



OASIS: DONE IN SYNC WITH GLOBAL AWARENESS WEEK

The Passage – Micah 6:1-16

Preface: Welcome back to Oasis. As we move through Global Awareness Week, we are taking a break from the *En Christo* series and pausing to learn and discuss what we see the Lord doing right here in our midst, throughout Greater Boston and across the world. Let us use this time to further reflect on this year's theme of justice and compassion.

Study's BIG Idea: In Micah 6, we learn what God asks of us – justice, mercy, and humility.

Opening Question/Transition: Have you been able to speak with any of our GC Partners during Global Awareness Week or participate in any of the events? Please share some thoughts on GAW.

(During a recent Oasis class, the suggestion was raised that for groups who either know each other very well or have spent too much time in conversation before the study to skip the opening questions and “jump right in the text.” I thought it was a helpful piece of feedback to pass along.)

Micah 6:1-16 (NIV © 2011)

The LORD's Case Against Israel

6 Listen to what the LORD says:

“Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say.

²“Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.
For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.

³“My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.

⁴I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery.

I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

⁵My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered.

Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Israel's Guilt and Punishment

⁹Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom—“Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.

¹⁰Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah, which is accursed?

¹¹Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?

¹²Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.

¹³Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.

¹⁴You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty.

You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword.

¹⁵ You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.

¹⁶ You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house; you have followed their traditions.

Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.'

Historical Context: *Micah prophesied during the 8th Century B.C. during Israel and Judah's greatest economic affluence but also during its free-fall into spiritual poverty. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos and lived during the reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746) of Israel and Uzziah of Judah (783-742).*

O – How would you describe God's disposition towards Israel in vv. 1-5?

I – The word "burden" (*la'ah*, in Hebrew means "to be weary" or "to cause someone to become impatient") is used. While the term refers to why the people are feeling burdened, it's more appropriately describing God's weariness with Israel. It's a theological discussion on whether or not God can actually become "weary," as this may be a use of anthropomorphism (giving God human characteristics to communicate a point). If so, what is the benefit of God to communicating that He is "wearied" by Israel's behavior?

(God is attempting to communicate to Israel on a level they can relate on. This is among the reasons He uses prophets, as well.)

I – Vv. 4-6 chronicle Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and during their desert journey until Jericho. There are references to Balak, a pagan king of Moab who wanted to destroy Israel in its infancy, and to Balaam, who obeyed God in not participating in the attack (see also Num. 22 & later in 2 Pet. 2:15-16). The journey from Shittim to Gilgal (Josh. 3 & 4) forced them to cross the Jordan River and God's power was what allowed them to find safety from their enemies, settle, and eventually become a nation. Why remind them of all this, especially during a time of economic prosperity?

A – Do you think God could make a similar case against the Church today? If so, describe why. (If not, describe why as well.)

O – Micah is answering on Israel's behalf in vv. 6-8. What do you find interesting about the response? *(The use of a series of rhetorical questions that sets up what God actually desires. It's also interesting to see just how much is being offered in the rhetorical questions. 10,000 rams, 10,000 rivers of oil, and first-born children are obvious hyperboles in this context.)*

I – Each of the examples Micah uses are very valuable. Yearling calves were specifically cited on a number of occasions in Lev. 9:2-3 and Ex. 12:5 and seem to be regarded as among the best of sacrifices, since rams were desirable to ancient societies and oil was important to the "cereal offering" in Lev. 2:1-16. Then there is the mention of sacrificing the first-born which not only was a Canaanite practice but also carried out by Israelites on certain occasions (2 Kings 3:27, 16:3, Isa. 57:5). How should it communicate to us that such practices are **not** what God wants? *(Understanding what Micah is saying gives us a fuller and better picture of the character of God in the Old Testament. He is loving and compassionate, even when "wearied." He does not desire to bankrupt us in order to prove our worship nor does He desire that we execute our children to prove our devotion. Rather, He calls us to live in a manner that reflects His character, which we will see in the next section.)*

A – What are some of the ways in which we have tried to satisfy God and now realize it either was not enough or not what God desired?

O – This passage centers on v. 8 – “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” What do you appreciate about this maxim? Is there anything that causes you anxiety or makes you feel uncomfortable?

(What God wants is not transactional but relational. Even if one could give 10,000 rams, this would conclude the moment of worship at the point of offering. What God desires is a faithful and ongoing demonstration of justice and obedience to Himself and to others rooted in the virtues of compassion, love and humility.)

I – “Do justice” (*mispat*): the ethical response to God that has a manifestation in social concerns as well. What can we learn about the type of justice God desires and how it corresponds with worship?

(It’s essential to see that we not only worship God by walking humbly with Him but by living justly and serving one another. How does this connect with passages like Matthew 25:40 – “what you have done to the least of these, you have done also to me”? (Best to read more of the context for richer thought – Matt. 25:31-46.)

A – What can we as present-day believers gain from acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God? How could this change us as a community?

O – Vv. 9-12 finally reveal why God is exasperated with Israel. What is included in the list?

I – The “ephah” (v. 10) is based on a standardized measurement/weight of grain, thus the “short ephah” was a deceitful tactic to shortchange others (hence the dishonest scales reference in v. 11.). In v. 16, the statutes of Omri look back to a previous generation of Israel’s idolatry of Baal (I Kings 16:21-28). Ahab’s corrupt house follows Omri’s in I Kings. Note that Micah begins this section with the amazing workings of God, and concludes with the idolatry of men. What conclusions can we have here?

A – A previous question asked how God might be angry with us (as individuals and as a community) today. If you have already settled this question, the next step would be to determine what the root causes are for our entitlement, dishonesty, unhealthy desires for power, wealth, praise and general selfish behavior.

O – Describe God’s graphic and painful warning of Israel’s demise in vv. 13-16.

A – Present-day believers need to be very careful that we do not “copy and paste” God’s warnings to us, while also not dismissing what happens when God’s people fail to live in obedience. Therefore, what can we learn from them?

Key: O – Observation. I - Interpretation. A – Application

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.