

## Micah – Part 1 (Introduction)

**Background to the Prophet:** Micah prophesied during the period 738 BC to 690 (to 686) BC (See timeline). As a prophet he spoke of future events and perhaps even more importantly he declared the character and the will of God. Micah came from Moresheth, a town located near Gath about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. His genealogy is not given, suggesting his family was not famous. The name Micah or Micaiah means “Who is a God like thee?”- Micah 7:18. Appropriately he calls upon men to ponder the Greatness and incomparable Power and Character of the Lord of the whole earth related to holiness, power and love. In some ways his comments were more directed to small towns than to Jerusalem whereas Isaiah’s message (c.740 BC to 681 BC) seemed more directed to Jerusalem. Micah’s imagery would appeal to farmers and rural people – e.g., Jer. 26:18. Three prophets who prophesied in the same period: Isaiah, Hosea and Amos.

**Background to the conditions** (see 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chron, 26-30): Both Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom) had been quite prosperous but there was a large gap between rich (few) and poor (many). Businesses and rich people were becoming more corrupt. The policy of the time seemed to be if you had the power (and the wealth) to take another’s property it was your right to do so. Israel would soon be under attack and would be defeated by the Assyrians. Judah will also come under attack. They mistakenly thought they were pleasing God because they were God’s chosen people. Israel had tried to force Judah to join a coalition against Assyria (which had become very strong in this period) Ahaz had displeased the Lord by relying on military might and entering into agreements with Assyria.

Three kings of Judah during Micah’s prophetic ministry: Jothan 750 to 735 BC. Ahaz 735 – 715 BC and Hezekiah 715 to 686 BC

Three cities highlighted: Samaria (Israel); Jerusalem (Judah); Bethlehem

**Message of the Book:** His mission was to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin (Micah 3:8). He was the first prophet to predict the destruction of Jerusalem (1: 3-5; 3:12) in the days of Hezekiah. He also emphasized that man should ponder and honour the power and perfections of the Lord.

Authentication of Micah’s prophecy: Micah’s words are used in the New Testament: Matt. 2:5-6 (Micah 5:2); Matt. 10.21 (Micah 7:6) and in the Old Testament Micah’s example saved Jeremiah from death: Jer. 26:11, 17-19, 24 (Micah 3:12).

### Timeline:

738 – 736 BC – Micah begins to prophesy  
 732 BC – Jotham dies, Ahaz comes to the throne  
 725-722 BC – Samaria is destroyed and Israel goes into captivity to Assyria  
 722 BC - Lachish attacked (under Sennacherib)  
 715 BC – Ahaz reign ends, Hezekiah comes to the throne (until 687 BC)  
 701 BC – Assyria attacks Egypt near Eltekeh and invades Judah and attacks every city including Jerusalem. God intervenes to deliver Jerusalem.  
 690 – 686 BC – Micah’s prophecy ends  
 585 BC – Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians

The message of Isaiah paralleled that of Micah (see Micah 4:1-4 and Isa. 2:2-4.).

### **Structure of the Prophecy**

Micah wrote the book to tell the nation that in spite of coming judgment God would offer pardon to all who would repent. The message shows that all people must answer to the Sovereign Lord specifically:

- Those who are sinful meet his judgment (1:5)
- These who watch for him and have a listening ear are preserved (7:7)

Micah writes in a very integrated literary style using reactions in one sphere to provide imagery for actions in another sphere.

Structure of the book:

Chapter 1-3: Coming judgment on the nations (Judah and Israel) - oracles of judgment against Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem)

Chapter 4,5: Final blessing of the nation - oracles of hope and restoration

Chapter 6, 7: God's word for his people at that hour (includes Pleading in Chapter 6 and Pardoning in chapter 7): 6:1 – 7:7 – legal trial against Israel for its sin; 7:8 – 20 – Vision of God's victory over Israel's enemies.

Micah's Major Prophecies:

- Failure of Samaria and the judgement that would come upon it (1:5-9) (10 years)
- Destruction of Jerusalem (1:1-16) (100 years)
- Babylonian captivity and return (4:6-10) (c. 200 years)
- Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem (5:2) (c. 700 years)

Three calls to the people to hear: 1) All people(s) of the earth (1:2); 2) The house of Jacob (3:1); 3) The people (6:1) -There are two other "Hear ye"'s as well but not to people.

Three trials for: 1) the rotten cores of the nations: Samaria and Jerusalem (1:1 to 2:13) but Bethlehem comes forth

2) the corruption on the leaders (3:1 to 5:15) but the Lord Jesus would come forth.

3) the corruption and idolatry of the people (6:1 to 7:20) but God would show his love.

Three of Israel's sins: cruelty (c.3), oppression (c.6) and idolatry (c.7)

Three of Judah's serious sins; Moral failure of leadership; idolatry, greed and covetousness and the willingness to oppress others to get rich quickly.

Three things Judah would suffer: Destruction and exile (1:10-16); Silence from God (3:6-7); Frustration (6:13-16)

Three promises for the later days (c.4): a ruler, the restoration of Zion and peace.

The requirements of God: Micah 6:8: Do justice – Amos; love kindness – Hosea; walk humbly with God (Isaiah - quiet faith in God)

## Micah One <meaning of name>

Verse 1: This verse gives an overview of the home town of Micah, his message and his period of service. Morasthite means possession and Morasheth-<possession of Gath.> It was 17.5 miles west of Tekon which 50 years earlier was the home of the prophet Amos. Micah comes from a small town to warn kings of days of destruction coming for Samaria and Jerusalem.

*Lesson: God raises up whom he will to be his spokesman – it is our part to be obedient to his call.*

Verse 2: This is a call to the people(s) <it's plural> of the known world that the Lord who comes from his holy temple and use Samaria and Jerusalem to witness that the Lord is just and his judgement against men and their sins is righteous and sure. This is the Lord God <Adonai Jehovah> - the title of might and majesty, sovereignty and power. From his holy temple- this is likely God's dwelling place in heaven. *Lesson: some may be given special privilege (Israel) but they are still held accountable by God.*

Verse 3: The Lord comes down from his dwelling to tread on the high places of earth. The verb to come forth means to come forth for battle. The altars to idols were frequently located on hill tops. The Lord would tread down these places. Some suggest that the high places refers to rich and powerful people living above the rest of the people. Israel had once tread on the high places of their enemies but now is trodden upon (Deut.33:29).

Verse 4: The Lord's judgment will be accompanied geophysical upheaval. Mountains and valleys alike feel his judgment. Judges 5:5 talks about mountains melting in terms of waters gushing forth. The land would give way as if it was melting before him and the powerful waterfalls that fall from great heights.

Verse 5: Both Israel and Judah stand indicted because their capital cities have been corrupted and they have engaged in idolatry. Israel – deviations from God's goal of having them as a light to the gentiles. The evil seemed to begin in the capitals and spread to the areas around. The Samaritans boasted that Jacob was their father (Samaritan woman: John 4:12). However, Ahab, one king of Israel had built a temple to Baal in Samaria. The transgression of Jacob – willfully breaking a covenant'. Practices in Jerusalem were also filled with idolatry. Idolatry on high places seemed to begin in Jerusalem (Judah). Even the elders of Judah practiced idolatry – Ezek.8:1. *Lesson: God was displeased in idols in the days of Samaria. He is also displeased in idols such as money, fame, power, etc in the lives of believers today.*

Verse 6: After the judgement Samaria would be just a heap of rubble. (Isa 28:1 describes Samaria's situation). Stones from the buildings on the hill would be thrown down into the valley. Close to the vicinity of these ruins stones appear to have fallen 300 feet in the past. The land itself would become a vineyard.

Verse 7: The graven images would be destroyed and left desolate. The meaning of hires is less clear, some saying it refers to things sold which would be burned and but more likely it refers to harlots who sold favours to support the temple and the things which they had labored for would be destroyed. *Possible lesson: God cares about the source of money that is used for his work.*