

## What God Requires in Micah

### Commentary for July 1, 2013 — It Is Justice, Mercy, and Humility

This month's article by Dr. Ernest L. Martin is "The Book of Micah." Read first the "[July 2013 Newsletter](#)." In Micah chapter 6:6-7 four rhetorical questions are asked of God.

**"Wherewith shall I come before YHWH, and bow myself before the high God?  
shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?"**

**Will YHWH be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"**

• **Micah 6:6-7**

In other words, the people of Jerusalem and Judah ask, what will satisfy God? YHWH answers through the prophet Micah in the next verse.

**"He has shewed you, O man [*adam* in Hebrew], what is good; and what does YHWH require of you, but**

[1] **to do justly [*mishpat*, justice], and**

[2] **to love mercy [*hesed*, kindness], and**

[3] **to walk humbly [*tsana*] with your God?"**

• **Micah 6:8**

This well-known passage in Micah answers the questions raised above, by an unnamed man. Note, the Hebrew word "*adam*" is used, and the "man" is the object of the information YHWH is giving. Therefore, although Judah and the city of Jerusalem are taught by Israel's negative example and God's punishment, there is still hope for them. If the leaders and people of Judah and Jerusalem learn to love justice, mercy, and humility (and act that way toward each other), then God will show justice, mercy, and humility to them.

[1] Besides Micah 6:8, four other instances of the root word *mishpat* occur in Micah:

**"And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and you princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know JUDGMENT [*mishpat*, honest justice]?"**

• **Micah 3:1**

**"But truly I am full of power by the spirit of YHWH, and of JUDGMENT [*mishpat*, honest justice], and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, you heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, [those] that abhor JUDGMENT [*mishpat*, honest justice], and pervert all equity."**

• **Micah 3:8-9**

**"I will bear the indignation of YHWH, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute JUDGMENT [*mishpat*, honest justice] for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."**

• **Micah 7:9**

[2] The instances of the root word *hesed*, kindness, occur twice after Micah 6:8:

**“Who is a God like unto you, that [1] pardons iniquity, and [2] passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? [3] he retains not his anger for ever [perpetually], **because [4] he delights in MERCY** [*hesed*, kindness].”**

• **Micah 7:18**

**“You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the MERCY** [*hesed*, kindness] **to Abraham, which you have sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”**

• **Micah 7:20**

**[3]** For the Hebrew word humbly or humility [*tsana*] there is only one other occurrence in the entire Bible. It occurs in Proverbs: **“When pride come, then come shame: but with the LOWLY** [from *tsana*, humble] **is wisdom”** (Proverbs 11:2).

The way of life God desires from His people was alluded to some 150 years after Micah, when the prophet Jeremiah gave God’s message about His expectations of Judah and Jerusalem:

**“Thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust you not in lying words, saying, The temple of YHWH, The temple of YHWH, The temple of YHWH, are these.**

**For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute JUDGMENT** [*mishpat*, honest justice] **between a man and his neighbor; If you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk** [same word as Micah 6:8] **after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever** [from the eon to the eon].”

• **Jeremiah 7:3–7**

Just as Micah 6:6–8 tells us, Jeremiah says the quantity of sacrifices was unimportant, and what occurs in the Temple is less important than how man treats his fellow man. Of course, the root words for mercy and judgment occur many times in the Old Testament, but they also occur in other instances of the Minor Prophets. They give a similar message:

**“For I desired MERCY** [*hesed*, kindness], **and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”**

• **Hosea 6:6**

**“Therefore turn you to your God: keep MERCY** [*hesed*, kindness] **and JUDGMENT** [*mishpat*, justice], **and wait on your God continually.”**

• **Hosea 12:6**

**“But let JUDGMENT** [*mishpat*, justice] **run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”**

• **Amos 5:24**

**“Seek you YHWH, all you meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment** [*mishpat*, justice]; **seek righteousness, seek meekness:** [if so] **it may be you shall be hid in the day of YHWH’s anger.”**

• **Zephaniah 2:3**

This all comes together in the extended passage by the apostle Paul in Romans 2:1–16. Paul seems to reference Micah 6:8 and the other Minor Prophets passages. Read the entire Romans passage and take note how it corresponds to the passages quoted above. Justice, mercy, and humility are what God requires for all people.

David Sielaff  
[david@askelm.com](mailto:david@askelm.com)