

Micah 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

Analysis

O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. God's covenant lawsuit (rib) shifts from accusation to heart-wrenching appeal. The vocative "O my people" (אַמִּים, ammi) emphasizes covenant relationship—not "you people" but "My people," possessive and intimate. Despite their rebellion, God claims them. The question "What have I done unto thee?" (מַה עֲשִׂיתִי לְךָ, meh-asiti lekha) challenges Israel to identify any divine injustice justifying their apostasy.

"Wherein have I wearied thee?" (בַּל אִתִּיב, u-mah hel'etikha) uses הַלְאָה (hel'ah), meaning to weary, exhaust, or burden. God asks if His covenant demands proved burdensome, justifying Israel's turning to other gods. The irony is devastating—they wearied God with sins (Isaiah 43:24) while claiming His law wearied them. God's requirements weren't oppressive; Israel's rebellion was self-inflicted.

"Testify against me" (עֲנוּ בַּי, aneh bi) invites Israel to present evidence of divine failure. It's rhetorical—God knows they have no legitimate grievance. Yet He graciously offers opportunity to voice complaints, demonstrating patience even in judgment. This divine pathos reveals God's heart: yearning for reconciliation, grieved by betrayal, yet committed to justice. Romans 2:4 echoes this: God's goodness leads to repentance, not presumption.

Historical Context

This rhetorical question pattern appears throughout Scripture when God confronts rebellious people (Jeremiah 2:5, 31; Isaiah 5:4). Ancient Near Eastern treaty forms included prologues recounting the suzerain's gracious acts toward vassals, establishing moral obligation. Micah 6:3-5 follows this pattern: God recounts redemption from Egypt, provision of leaders (Moses, Aaron, Miriam), and protection from Balaam's curse—demonstrating His covenant faithfulness.

Israel's ingratitude parallels the vine parable in Isaiah 5:1-7: God cultivated a vineyard expecting good grapes but received wild ones. After providing everything necessary for fruitfulness, He asks, "What more could have been done?" The answer: nothing. Israel's failure wasn't due to divine neglect but willful rebellion. The church fathers applied this to apostate Christianity: God gives grace, Scripture, sacraments, and church; rejection is without excuse (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's question "What have I done unto thee?" expose the irrationality of sin and the heart's deceitfulness?
2. What false burdens do modern Christians attribute to God's commands that actually result from our own disobedience?
3. How should God's patient invitation to "testify against me" shape our approach to difficult questions and doubts about His goodness?

Interlinear Text

וְתַּתְּעַמֵּל מָה עָמֵד
O my people H4100 what have I done H6213
H5971 H4100
בְּלֹאָת יְבָנְתָּה
unto thee and wherein have I wearied thee testify H0
H3811 H6030

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:5 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

Psalms 81:13 (Parallel theme): Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

Psalms 50:7 (Witness): Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

Jeremiah 2:31 (Parallel theme): O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

Romans 3:19 (Parallel theme): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Micah 6:5 (Parallel theme): O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.