

Micah 6:4-11 + 7:14-15

The Torah reading in Numbers starts off "These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses." And so this reading starts, "I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

Micah 6:4 - "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

The Numbers reading concerns the substitution of the Levites for the firstborn, and "redemption" money that recalled how the firstborn were spared in Egypt.

- **Numbers 3:49** - "And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites"

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam together, are Lawgiver, to deliver and instruct; Priest, to atone; and prophetess (**Exodus 15:20**) to praise God; and the name of Miriam at once recalled God's mighty works at the Red Sea and how she led the women in praise of God.

The Prophet Micah

Micah prophesied during the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah from approximately 737 to 696 BC in Judah. He foretells the captivity of the ten tribes thirty years before, and the coming of Sennacherib forty years before they came to pass. He also said that the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6**).

Micah 6:5 - "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."

Really referring to two different things:

NET - "My people, recall how King Balak of Moab planned to harm you, how Balaam son of Beor responded to him. Recall how you journeyed from Shittim to Gilgal, so you might acknowledge that the LORD has treated you fairly."

"righteousness" here equals "fairness" as in the NET. God could have abandoned them because of their sin, but instead he led them into the Promised Land. He can't be accused of unfairness toward His people.

Balaam

Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel. The Jews say Balaam was first a prophet, and so the Apostle Peter calls him (**2 Peter 2:16**), and that afterwards he fell into sorcery and became a diviner. He was killed by Israel when they invaded Canaan (**Joshua 13:22**).

The story is found in **Number 22-24**.

God caused Balaam to bless Israel instead, and to even make a prophesy about the Messiah. He mixed divination with belief in the true God, and made it all a venue for gain. He became a "prophet for hire." This is what he is condemned for in the New Testament:

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (**Revelation 2:14**)

Jude condemns false prophets who "have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit" (**Jude 1:11**).

Mixing

The "stumbling block" was the allure of Midianite women who, according to the Talmud, tricked Jewish men into worshipping idols by offering sex. The rabbis were as much concerned about the idolatry as the sex, apparently. They warned that the allure of the senses is a pathway that leads to idolatry. The real enemy was the idolatrous customs that go along with the "mixing" of Israel with other peoples. In the Old Testament, Israel was to be a fortress, keeping them separate from the other nations, until Messiah came. Then Jesus opened the community of faith to everyone. But even in the Old Testament there are continual hints toward that future openness as a "light to the Gentiles." This incident is not one of them.

See <https://thetorah.com/balaam-the-seducer-of-jews-and-an-early-christian-polemic/>

Numbers 31:15-16 - "And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."

"from Shittim" - Shittim or "Valley of Acacias" is in the plains of Moab, where the Children of Israel were encamped just before crossing the Jordan. This is where the incident with Balaam happened.

A plague on the men of Israel killed 24,000 of them (**Numbers 25**).

But "from Shittim to Gilgal" was also the journey of the Ark of the Covenant across the Jordan, which began in Shittim (**Joshua 3:1**) and ended in Gilgal (**4:19**).

A Different Subject - How to get back into God's Favor

Sacrifices are not what He wants:

Micah 6:7 - "Will the LORD 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?"

Another (oblique) Haftarah reference to the firstborn in Numbers 3

Micah 6:8 - "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

(Ultimately, Micah points to the Messiah, who would bring it all down to only one requirement - repentance.)

But they weren't even able to accomplish these three reduced requirements from the 613 commandments of the Law.

Instead they would be punished with the rod.

Micah 6:10 - "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?"

Rashi - Does the house of the wicked last long, [or do] the treasures of wickedness? And an ephah of leanness is condemned. A small measure with which your wealthy deceive the poor and bring them to leanness - that is condemned by the wrath of the Holy One, blessed be He.

The Haftarah ends on **verse 11**:

NET - "I do not condone the use of rigged scales, or a bag of deceptive weights."

"wicked balances and deceitful weights" - keeping a finger on the scales - figuratively, this is injustice on a mass scale, rigging the courts, "legally" stealing from the weak and vulnerable while maintaining a public semblance of uprightness and piety.

Also, remember this when we judge people according to our own standards - our scales are always skewed from the truth. Our opinions are always weighted toward ourselves.

Added to the end of the Haftarah is **Micah 7:14-15**:

Micah 7:14-15 - "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous things."

Another oblique reference to the Book of Numbers and "numbering" - the rod was used to count sheep. The Shepherd would cause the sheep to pass "under the rod" to be counted and examined. By submitting to God's authority we are being "fed."

It's not in the readings, but here's the end point, if we repent:

- **Micah 7:19** - "You will once again have mercy on us; you will conquer our evil deeds; you will hurl our sins into the depths of the sea."

He will conquer our evil deeds. Our own strivings will never get the job done. But we have to agree with what He's doing in us.