

# Micah 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

## Analysis

**And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?** Micah directly confronts corrupt leadership with a devastating rhetorical question. The phrase **ראשי יעקב** (roshei Ya'akov, "heads of Jacob") and **קציני בית ישראל** (qetziney beit-Yisrael, "rulers of the house of Israel") addresses those with judicial and administrative authority. These leaders held positions requiring wisdom and justice (Exodus 18:21-22; Deuteronomy 1:13-17).

The question **הלוֹא לְכֶם לִדְעַת אֶת-הַמִּשְׁפָּט** (halo lakhem lada'at et-hamishpat, "Is it not for you to know judgment?") is bitterly ironic.  **mishpat** means judgment, justice, or righteous legal decision. These leaders should be experts in justice—it's their job description! The verb **יְדַע** (yada', "to know") implies intimate, experiential knowledge, not mere intellectual awareness. They should know justice so deeply it governs every decision.

Yet verses 2-3 reveal the shocking reality: they hate good and love evil, treating people like meat to be butchered. The question exposes their fundamental failure—those charged with administering justice have become its worst violators. This echoes Isaiah's condemnation: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). When guardians of justice become perpetrators of injustice, society collapses into predatory chaos.

## Historical Context

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Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (740-700 BC) when Judah's leadership class exploited the poor. The Mosaic law established clear standards for judges: impartiality, rejection of bribes, protection of vulnerable (Exodus 23:1-9; Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 24:17-22). But by Micah's era, these protections were systematically violated. Judges took bribes (Micah 3:11), rulers seized property (2:1-2), and religious leaders prophesied for profit (3:5-7). Amos and Isaiah contemporaneously denounced similar corruption (Amos 5:10-15; Isaiah 1:21-23). This corruption contributed to Judah's eventual exile—God judges nations that institutionalize injustice.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does leadership that hates good and loves evil corrupt an entire society?
2. What does it mean to truly 'know' justice—not merely intellectually but experientially and practically?
3. How should Christians respond when those charged with upholding justice become its chief violators?

## Interlinear Text

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וְלֹאמֶדֶת יְהוָה שְׁמָעוּ וְאֶת־  
And I said Hear H4994 I pray you O heads of Jacob and ye princes  
H559 H8085 H7218 H3290 H7101

אַתָּה לֹא יְדַעַת לְכָמֶבֶל וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
of the house of Israel H3808 H0 Is it not for you to know H853  
H1004 H3478 H3045

בְּמִשְׁפָט:

judgment

H4941

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 1:10** (Parallel theme): Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

**Hosea 5:1** (Judgment): Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

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