernatural world as his press releases would lead you to believe. After a heart to heart with his donkey, Balaam talks to the Angel of the Lord.

“The point of this whole story is that, in contrast to the important status of Balaam as a seer (see vv. Numbers 22:2–21), he is more blind to the presence of a messenger from Yahweh than his supposedly dumb beast. In his natural state (i.e., with “covered eyes”; see below on v. 31) Balaam was unaware of the reality of the spiritual world in spite of his professional reputation. This kind of statement would not be lost on an Israelite audience...” (Ashley 1993, 457)

Numbers 22:31

“Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face.” (NRSV)

Nahmanides wrote about this verse in his commentary on the whole affair. He tells us that Balaam is not much of a prophet. No where do we learn that he had the same calling on his life as a true prophet would have, and there was no notice of any job interview with the Divine Council either.

From this verse we learn that Balaam was not a prophet. Had he been a prophet, how could he possibly have needed to have his eyes “uncovered” in order to see the angel? This is the sort of expression the text reserves for those who have not attained prophecy—like Elisha’s servant or Hagar the Egyptian. (Nahmanides 2011, Nu 22:31)

The whole purpose of this encounter was to make certain that Balaam would not utter any curses at all, but only blessings.

Micah 6:5

“My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab planned And what Balaam son of Beor answered him, And what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

What Balak had planned for the Jewish people was curses. He wanted them damned, and he wanted it done in such a manner as God would be obligated to do it. He was trying to manipulate God. After multiple attempts to get Balaam to do this for him, Balaam gave him the bad news.

Numbers 23:8

“How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?” (NRSV)

What Balaam winds up explaining to Balak, who wanted curses and doom pronounced on the people was this. “I myself have no power. All I am capable of doing is to identify the moment when the Holy One Himself is angry. But He has not been angry the whole time since I arrived here.” (Nahmanides 2011, Nu 23:8)

The text here in Numbers does not tell us what Balaam did tell Balak, which would later cause some problems at Shittim, but we learn later in Numbers 31:16 that Balaam was the one who advised Balak how to have the curse of God fall on His people. You must get God angry with them, get them into a sin problem. Again, from Nahmanides.

“Rashi rightfully blames this event on Balaam. It was not that the Moabite women were promiscuous; their husbands, and the Moabite leaders, told them to do this, along with some of the elders of Midian as well, for the Midianites were involved in this “affair of Peor” (v. 18). Their intent was to seduce the Israelites into the worship of Baal-peor, so Balaam might very well have been involved. He was certainly their greatest counselor, and was intent on doing harm to Israel to the best of his ability, as we understand when we learn that God “refused to heed Balaam” (Deut. 23:5)—which is why he was killed.” (Nahmanides 2011, Nu 25:1)

Balak and Balaam though did not consider what God would do to those who were the instrument of making His people go into sin.

Mark 9:42

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.” (NKJV)

Numbers 31:7–9

“And they warred against the Midianites, just as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods.” (NKJV)

Balaam who had come to Midian from his home in Mesopotamia in order to receive his reward for his counsel not to fight Israel, but to tempt them to sin, instead of a reward, met with death at the hands of the Jews. (Ginzberg, Szold and Radin 2003, 795)

The final point from the Lord here in Micah - I cleansed the sin problem at Shittim and then led you into the promised land at Gilgal. Taken from operating in the flesh to operating in the spirit.

From Shittim to Gilgal was the last long leg of the journey from Egypt to the new land. Shittim is where they were encamped when the Balaam episode took place (Num 25:1; 33:49). Shittim was their last camp of the wilderness wandering. The speeches of Deuteronomy were given there. From there the spies were sent (Josh 2:1; 3:1), and Gilgal was the first camp in the Promised Land. (Anderson and Freedman 2008, 523)

Crossing the Jordan River is a picture of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Jewish nation were believers but were operating in the flesh and having a tough time of it in the wilderness. The Lord gave them a

taste of things to come with the victory over Og, but then crossing the Jordan changed all of that as they entered the land fully empowered and obedient, most of the time, to YAHWEH.

By referencing those two locations, the Lord is referencing the move from living by sight to living by faith and the need for the nation to once again go back to that level of faith. They need to remember what happened.

If only they would recall the preparation this all took. Prior to crossing the Jordan, how the people prepared and then, the test of faith. “How could mothers and babies, pregnant women and children, sheep and cattle cross the swollen, one-and-a-half-kilometre-wide river (for ‘the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest’, Joshua 3:15)? Yet they gathered in expectancy and faith. The crossing would need to be accomplished in the daylight hours of a single day. They did not know how it would be accomplished, but they knew that their God would not leave them stranded on the east side of the river. This was a massive act of faith in the face of impossible circumstances.” (Peckham 2007, 83)

How would you like to be the Priest at the front end of the Ark that morning? ½ mile out in front of everyone else, the enemy on the other side of the river, and it is in flood stage.

You get to walk into the water just as all your colleagues, but you are first, and you will go deeper than any of them will until the hand of God begins to roll the river back

How good would our faith be as the water rose higher and higher on us, and this is snow melt to boot. Cold water.

Just as God would push back the waters of the Jordan, the people would be pushing back the peoples they would be encountering in the land.

- This was to be a sign that they would indeed take the land.
- The water stopped and began to roll back.
- The water backed up to Adam about 18 miles upriver.
- It was dry all the way to the Dead Sea.
- All the various wadis running into the Jordan between Adam and the point of crossing also stopped.
- Now there is no impediment to the nation crossing over the Jordan.
- The nation is about ½ mile away and they can see the water reversing.

Now comes another step of faith for the Priests, they cannot move, they must remain stationary. For hours.

Meanwhile in Jericho where this can all be seen clearly from the wall one can only imagine the panic as this barrier to passage is removed and with a visible miracle.

Now, YAHWEH intentionally draws upon this event as an example of how He showed grace to His people.

Micah 6:5

“My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab planned And what Balaam son of Beor answered him, And what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

All of this took place so that they would know the righteous acts of the Lord. What righteous acts? In other words, everything from that point of making camp in Gilgal to where they are the day that Micah is talking to them falls under this. Everything that YAHWEH has done for them, corporately and individually.

If Israel could but realise and appreciate the extent of her obligation to Yahweh, she would surely gladly do his will. The “righteous deeds” are acts of Yahweh which reveal his just and righteous character to the world at large; cf. Ju. 5:11, 1 S. 12:7 ff. They are practically Israel’s God-given victories over her foes,

which vindicate Yahweh as the strength and stay of his own righteous people. (Powis Smith, Ward and Bewer 1911, 122)

When He says righteous הַיָּדָיִץ (sidqōt) acts, the people should remember things such as:

- Jericho (Joshua 6)
- The long day of Joshua (Joshua 10:12 – 14)
- Deborah (Judges 5)
- Gideon (Judges 6 – 8)
- Samson (Judges 13 – 16)
- Samuel (1 Samuel)
- David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17)
- And on and on and on

He calls his acts “righteous” (“saving”) in the sense that he did what was right; namely, he delivered Israel. Now he expects Israel to do what is right: to fulfill its covenant obligations. (Waltke 2007, 385)

Yet the sense is not only “triumphs,” (RSV at Judg 5:11), for the word also bears an ethical or forensic connotation. A הַיָּדָיִץ (sidqōt) is a righteous act. This carries us to the lawcourt scene, where the judge would pronounce one party “right,” (יָדַיִק) or where the party in the wrong might even admit that his adversary was right. (Hillers 1984, 78)

And with that, YAHWEH rests His case for now. It is time for the Jewish people to respond to the charges.

A major question is now before the court, one which Micah’s listeners would want to know the answer to. What can someone do who has blown it as badly as the nation of Israel has, to restore their relationship with God?

This is a question being asked constantly all around the world, not just in Israel. Israel’s response and the answer YAHWEH provides we all must take note of.

Micah 6:6

“With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?” (NASB 2020)

Phrased a different way, what can someone who is a sinner, do to come into a relationship with God? The indictment has been presented, and in great detail.

But the nature of the response shows a deep ignorance of just who God is and what it is He desires based on what the Torah teaches. They do not have a Biblical worldview.

“The people have nothing to say in rebuttal except to raise questions about how best to restore the fractured relation. “With what shall I come before the LORD?” This question before the litany of sacrifices resembles the Temple Entrance Liturgy where questions about proper entrance to the presence of Yhwh are raised (cf. Ps 15; 24).” (Gignilliat 2019, 199)

The psalmist, David in this case, asked the same question.

Psalm 15:1–5

“Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD, and keep their promises even when it hurts. Those who lend

money without charging interest, and who cannot be bribed to lie about the innocent. Such people will stand firm forever.” (NLT)

When David asked the question, there was an anticipated response which showed exactly who could enter.

Those standards had not changed and were still applicable even as the response is provided to Micah. Here is the bad news, they are still applicable today.

We think that we are more enlightened today and as such we are above the backwards restrictions being applied here by YAHWEH. This is reflected today in our worldview. Do we follow what the Bible teaches, or do we follow what the world teaches. We truly believe we have advanced way beyond those backward 8th century BC folks Micah is writing to, right?

The Shift in Biblical Worldview Incidence			
		National Incidence of Adults	
Worldview Segment	Segment Description	2020	2023
Integrated Disciples	Possess a biblical worldview	6%	4%
Emergent Followers	Possess a significant portion of a biblical worldview, but not enough to qualify	25%	14%
World Citizens	Possess a worldview other than Biblical	69%	82%

Source: American Worldview Inventory, conducted in 2020 and 2023, by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. Each study is based on a national sample of 2,000 adults, interviewed by telephone and online in January.

(Barna 2023)

Percentage of U.S. Adults who Have a Biblical View of Each of the Seven Cornerstones		
Description of the Biblical Cornerstone	Percentage of U.S. adults:	
	Who have a Biblical view	Who do not have a Biblical view
Believing God is omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, and just, and is the Creator and eternal ruler of the world.	50%	50%
Realizing that all humans are not basically good; everyone, including you, is a sinner	27%	73%
Knowing Jesus Christ is the only means to salvation, through our confession of sin and reliance on His forgiveness	35%	65%
Believing the Bible to be the true, relevant, and reliable words of God that serve as a moral guide	46%	54%
Accepting the existence of absolute moral truth	25%	75%
Acknowledging your purpose in life: knowing, loving and serving with all your heart, soul, strength and mind	36%	64%
Understanding genuine success in life: consistent obedience to God	23%	77%

Source: American Worldview Inventory 2023; Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; N=2,000 adults, 18 or older; conducted January 2023.

(Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #2: Research Identifies the Best Starting Point for Developing a Biblical Worldview 2023)

Could it be, then, that we are now in the time of the final apostasy, a time of which both Jesus and Paul spoke? Could this be the final falling away? Personally, I do not believe that we are in that final time of apostasy. But without question I can say that this is the most significant falling away I have ever witnessed, and numerous factors are contributing to this current crisis of faith. (Brown 2023, 16)

In other words, the response of Israel to the indictment of the Lord is one we need to take note of today as we too find ourselves living in a culture that has turned away from the Lord to chase after many of the same things that were being chased after in the 8th century BC.

Since we too are truly ignorant of the Bible and just who God really is, then we would also have a tendency to ask questions that reveal just how much we know and could also reveal the true condition of our heart as well.

It was very revealing for Israel.

These people had broken the covenant so many times, and so thoroughly, that they had no clue what Yahweh required of them. They are scrambling in their efforts to find an appropriate sacrifice or offering in attempts to pacify Yahweh. These attempts showed their neglect and ignorance of the covenant, for the covenant spells out what offerings are acceptable to Yahweh. (Hoyt 2018, 762)

What is being asked here is a simple question, just how much sacrifice do I have to do to get a pass?

This is not a question from someone who is desiring to be obedient, this is coming from someone with very little knowledge who wants fire insurance.

Do I need to come with burnt offerings and yearling calves? Will that do it for me? If I bow down before the Lord and then make those sacrifices, is that good enough?

This general question, whose meaning and efficacy are apparently not entirely self-evident to the speaker, is immediately followed by a refinement. "Calves one year old," because of their tenderness, are a favored delicacy; in connection with burnt offerings, the expression occurs elsewhere only in Lev. 9:3. According to Lev. 22:27, calves are acceptable as sacrificial animals from their eighth day on (as are lambs and kids). Apparently v. 6b presents a first heightening in the quality of the offering. What is of course naturally presupposed here is a consciousness of guilt (cf. v. 7b) and a desire for atonement (cf. Num. 15:22–26; Judg. 20:26; 21:2–4; Job 1:5). (Wolff 1990, 178)

The expectation of guilt and a desire for forgiveness are assumed, but I don't think this is reflective of the questions being asked. I think the questioners simply want to do the minimum. What do I have to do to get out of trouble again this time? What is the minimum I need to do to get my pass?

Today the question would be more along the lines of "what do I need to do to be saved."

The answer to that question – nothing. Just believe.

Romans 3:21–24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be

disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

For Micah though, remember he is talking to the idol worshipping folks in Israel, the absurd nature of this line of questioning gets expanded on in the next verse.

This type of discussion reminds me of a **non-biblical doctrine** we see in a certain denomination. There, sin is redefined, non-biblically, into two types of sin with similar thinking as Micah is dealing with.

Mortal vs Venial Sin

The Church of Rome distinguishes between mortal sin and venial sin. Mortal sin is said to be any great offence against the law of God or of the church, and is so named because it is considered to be deadly to the soul, leading to eternal hell. According to Rome, it may be pardoned upon confession, though an indefinite amount of punishment in purgatory is needed to expiate it. Thus, to die in mortal sin is to go straight to hell, where no alleviation of suffering can be obtained through prayers and masses. The soul dying in mortal sin is deprived of all sanctifying grace and is irremediably lost. But those guilty of mortal sin can have pardon if in life they confess it and obtain absolution from a priest. In this way, and by the grace inherent in the sacraments of baptism and penance (see Opus Operatum), the eternal punishment due to mortal sin is cancelled. The temporal punishment of purgatory remains, though this may be reduced in duration by penance, paying for masses, almsgiving, indulgence, etc.

Venial sin is said to be a small and pardonable offence against God or our neighbour. Being slight sins, venial sins may be expiated by good works, prayer, extreme unction, and the sufferings of purgatory.

*Needless to say, the whole elaborate distinction between mortal and venial sins, with its attendant fallacies of auricular confessions, human merit, priestly pardons, and purgatorial expiation, **is without any foundation in Scripture.** (Cairns 2002, 291)*

For Micah though, the questioning gets crazy. Once again, we see the basic “what do I have to do to get out of jail free” questions.

Micah 6:6–7

“With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? Does the LORD take pleasure in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give Him my firstborn for my wrongdoings, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (NASB 2020)

Am I thinking wrong here? Is a basic sacrifice not enough, do I need to do thousands instead? How much is enough?

Is this going to cost me thousands of rams and thousands of gallons of oil? How much is enough to satisfy God?

Nevertheless, in the consciousness that these sacrifices might not be sufficient, the people would offer the dearest thing of all, viz., the first-born son, as an expiation for their sin. This offer is founded, no doubt, upon the true idea that sacrifice shadows forth the self-surrender of man to God, and that an animal is not a sufficient substitute for a man; but this true idea was not realized by literal (bodily) human sacrifices: on the contrary, it was turned into an ungodly abomination, because the surrender which God desires is that

of the spirit, not of the flesh. Israel could and should have learned this, not only from the sacrifice of Isaac required by God (Gen. 22), but also from the law concerning the consecration or sanctification of the firstborn (Ex. 13:12, 13). Hence this offer of the nation shows that it has no true knowledge of the will of its God, that it is still entangled in the heathen delusion, that the wrath of God can be expiated by human sacrifices (cf. 2 Kings 3:27; 16:3). (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 335-336)

Micah 6:7b “Shall I give Him my firstborn for my wrongdoings, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (NASB 2020)

God never required human sacrifice, but Baal did, so did Molech.

They are still not getting it, and if we think about it, we struggle with this at times as well.

As believers we sin from time to time. It is a hazard of life on earth and still being in the process of being sanctified. Just like all salvation requires is belief, not the doing of anything. For us as believers, forgiveness is just as simple.

1 John 1:9

“But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Whatever we think we need to do to ensure reconciliation with God, unless we are following what the scriptures tell us, will never be enough.

Praise the Lord Jesus took care of this for us on the cross.

Micah lays out what is required.

Micah 6:8

“He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” (NASB 2020)

All the crazy things the folks in Israel thought they would need to do to obtain reconciliation with God, are simply not required. Everything is boiled down to just three things.

These are the three things that God requires: (1) You are “to do justly”—that is, you must have a righteousness to present to God, you must be a righteous person. You are to be just in your dealings with your fellow man; you are to be honest and true. (2) You are “to love mercy.” You are not only to love the mercy of God but also to be merciful in your own dealings with others. And (3) you are “to walk humbly with thy God.” (McGee 1997, 798)

I cannot do these, but God can.

These three requirements are only possible in the life of someone who has become a believer. More on that next time.

For homework, read Galatians 5:22 – 26.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Francis I., and David Noel Freedman. 2008. *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Yale Bible*. Vol. 24E. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ashley, Timothy R. 1993. *The Book of Numbers, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Barna, George. 2023. *American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #1: Incidence of Biblical Worldview Shows Significant Change Since the Start of the Pandemic*. Cultural Research Center. February 28. Accessed March 14, 2023. https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CRC_AWVI2023_Release1.pdf.
- . 2023. *American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #2: Research Identifies the Best Starting Point for Developing a Biblical Worldview*. Cultural Research Center. March 14. Accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CRC-Release-2nd-2023-Final.pdf>.
- Barry, John D., David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Miles Custis, Michael R. Grigoni, Michael S. Heiser, Douglas Mangum, Elliot Ritzema, and Matthew M. Whitehead. 2012, 2016. *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Brown, Michael L. 2023. *Why So Many Christians Have Left The Faith: Responding to the Deconstructionist Movement With Unshakable, Timeless Truth*. Kindle Edition. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House.
- Bullinger, Ethelbert William. 1898. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Cairns, Alan. 2002. *Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Belfast: Ambassador Emerald International.
- Gignilliat, Mark S. 2019. *Micah: An International Theological Commentary, The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments*. Edited by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. London: T&T Clark.
- Ginzberg, Louis, Henrietta Szold, and Paul Radin. 2003. *Legends of the Jews*. 2nd Edition. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society.
- Heiser, Michael S. 2017. *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, The Watchers & The Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Hillers, Delbert R. 1984. *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah, Hermeneia-a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Edited by Paul D. Hanson and Loren R. Fisher. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- Hoyt, JoAnna M. 2018. *Amos, Jonah, & Micah, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. 1996. *Micah*. Vol. 10, in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, translated by James Martin. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- McGee, J. Vernon. 1997. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Electronic Edition. Vol. 3. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Nahmanides. 2011. In *Numbers: Introduction and Commentary, The Commentators' Bible*, edited by Michael Carasik, translated by Michael Carasik. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society.

- Pardee, D., and P. Xella. 1999. "Mountains-And-Valleys." In *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill.
- Peckham, Colin N. 2007. *Joshua: A Devotional Commentary, Exploring the Bible Commentary*. Leominster: Day One Publications.
- Pilch, John J. 2012. *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Powis Smith, J. M., William Hayes Ward, and Julius August Bewer. 1911. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel, International Critical Commentary*. New York, NY: Scribner's Sons.
- Smith, Gary V. 1994. *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.
- VanGemeren, W. A. 2008. "Mountain Imagery." In *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, edited by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Waltke, Bruce K. 2007. *A Commentary on Micah*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Wolff, Hans Walter. 1990. *A Continental Commentary: Micah*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.