

**Micah's Warning to the Divided Kingdom**  
**Micah 1:1 – 4:13**  
**Lesson 1**

**Introduction**

**Micah 1:**<sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Within the first few words of his recorded prophecy, Micah dates his ministry during the reigns of three kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Jotham reigned from 740 – 726 BC, Ahaz followed him from 726 – 712 BC and Hezekiah from from 712 – 685 BC. Micah probably did not minister for the entire 55 years of the three kings; rather, his ministry began during Jotham's reign and ended during the reign of Hezekiah. He does not mention by name Pekah, Elah II and Hoshea, the last three kings of the Northern Kingdom in the prophecy. By the time of Micah, 29 kings of the Divided Kingdom had come and gone along with the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Joel, and Amos. Isaiah's ministry ran in tandem with Micah's except that he began his ministry during the reign of Azariah, Jotham's father. At the end of Micah's ministry, Nahum, Jeremiah and Zephaniah began their ministries. The Southern and Northern Kingdoms certainly had enough prophets proclaiming the word of the Lord to them but experienced little positive response from the kings and people, especially Israel, the north kingdom. Micah saw her fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC during the reign of Ahaz in the south. However, Micah's prophecy spoke to the people of both kingdoms as indicated by its mention of the two capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem in the first verse. Both kingdoms troubled the Lord with their sins and both kingdoms found themselves in exile because of those sins. The Northern Kingdom fell in 722 BC and the Southern Kingdom fell in 606-605 BC.

Micah grew up in Moresheth-gath, a little town 17 miles southwest of Bethlehem in the Southern Kingdom just outside the famous village of Gath, the birthplace and residence of Goliath. The Bible does not reveal Micah's location during his ministry; however, he probably still resided in his hometown. Jeremiah recognized and validated Micah's ministry by mentioning his name in the following passage.

**Jeremiah 26:**<sup>16</sup> Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and to the prophets, "No death sentence for this man! For he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."<sup>17</sup> Then some of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying,<sup>18</sup> "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus the LORD of hosts has said, "Zion will be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem will become ruins, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.'"<sup>19</sup> "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and the LORD changed His mind about the misfortune which He had pronounced against them? But we are committing a great evil against ourselves."

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scriptures in this lesson entitled "Micah's Warning to the Divided Kingdom" are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright (C) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The Jeremiah passage indicates that Micah's death occurred at the hands of the people of the Southern Kingdom, but no other passage supports that conclusion. The record indicates that Hezekiah did repent and that the Lord granted him 15 more years of life as king.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Micah's message from the Lord addressed both kingdoms because of their sins.

### The Coming of the Lord

Micah 1:2-9

**Micah 1:**<sup>2</sup> Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. <sup>3</sup> For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. <sup>4</sup> The mountains will melt under Him and the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place. <sup>5</sup> All this is for the rebellion of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? <sup>6</sup> For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley and will lay bare her foundations. <sup>7</sup> All of her idols will be smashed, all of her earnings will be burned with fire and all of her images I will make desolate, for she collected *them* from a harlot's earnings, and to the earnings of a harlot they will return. <sup>8</sup> Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked; I must make a lament like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches. <sup>9</sup> For her wound is incurable, for it has come to Judah; it has reached the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

The prophecy of Micah begins with a general promise of the Lord's coming to redeem His people from their great sin. Just as stated in the other prophecies, at His coming, the mountains will melt and the valleys will split causing Jerusalem to rise up and become the highest mount on earth. However, before the mountains melt, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms must suffer for their sins. When the kingdom divided in 937 BC, Jeroboam in the north flooded the new kingdom with false gods and idols. Throughout the following 215 years of their existence as a nation, every king committed evil acts by breaking the Lord's commandments. The Southern Kingdom lasted for 332 years but her sin would ultimately dwarf that of the Northern Kingdom even though the majority of her kings sought to follow the Lord in most things. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, took the Southern Kingdom deep into sin beginning in 685 BC and even Josiah, a wonderful king, could not change the hearts of the people. The Lord's prophecy of the unforgiveable sins of His people caused Him to lament in total shame over them, using terms such as barefoot and naked. The people of Micah's day understood those words to mean great distress and brokenness. Jackals cry out in the dark of the night when hunger strikes them; the Lord cries for His people when they fail to trust in Him. The voice of the ostrich mourns especially at night and sounds like a hoarse child who has cried the night away. The Lord's grief over His chosen nation stemmed from her rebellion and sin.

### The Fate of Cities

Micah 1;10-16

**Micah 1:**<sup>10</sup> Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all. At Beth-le-aphrah roll yourself in the dust. <sup>11</sup> Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir, in shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of Zaanan does not escape. The lamentation of Beth-ezel: "He will take

---

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 20

from you its support." <sup>12</sup> For the inhabitant of Maroth becomes weak waiting for good, because a calamity has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Harness the chariot to the team of horses, O inhabitant of Lachish— she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion— because in you were found the rebellious acts of Israel. <sup>14</sup> Therefore you will give parting gifts on behalf of Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib *will* become a deception to the kings of Israel. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, I will bring on you the one who takes possession, O inhabitant of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will enter Adullam. <sup>16</sup> Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, because of the children of your delight; extend your baldness like the eagle, for they will go from you into exile.

The Lord placed parameters on Micah's message. The city of Gath must not hear the message as Philistines and enemies of the Lord. In contrast, the chosen people should go to the city of Bethlehem and mourn over their sins by rolling in the dust. A play on word occurs in this passage because Bethlehem means house of dust.

Shaphir, Zaanan, Bethzelem, Maroth, Jerusalem, Lachish, Zion, Moresheth, Mareshah and Adullam existed as cities in the Southern Kingdom that will fall when Babylon overruns the kingdom in 606-605 BC. However, the city of Adullam had extremely strong gates and walls around it as well as caves where people could hide as David did in his day. All the people of all these cities had only one option from the Lord; they had to become greatly distressed and repent. In that day, men showed their distress by shaving their heads. One example of this practice always occurred at the death of a child. The Lord continues to want that kind of repentance from His people. When they fail to repent, He will extend their calamity by causing them to go into exile in Babylon. Micah speaks of the extended baldness of the eagle. An eagle has a sickly appearance during those days when he molts and begins to grow new feathers. During the exile, God's chosen people will also appear sickly. But just as the eagle emerges from its molt with renewed vigor, strength and majesty, so too, will God's chosen people emerge.

### **A Warning, a Calamity and a Remnant**

Micah 2:1-13

**Micah 2:**<sup>1</sup> Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, for it is in the power of their hands. <sup>2</sup> They covet fields and then seize *them*, and houses, and take *them* away. They rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. <sup>3</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity from which you cannot remove your necks; and you will not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. <sup>4</sup> "On that day they will take up against you a taunt and utter a bitter lamentation *and* say, 'We are completely destroyed! He exchanges the portion of my people; how He removes it from me! To the apostate He apportions our fields.' <sup>5</sup> "Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line for you by lot in the assembly of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> 'Do not speak out,' *so* they speak out. *But if* they do not speak out concerning these things, reproaches will not be turned back. <sup>7</sup> "Is it being said, O house of Jacob: 'Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?' Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly? <sup>8</sup> "Recently My people have arisen as an enemy— You strip the robe off the garment from unsuspecting passers-by, *From* those returned from war. <sup>9</sup> "The women of My people you evict, Each *one* from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever. <sup>10</sup> "Arise and go, for this is no place of rest Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction, A painful destruction. <sup>11</sup> "If a man walking after wind and falsehood had told lies *and said*, 'I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,' He would be spokesman to this people. <sup>12</sup> "I will surely

assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; like a flock in the midst of its pasture they will be noisy with men. <sup>13</sup> "The breaker goes up before them; they break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, and the LORD at their head."

The schemes and plans for rejecting God in Micah's day found their genesis in the nocturnal hours. When daylight came, the details of the sinful plans and schemes began to appear. Both kingdoms had studied through the night to devise new ways to sin against God and they thought they had the power to do whatever they wished with impunity. The rich coveted the possessions of the poor but the Lord would not let them fulfill their desires. The Lord sent Tiglath-philasar, king of Assyria, to plummet the Northern Kingdom, taking many into exile in 2 Kings 15:29-31. Micah lived to see this catastrophe fulfilled. The funeral dirge rang through the air, "We are completely destroyed! He exchanges the portion of my people; how He removes it from me! To the apostate He apportions our fields." The calamity came from the Lord as the remaining tribesmen continued to sin against Him. The regular inheritance of the Promised Land from generation to generation ceased because the land belonged to another empire now. No one would survey the land with a measuring line to pass it on to the next generation through the last will and testament; that document no longer carried any authority in the Divided Kingdom of the Jews. This news caused the Jews to beg for the prophecies against them to stop – they already had more prophecies than they could bear to see fulfilled, but the Lord had more to give them. They said that surely, the Holy Spirit had not spoken these prophecies against the Lord's people and He replied, "Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly?" The people could not see their sins as sins. The judgment of the Lord seemed unjust to them but had they followed the Lord's commands, His words would have brought good to them. The Lord's chosen people had become His enemies. When He sent the barbarians of the Assyrian Empire, 120,000 died and 200,000 became captives in the foreign land.<sup>3</sup> The people failed to heed the warning to prepare for its coming.

### **The Warning to Prepare for Calamity**

Micah 3:1-4

**Micah 3:**<sup>1</sup> And I said, "Hear now, heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice? <sup>2</sup> "You who hate good and love evil, who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones, <sup>3</sup> who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones and chop *them* up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle." <sup>4</sup> Then they will cry out to the LORD, but He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time because they have practiced evil deeds.

Neither Jewish kingdom heeded this warning from the prophet which showed the cruelty of the coming Assyrian Empire. Yes, the Assyrians removed the flesh from the bones of the Israelites, chopped it up and cooked it in kettles to strike fear in the hearts of the people and demand servitude. The Jews did cry out to God at that time but He did not answer. If they had cried out when Micah foretold the coming calamity, the Lord would have answered, but the time for repentance had passed for the Lord and 120,000 Jewish men and women died in the onslaught.

---

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chronicles 28:6

## The Warning to False Prophets

Micah 3:5-7

**Micah 3:**<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray; when they have *something* to bite with their teeth, they cry, "Peace," but against him who puts nothing in their mouths they declare holy war. <sup>6</sup> Therefore *it will be* night for you—without vision, and darkness for you—without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, and the day will become dark over them. <sup>7</sup> The seers will be ashamed and the diviners will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover *their* mouths because there is no answer from God.

The great tragedy of the destruction of the Northern Empire fell on the shoulders of the false Jewish prophets who made up lies and the seers dreamed up false images, but none of them came from God.

## Micah's Power

Micah 3:8-12

**Micah 3:**<sup>8</sup> On the other hand I am filled with power— With the Spirit of the LORD— and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin. <sup>9</sup> Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, <sup>10</sup> who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice. <sup>11</sup> Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us." <sup>12</sup> Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple *will become* high places of a forest.

Micah had nothing to worry about; his prophecies came through his teacher, the Holy Spirit. The leaders of both kingdoms exuded corruption in the sight of the Lord. They did nothing for the sake of the Lord. Money lies at the root of every religion's words and actions. Although they claimed His presence in their midst, the prophets and priests had no relationship with God and He did not respond to them. Jerusalem, the Lord's great city for His people, and Zion, the great throne of Israel's kings, could not survive the coming wrath of the Lord at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Notice the change of the prophecy from Judah and Israel, the two kingdoms, to Jacob and Israel, who represent the same person. Jacob the deceiver became Israel, God's chosen head of His chosen nation. What does that mean? Micah's message covers all of Israel without respect to the differences found in the Divided Kingdom.

## In the Last Days

Micah 4:1-5

**Micah 4:**<sup>1</sup> And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. <sup>2</sup> Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war. <sup>4</sup> Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make *them* afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. <sup>5</sup> Though all the peoples walk each in the name of his god, as for us, we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

Micah's prophecy transcends the coming tragedy to remind the Jews of God's ultimate plan and promise. One day in the future, Jerusalem and Zion will belong again to Israel and true peace will prevail, not the false peace proclaimed by the false prophets and seers of Micah's day. Then, and only then, will all the weapons of warfare find their ways into the melting pots to become farming tools to provide food for the nation. From that time on, the Lord will truly be in their midst forever and ever.

### **In that Day**

Micah 4:6-8

**Micah 4:**<sup>6</sup> "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. <sup>7</sup> "I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation, and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever. <sup>8</sup> "As for you, tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come— even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

Micah's prophecy speaks of the coming day of the Lord when He will take charge over the city of Jerusalem and Mount Zion forever as His city and His throne. When the Lord arrives, the greatness of Zion will overshadow all its former glory. Micah speaks of Jerusalem and Zion as daughters in this passage. Why? His next words return to the warning of the coming calamity, specifically the calamity to the Southern Kingdom and the word daughter gives imagery to the next warning.

### **Off to Babylon and Exile**

Micah 4:9-13

**Micah 4:**<sup>9</sup> "Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished, that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? <sup>10</sup> "Write and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth; for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. <sup>11</sup> "And now many nations have been assembled against you who say, 'Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.' <sup>12</sup> "But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, and they do not understand His purpose; for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. <sup>13</sup> "Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze, that you may pulverize many peoples, that you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain and their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

Nothing could stop the coming destruction of the Southern Kingdom and Micah used the idea of a daughter's (or woman's) fear of childbirth in those days. In Micah's prophecy, the Southern Kingdom must be birthed in Babylon from where the Lord will rescue her, bringing her back to the Promised Land in renewed strength. Its great promise brought no comfort to the Jews; they ignored the message of Micah.