

## 5. Christian Responses to Common Justifications of Bribery

### 5.1 Bribery is Part of The Local Culture

A constant refrain heard in many countries is that bribery and corruption are simply part of the local culture, part of the business or political culture of the country. This reason is often provided in post-colonial nations, and western missionaries find it hard to counter such local justifications without appearing to, or being accused of, simply adopting a colonial mentality and forcing their western mindset on the local culture.

A weakness with the local culture justification of bribery is that it bases the morality (morality is understood in this paper as being God's revealed will for mankind) on cultural norms. Were the cultural argument to be accepted, it could be used to provide moral justification for slavery in the southern states of the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for female genital mutilation, and for the anti-semitism and resultant holocaust of Nazi Germany.

The strongest argument against the local culture justification is that almost every country on earth has criminal laws and statutes prohibiting bribery. There is no country on earth that has provided a legal justification for bribery, but almost every country on earth has passed legislation making bribery a criminal offence. As a result, it is rare, if impossible, to find autobiographies in which the authors boast of how much they have paid in bribes or taken in bribes, honours are not given out to the one who can collect the most bribes in a year, and those who give bribes never publicly announce their deed.

Even in countries that rank low in the international corruption ratings of agencies such as Transparency International have laws against bribery. For instance, in Lebanon (which by most international standards is a relatively corrupt operating environment), bribery of any public employee is punishable by custodial sentence (with the option of hard labour) or heavy fines under the penal code (Articles 350-356). In the Lebanese penal code, bribery is not restricted to the perversion of the criminal justice system, but as a term covers any payment given to any public employee with the intent of having a certain duty performed (or not performed).

The Bible is clear on the Christian's duty concerning the laws of the land: 'Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour' (Romans 13:1-7).

Unless there is a conflict with the revealed will of God (c.f. Acts 5.29), a Christian's obedience to God's revealed will in social issues is revealed by adherence to the laws of the land, which involves acting to uphold the laws of the land even when others do not, even government officials themselves.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee recognized the above Biblical principles when it voted on 29 September 1999 a 'Statement of Ethical Foundations for the General Conference and Its Employees', included in which were the following two items:

- *'Compliance with laws of the land.* The General Conference will carry on its activities in compliance with the laws of the land provided that these are not in contradiction to God's expressed will.'
- *'Avoiding inappropriate influence.* We acknowledge that the giving or receiving of business gifts can easily inject ulterior considerations in our work and employment relationships. Therefore the use of gifts, payments or honoraria as incentives or rewards for a particular course of action is unacceptable. We will not offer gifts, favor, payments, or other forms of reward directly or indirectly in exchange for a specific gain or action.'

All employees of the General Conference, including in division offices, and Inter-Division Employees who are sent around the world by the General Conference, are expected to adhere to the above ethical framework.

### 5.2 Bribery is a Means to a Greater End

In this justification of bribery, the bribe is acceptable because it enables a greater good to be accomplished. Without the bribe, the greater good could not be accomplished.

This justification of bribery puts pragmatism over obedience. The supplicant gives bribes, because they 'work', even though this involves sinning in the sight of God. This justification also attempts to weight the cost of the bribe with the cost of not giving the bribe, and bribery becomes a regular necessity whenever the cost of not giving the bribe outweighs the cost of the bribe itself.

A further problem with this justification is that involves a hierarchy of values that will guide in decision-making towards the 'greater good'. However, there does not exist in the Bible, nor can there be proven in any system of logic, reasoning or experience, any commonly accepted hierarchy of values. If there does exist a hierarchy of values leading towards the 'greater good', it is purely subjective and subject to the weaknesses, sinful nature and personal interests of those who argue for the 'greater good', i.e. the argument about the 'greater good' is essentially a form of moral relativism based on subjectivity rather than on revelation.

Furthermore, making a judgement about the 'greater good' assumes that the one making the judgement, and thereby deciding to pay a bribe, is able to accurately predict final results of the bribe, yet who can accurately gauge the long term impact of a discrete episode of bribery?

Without being based on the revelation of God in Scripture, no argument about the 'greater good' can be ultimately sustained, as such arguments are a form of moral relativism, and are inherently flawed due to the fallen human nature and reasoning of those trying to define the 'greater good'.

### **5.3 Bribery Doesn't Hurt Anybody**

In many countries, public sector employees earn such low formal salaries that they are almost forced by their national system to extract additional payments from their clients. Therefore, so runs the justification, bribery is forced onto the individual by the 'system' and the individual is thereby absolved of moral culpability for the act of bribery.

As stated above in Section 2.1, bribery is commonplace across the world, and particularly so in countries that experience high poverty levels, low development levels, and ongoing human deprivation. Bribery and corruption are recognized globally as being two of the major factors impeding social and economic development, regardless of the local culture, natural, financial and human capital, geography, educational standards or other relevant factors to economic development. Bribery of customs officials across the world leads to sub-standard products being imported into low-income countries, and many public positions are effectively auctioned off, leading to incredible waste of scarce national resources. In all cases, it is the poor and voiceless who suffer the most.

In many countries, additional payments are required by public sector functionaries, and go by different names, e.g. express fees, extraordinary fees etc. However, for every document that is 'speeded up' through the system by someone making such a payment, someone who cannot afford an equivalent payment experiences delays. Bribery never happens in a vacuum. It is never an isolated act. For every individual who benefits through payment of a bribe, there is another individual who is disadvantaged, most often the poor and powerless who cannot match the bribing capacity of the wealthy, further compounding the social and economic isolation of the poor, their sense of powerlessness, misery and despair with the 'system'. Solomon understood this principle, stating clearly that 'He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God' (Proverbs 14.31).

Bribery perverts civil and criminal justice cases (e.g. Ezekiel castigates Israel for bribery perverting the courts of justice, saying 'You have profaned me among my people for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. By lying to my people, who listen to lies, you have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live' Ezekiel 13.19), and it corrupts the heart of the individual receiving the bribe. From a Christian perspective, with the command to 'love thy neighbour as thyself' coming from Jesus, how is one 'loving thy neighbour as thyself' if one through the act of bribery is corrupting the individual's heart?

Furthermore, every bribe paid further corrupts the recipient, and reinforces patterns of corruption and bribery. The vicious cycle can only be broken when individuals refuse to participate in the system any longer. Hosea recognized the importance of the individual's stand within a corrupt society such as Israel, and so in the midst of his despairing denunciations of the corrupt rulers and government of his time, he calls on his hearers to 'Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you' (Hosea 10.12), i.e. no individual can entirely blame the 'system' for their bribery – the call from God is for lives of righteousness, unswerving and unfailing, leading to a divine reward that no bribe can win.

Bribery leads to the collapse of public confidence in public functionaries, and ultimately to the collapse of civil society, with the educated and middle classes leaving for other countries, with the result being a tiny political and business elite ruling the disenfranchised and disillusioned majority. This 'hollowing out' of societies leads through despair to political apathy and then political violence, as witnessed in many low-income countries, e.g. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe.

Bribery is also condemned in the Bible because of the partiality it creates, serving the rich at the expense of the poor and further exacerbating social divisions (e.g. 'To show partiality is not good, yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread' Prov. 28.21). The NT

is clear on the eternal consequences of partiality – it is a sin as is murder and adultery, and leads to eternal judgement (James 2.8-13). Paul emphasizes the problem of partiality in his instructions to Timothy, ‘I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism’ (1 Timothy 5:21). Indeed, if the Christian is sincere in praying ‘your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ (Matt. 6.10), then as God condemns all exploitation of the poor consistently throughout the OT prophets, so the Christian today must avoid actions that contribute to the oppression of the poor – and bribery is such an action through its direct and social consequences.

From a missiological perspective, mission funds within the SDA church are decreasing in gross and per capita terms, and gross per capita giving (including tithes and offerings) is also declining. These global financial trends are partially offset by rapid membership growth, but when membership growth stagnates, then the underlying financial problems become evident, as in many countries within the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists. There is an inherent trust on the part of members that when they place their tithes and offerings in the offering basket, that the funds will be used in a transparent and ethical manner.

No announcement from the pulpit that ‘today’s offering is for pocket-money for government officials in this country’ would draw a bountiful financial response – quite the opposite would probably be the case. The bond of trust between member and administrator in financial matters in a world of well-organized independent ministries and ever more professional attempts at directing members’ financial resources elsewhere other than the SDA church is increasingly tenuous and must be protected at all costs. If this bond of trust is broken then the financial engine of the SDA church’s missiological thrust can be fatally compromised, leading (as with the bribe paid by the priests to the Roman soldiers) to eternal consequences for those who would otherwise have been able to hear the Gospel proclaimed. Bribery therefore, in breaking the bond of trust between administrator and member and thereby reducing financial income for the SDA church, can be understood as contributing towards the eternal loss of souls.

## 6. Conclusions

We noted in the introduction that the demands for bribes to be paid often catch Christians unprepared. Once payments are made, it becomes increasingly difficult to resist demands for bribes. This paper aimed to present a brief overview of the Biblical material relating to unofficial payments (bribes) and provide recommendations for Christians when faced with demands for bribes. After defining in practice the essential and defining characteristics of bribes, gifts, tips and donations, this paper adopted the following working definition of bribery: 'the bestowing of money or favour upon a person who is in a position of trust (for example a judge or government official) in order to pervert his judgement or corrupt his conduct'<sup>19</sup>.

The paper then presented an overview of current trends in the international arena relating to bribery. Bribery is increasingly recognized as constituting not the 'grease' of international business, but as a major factor in impeding socio-economic development. Bribery directly contributes towards the entrapment of entire communities in poverty and despair, and perpetuates corrupt and self-seeking governance. A variety of international laws, initiatives and protocols are currently operative through a large array of bilateral, national, NGO and UN actors to actively fight bribery and attempt to eliminate it from the global economy.

The paper then moved on to a review of key OT texts relating to bribery. Bribery in the OT is not merely understood as corrupting justice systems, but is condemned for the following negative effects:

- Bribery turns the heart of the giver of the bribe away from trust in God to trust in bribes or in other men, and corrupts the heart of the recipient, leading to trust in material wealth rather than God.
- Bribery occurs in all spheres of government, not exclusively in the judicial system, and leads to moral declension and social decay (in some cases to social collapse).
- Governments and functionaries that seek undue payments contribute directly towards the collapse of their societies.
- Bribery contributes directly to the economic and social oppression of the poor.
- Bribery betrays divinely ordained human relationships of mutuality, trust and respect.
- Bribery (in a criminal justice context) and the payment of gifts (in other contexts) by God's professing people reflects on the nature of YHYH Himself, distorting before the world both His self-definition as the One who does not receive bribes, and showing that YHYH cannot fundamentally be trusted, even by those who nominally serve Him.

The paper then moved on to a review of key NT narratives relating to bribery. Bribery in the NT is portrayed exclusively in negative terms, and as in the OT, is understood to encompass all aspects of government, not merely as being a corruption of criminal justice systems. Bribery is condemned for the following reasons:

- Christians are to neither proffer a bribe, nor receive, for bribes do not merely pervert criminal justice, but in the perversion of civil authorities they pervert the divinely ordained order, transferring worship from God to mammon (directly) and to Satan (indirectly).
- The desire for personal enrichment pursued by those seeking bribes can ultimately lead to eternal damnation, and no Christian with a concern for his fellow man should participate in such activities – for thereby the path to destruction is hastened.
- Once initiated, the chain of bribery can expand ever wider, causing unforeseen and eternal consequences.
- A true witness before the civil authorities to the absolute purity, incorruptibility and truth that is in Christ Jesus requires from followers of Jesus a life of integrity, integrity that may come with a huge personal cost, integrity that precludes the payment of anything on a personal level to a functionary other than that which is officially required.

The paper then provided rebuttals to three common justifications for bribery: bribery is not acceptable just because it is in the local culture; bribery always hurts the innocent, either directly or indirectly; and the greater end tomorrow does not justify bribery today. So, in essence, what should the Christian response to bribery be?

- 'Avoid every kind of evil' (1 Thess. 5.22), and 'do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows' (Gal.6.7)
- 'Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall' (Prov. 4.14).
- 'Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon' (Isa. 55.7).
- 'Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture' (Ps. 37.3).
- 'Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the

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<sup>19</sup> Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics.

attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body' (Eph. 4.21-25).

### Appendix I Old Testament texts relating to bribery

#### 1:

**KJV Exodus 23:8** And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

**NIB Exodus 23:8** "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

**NRS Exodus 23:8** You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

#### 2:

**KJV Deuteronomy 10:17** For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

**NIB Deuteronomy 10:17** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

**NRS Deuteronomy 10:17** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe,

#### 3:

**KJV Deuteronomy 16:19** Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

**NIB Deuteronomy 16:19** Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

**NRS Deuteronomy 16:19** You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

#### 4:

**KJV Deuteronomy 27:25** Cursed *be* he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**NIB Deuteronomy 27:25** "Cursed is the man who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

**NRS Deuteronomy 27:25** "Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

#### 5:

**KJV 1 Samuel 8:3** And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

**NIB 1 Samuel 8:3** But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

**NRS 1 Samuel 8:3** Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

#### 6:

**KJV 2 Kings 16:8** And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria.

**NIB 2 Kings 16:8** And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria.

<sup>NRS</sup> **2 Kings 16:8** Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria.

7:

<sup>KJV</sup> **2 Chronicles 19:6-7** And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who *is* with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

<sup>NIB</sup> **2 Chronicles 19:6-7** He told them, "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the LORD, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

<sup>NRS</sup> **2 Chronicles 19:6-7** and said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you judge not on behalf of human beings but on the LORD's behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes."

8:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Job 6:22** Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance?

<sup>NIB</sup> **Job 6:22** Have I ever said, 'Give something on my behalf, pay a ransom for me from your wealth,

<sup>NRS</sup> **Job 6:22** Have I said, 'Make me a gift'? Or, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me'?

9:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Job 15:34** For the congregation of hypocrites *shall be* desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Job 15:34** For the company of the godless will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of those who love bribes.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Job 15:34** For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery.

10:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Psalm 26:9-10** Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands *is* mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Psalm 26:9-10** Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes. But I lead a blameless life; redeem me and be merciful to me.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Psalm 26:9-10** Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with the bloodthirsty, those in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me.

11:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Proverbs 15:27** He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Proverbs 15:27** A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Proverbs 15:27** Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households, but those who hate bribes will live.

12:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Proverbs 17:8** A gift *is as* a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Proverbs 17:8** A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Proverbs 17:8** A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who give it; wherever they turn they prosper.

**13:**

**KJV Proverbs 17:23** A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

**NIB Proverbs 17:23** A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice.

**NRS Proverbs 17:23** The wicked accept a concealed bribe to pervert the ways of justice.

**14:**

**KJV Proverbs 18:16** A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

**NIB Proverbs 18:16** A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great.

**NRS Proverbs 18:16** A gift opens doors; it gives access to the great.

**15:**

**KJV Proverbs 21:14** A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

**NIB Proverbs 21:14** A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.

**NRS Proverbs 21:14** A gift in secret averts anger; and a concealed bribe in the bosom, strong wrath.

**16:**

**KJV Proverbs 25:14** Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain.

**NIB Proverbs 25:14** Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give.

**NRS Proverbs 25:14** Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of a gift never given.

**17:**

**KJV Proverbs 29:4** The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

**NIB Proverbs 29:4** By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down.

**NRS Proverbs 29:4** By justice a king gives stability to the land, but one who makes heavy exactions ruins it.

**18:**

**KJV Ecclesiastes 7:7** Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

**NIB Ecclesiastes 7:7** Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

**NRS Ecclesiastes 7:7** Surely oppression makes the wise foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

**19:**

**KJV Isaiah 1:23** 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.

**NIB Isaiah 1:23** Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Isaiah 1:23** Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them.

20:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Isaiah 5:22-23** Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

<sup>NIB</sup> **Isaiah 5:22-23** Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Isaiah 5:22-23** Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant at mixing drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of their rights!

21:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Isaiah 33:15-16** He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Isaiah 33:15-16** He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil, this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Isaiah 33:15-16** Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly, who despise the gain of oppression, who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it, who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed and shut their eyes from looking on evil, they will live on the heights; their refuge will be the fortresses of rocks; their food will be supplied, their water assured.

22:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Ezekiel 22:12-13** In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Ezekiel 22:12-13** In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbours by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD. "I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Ezekiel 22:12-13** In you, they take bribes to shed blood; you take both advance interest and accrued interest, and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD. See, I strike my hands together at the dishonest gain you have made, and at the blood that has been shed within you.

23:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Amos 2:6** Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

<sup>NIB</sup> **Amos 2:6** This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back *my wrath*. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Amos 2:6** Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.



24:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Amos 5:10-12** They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as your treading *is* upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Amos 5:10-12** you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth. You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offences and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Amos 5:10-12** They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins-- you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.

25:

<sup>KJV</sup> **Micah 7:3,7** That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward; and the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up... Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Micah 7:3,7** Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire--they all conspire together... Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Micah 7:3,7** Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice... But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me.

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<sup>KJV</sup> **Micah 3:9-12** 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. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is* not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

<sup>NIB</sup> **Micah 3:9-12** Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us." Therefore because of you, Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

<sup>NRS</sup> **Micah 3:9-12** Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Surely the LORD is with us! No harm shall come upon us." Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.