

Micah 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

Analysis

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. Micah resumes his indictment of corrupt leadership, repeating his opening summons (v. 1) with intensified charges. **רָאשֵׁי בֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְקִצְיֵי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** (roshei beit-Ya'akov u-qetziney beit-Yisrael, "heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel") again addresses civic leaders responsible for justice.

The accusation deepens: **הַמִּתְעַבִּים מִשְׁפָּט** (ha-meta'avim mishpat, "who abhor judgment"). **תֵּעֵב** (ta'av) means to abhor, detest, or regard as abominable—the same word used for God's abhorrence of idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:26). These leaders don't merely neglect justice; they hate it with visceral disgust. What should attract them (justice) repulses them. This is moral inversion at its worst—finding evil attractive and good repulsive (Isaiah 5:20; Romans 1:28-32).

וְעָקְשׁוּ כָּל-הַיֶּשְׁרָה יְעָקְשׁוּ (ve-et kol-ha-yesharah ye'aqqeshu, "and pervert all equity"). **יָשָׁר** (yashar) means straight, right, equitable. **עָקַשׁ** (aqash) means to twist, pervert, make crooked. They take what's straight (righteous laws) and twist it into crooked injustice. Every aspect of equity ("all") suffers perversion. This describes systematic corruption—not occasional lapses but institutional distortion of justice. Such leadership transforms society into predatory chaos where the strong devour the weak.

Historical Context

Micah 3:9-12 forms the climax of his judgment oracle against Jerusalem's leadership. The charge of perverting equity recalls the law's commands for righteous judgment (Exodus 23:6-8; Deuteronomy 16:19-20). By Micah's era, courts had become instruments of oppression rather than justice. Judges took bribes (v. 11), wealthy landowners seized property (2:1-2), and legal proceedings favored the powerful. A century later, Jeremiah cited Micah 3:12's prediction of Jerusalem's destruction (Jeremiah 26:18), demonstrating this prophecy's impact. The elders remembered Micah's warnings and how King Hezekiah had responded with repentance. Yet by Jeremiah's time, corruption had returned, leading ultimately to Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Perverting justice brings divine judgment—individually and nationally.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'abhor judgment'—how do leaders come to hate the very justice they should uphold?
2. How does systematic perversion of equity differ from occasional corruption—what makes it more dangerous?
3. What responsibility do Christians bear to confront leadership that perverts justice and equity?

Interlinear Text

שְׁמָעוּ	זֶה	אֶת	נְאֻמֵּי	בֵּית	יַעֲקֹב	וְקִצְיָנָיו
Hear	H4994	H2063	this I pray you ye heads	of the house	of Jacob	and princes
H8085			H7218	H1004	H3290	H7101
בֵּית	יִשְׂרָאֵל	הַמְתַּעֲבִים	מִשְׁפַּט	וְאֵת	כָּל	הַיֶּשֶׁבֶת
of the house	of Israel	that abhor	judgment	H853	H3605	all equity
H1004	H3478	H8581	H4941			H3477
יַעֲקֹבִישׁ:						
and pervert						
H6140						

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 1:23 (Judgment): Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Proverbs 17:15 (Parallel theme): He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

Deuteronomy 27:19 (Judgment): Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.