Micah

The prophet Micah told God’s messages to the people in Judah during the same time as the prophet Isaiah. Micah was angry that the people had not kept their agreement with God. They had chosen not to follow God. And now God would have to respond to their bad choices. In the book of Micah, we see God judging his unfaithful people like a judge in a court of law.

Micah says that the people of Judah are guilty of worshipping false gods. For this reason, he warns that God will destroy the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem. These are the places where the people were worshipping idols. But the most serious sins in Judah are sins against the people. Micah warns the leaders that God will punish them for the many ways they have used their power to hurt their own people. The prophet says that God will do to them what they have done to others. Those who have stolen land will lose their own land. And those who have ignored the cries of people in need will find that God will ignore their cries to him for help.

For most of this book, Micah accuses God’s people of not keeping their promise to God. But Micah also tells the people that God will keep his promise to them. Micah says God will punish his people for the evil they have done. But he also speaks words of hope for the future. Micah says God will forgive his people. He will send his Messiah (Chosen King) to save them. He will be to them like a shepherd guarding his sheep.

In the book of Micah, the prophet gives God’s warning against...
- Samaria and Jerusalem (1:1 – 2:13)
- The leaders of Israel (3:1 – 5:15)
- His own people (6:1 – 7:20)

Samaria and Israel to Be Punished

During the time that Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, the word of the LORD came to Micah. Micah was from Moresheth. He saw these visions about Samaria and Jerusalem.

1 Listen, all you people! Earth and everyone on it,* listen! The Lord GOD will be a witness against you. The Lord will come from his holy temple. 2 See, the LORD is leaving his place to come down and walk on the high places† of the earth. 3 The mountains will melt under him like wax in a fire. The valleys will break apart and slide like water rushing down a hill. 4 This will happen because of Jacob's sin, because of the sins of the nation‡ of Israel.

Samaria, the Cause of Sin

What caused Jacob to sin? It was Samaria. Where do people worship idols in Judah? It is Jerusalem.

*1:2 everyone on it Literally, “its fullness”.
†1:3 high places Here, this might mean simply “hills”, or it might mean places for idol worship that the LORD will trample.
‡1:5 nation Literally, “house”. This might mean the royal family of that country.
6 So I will change Samaria into a pile of rocks in an open field, a place where vineyards will be planted. I will push Samaria’s stones down into the valley, leaving nothing but the foundations.  
7 All her idols will be broken to pieces. She got them as pay for being a prostitute. They will be burned in fire. I will destroy all her statues of false gods, because Samaria got her riches by being unfaithful to me. So those things will be taken by other people who are not faithful to me.

Micah’s Great Sadness

8 I will be very sad about what will happen. I will go without sandals and clothes. I will cry like a wild dog. I will mourn like an ostrich.  
9 Samaria’s wound cannot be healed. Her disease has spread to Judah. It has reached the city gate of my people; it has spread all the way to Jerusalem.

10 Don’t tell it in Gath. Don’t cry in Acco. Roll yourself in the dust at Beth Ophrah.††

11 You people living in Shaphir,‡‡ pass on your way, naked and ashamed. The people living in Zaanan¶¶ will not come out. The people in Beth Ezel§§ will cry and take their support from you.  
12 The people living in Maroth* wait for something good to happen, even though trouble has come down from the LORD and has reached the city gate of Jerusalem.  
13 You people living in Lachish,† get the horses ready for your chariots. You are guilty of the same sins Israel‡ committed, and you brought those sins to Jerusalem.§  
14 So you must give goodbye gifts to Moresheth§ in Gath. The houses in Aczib** will trick the kings of Israel.  
15 You people who live in Mareshah,†† I will bring someone against you who will take the things you own. The glory of Israel will come into Adullam.‡‡

†1:9 Samaria The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.
§1:10 Gath This is a wordplay. This name means “tell”.
*1:10 Acco This name means “cry”.
††1:10 Beth Ophrah This name means “house of dust”.
‡‡1:11 Shaphir This name means “beautiful”.
¶¶1:11 Zaanan This name means “come out”.
§§1:11 Beth Ezel This name means “house of support”.
*1:12 Maroth This name means “bitter”, “angry” or “sad”.
†1:13 Lachish This name is like the Hebrew word meaning “horse”.
‡1:13 Israel Here, probably the northern kingdom of Israel centred in Samaria.
§1:14 Moresheth Micah’s home town.
**1:14 Aczib This name means “lie” or “trick”.
††1:15 Mareshah The name means “a person who takes things”.
‡‡1:15 Adullam A cave that David hid in when he ran away from Saul. See 1 Sam. 22:1.
16 So cut off your hair and make yourself bald, because you will cry for the children you love. Make yourself bald like an eagle and show your sorrow, because your children will be taken away from you.

The Evil Plans of People

Trouble will come to those who make plans to sin. They lie on their beds making their evil plans. Then when the morning light comes, they do what they planned, because they have the power to do what they want.

They want fields, so they take them. They want houses, so they take them. They cheat a man and take his house and his land.

The Lord’s Plans to Punish the People

That is why the LORD says: “Look, I am planning trouble against this family. You will not be able to save yourselves. You will stop being proud, because bad times are coming.

Then people will sing songs about you. They will sing this sad song: ‘We are ruined! The LORD took away our land and gave it to other people. Yes, he took my land away from me. He has divided our fields among our enemies.’"

5 So we will not be able to measure the land and divide it among the LORD’s people.

Micah Is Asked Not to Prophesy

The people say, “Don’t prophesy to us. Don’t say those bad things about us. Nothing bad will happen to us.” But people of Jacob, I must say these things. The LORD is losing his patience because of the bad things you have done. If you did what is right, I could say nice words to you.

8 But you attack my people like enemies. You steal the clothes off the backs of people walking by. They think they are safe, but you are there to treat them like prisoners of war.

9 You have taken nice houses away from the women of my people. You have taken my wealth away from their small children forever.

Get up and leave! This will not be your place of rest, because you ruined it. You made it unclean, so it will be destroyed! It will be a terrible destruction!

11 These people don’t want to listen to me, but if a man comes telling lies, they will accept him. They would accept a false prophet if he comes and says, “There will be good times in the future, with plenty of wine and beer.”

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**1:16 cut … bald** This showed that a person made a special agreement with God or that a person was very sad.

**1:16 eagle** Or “vulture”. See vulture in the Word List.

**2:3 save yourselves** Literally, “take your necks off it”.

**2:8 They think … war** Or “Returning from war, they think they are safe.”
The Lord Will Bring His People Together

Micah 2:12

Yes, people of Jacob, I will bring all of you together. I will bring together all those in Israel who are still living. I will put them together like sheep in the sheep pen, like a flock in its pasture. Then the place will be filled with the noise of many people.

Micah 3:11

The “One Who Breaks Through Walls” will push through and walk to the front of his people. They will break through the gates and leave that city. They will leave with their king marching before them—with the LORD at the front of his people.

The Leaders of Israel Are Guilty of Evil

Micah 3:3

Then I said: “Listen, leaders of Jacob and officers of the nation of Israel! You should know what justice is. But you hate good and love evil. You tear the skin off the people and tear the flesh off their bones. You are destroying my people. You take their skin off them and break their bones. You chop their bones up like meat to put in the pot! Then you will pray to the LORD, but he will not answer you. No, he will hide his face from you, because what you do is evil.”

False Prophets

Micah 3:5

Some false prophets are telling lies to the Lord's people. This is what the LORD says about them: “These prophets are led by their stomachs. They promise peace for those who give them food, but they promise war to those who do not give them food. “This is why it is like night for you and you don’t have visions. You cannot see what will happen in the future, so it is like darkness to you. The sun has gone down on the prophets. They cannot see what will happen in the future, so it is like darkness to them. The seers are ashamed; the fortune-tellers are embarrassed. None of them will say anything, because God will not speak to them.”

Micah Is an Honest Prophet of God

Micah 3:8

But the LORD’s Spirit has filled me with power, goodness and strength. So now I can tell Jacob what they have done wrong. I can tell Israel how they have sinned!

The Leaders of Israel Are to Blame

Micah 3:9

Leaders of Jacob and rulers of Israel, listen to me! You hate the right way of living! If something is straight, then you make it crooked! You build Zion by murdering people. You build Jerusalem by cheating people! The judges in Jerusalem accept bribes to help them decide who wins in court.

3:1 nation Literally, “house”. This might mean the royal family of that country.
3:3 You are destroying my people Literally, “who eat the flesh of my people”.
3:10 murdering people Literally, “bloodshed”.
The priests in Jerusalem must be paid before they will teach the people. People must pay the prophets before they will look into the future. Then those leaders expect the LORD to help them.

They say, “The LORD lives here with us, so nothing bad will happen to us.”

Leaders, because of you, Zion will be destroyed.

It will become a ploughed field.

Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.

Bushes will cover the hill where the Temple now stands.

**The Law Will Come From Jerusalem**

In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s Temple will be on the highest of all mountains. It will be raised higher than the hills. There will be a steady stream of people going there.

People from many nations will go there and say,

“Come, let’s go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. Then God will teach us his way of living, and we will follow him.”

His teaching, the LORD’s message, will begin in Jerusalem on Mount Zion and will go out to all the world.

Then God will act as judge to end arguments between people in many places.

He will decide what is right for great nations far and near.

They will hammer their swords into ploughs and use their spears to make tools for harvesting.

All fighting between nations will end. They will never again train for war.

They will sit under their own grapevine and fig tree.

No one will make them afraid, because the LORD All-Powerful said it would happen like that.

All the people from other nations follow their own gods, but we will follow the LORD our God for ever and ever!”

**The Kingdom to Be Brought Back**

“At that time,” says the LORD, “I will gather my people, the people I have punished. I made them suffer far away from home. Like scattered sheep, they are hurt and lame, but I will bring them back.

Those left alive are hurt, but I will give them a new start. They were forced to leave home, but I will make them a strong nation. And I, the LORD, will be their king and rule from Mount Zion forever.

And you, Tower of Flocks, your time will come. Ophel, hill of Zion, you will again have the right to rule. Yes, the kingdom will be in Jerusalem as it was in the past.”

**You People Must Leave Jerusalem**

Now, why are you crying so loudly? Is your king gone? Have you lost your wise leader? Is that why you are suffering like a woman in labour?

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**4:5** Or “All the nations will walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God, for ever and ever!”

**4:8** *Tower of Flocks* Or “Migdal Eder”. This probably means a part of Jerusalem. The leaders would be like shepherds in a tower watching their sheep.
10 Cry out, you people of Jerusalem,¶¶ and feel the pain, as if you were giving birth. You must go out of the city and live in the fields. You will go away to Babylon, but you will also be saved from that place. The LORD will come and rescue you there. He will take you away from your enemies.

**The Lord Will Destroy the Other Nations**

11 Many nations have come to fight against you. They say, “Look, there is Zion! Let’s attack her!”

12 They have their plans, but they don’t know what the LORD is planning. He brought them here for a special purpose. They will be crushed like grain on a threshing floor.

**Jerusalem Will Defeat Its Enemies**

13 “People of Jerusalem, get up and crush them! I will make you very strong. It will be as if you have horns of iron and hooves of bronze. You will beat many people into small pieces. You will give their wealth to the LORD. You will give their treasure to the Lord of all the earth.”

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**A King Will Come From Bethlehem**

5 Now, strong city,¶¶ gather your soldiers! Our enemies are attacking us! They will strike Israel’s ruler in the face with a stick.

2 You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, are the smallest town in Judah, but from you will come the one who will rule Israel for me. His family began in ancient times. He is from days long ago.

3 The Lord will let his people be defeated until the woman gives birth to her child, the promised king. Then the rest of his brothers will come back to join the people of Israel.

4 He will begin to rule Israel in the power of the LORD. Like a shepherd, he will lead his people in the wonderful name of the LORD his God. And they will live in safety because then his greatness will be known all over the world.

5 He will bring a time of peace. Yes, the Assyrian army will come into our country and march through our land.§§ But we have plenty of leaders* we can send against them.

6 With swords in hand, our leaders will defeat the Assyrians and rule the land of Nimrod.† They‡ will save us from the Assyrians

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¶¶4:10 **people of Jerusalem** Literally, “Daughter Zion”, a name for Jerusalem. Also in verse 13. See Zion in the Word List.

¶¶5:1 **strong city** Literally, “daughter of troops”, meaning Jerusalem.

§§5:5 **march … land** This is from the ancient Greek version. The traditional Hebrew text has “trample our palaces”.

*5:5 **plenty of leaders** Literally, “seven shepherds, no eight leaders”.

†5:6 **land of Nimrod** Another name for Assyria.

‡5:6 **They** Literally, “He”. 
when they come into our land and march through our territory.

7 The descendants of Jacob who are left alive will be surrounded by many nations. They will be a blessing, like dew from the LORD or like rain falling on the grass. Those blessings come from God alone, without help from any human.

8 Those from Jacob who are still living are scattered among the nations. But they will be like a lion among the animals in the forest. They will be like a young lion among flocks of sheep. If the lion passes through, he goes where he wants to go. If he attacks an animal, no one can save it. The survivors will be like that.

9 You will lift your hand against your enemies, and you will destroy them.

God Will Force His People to Depend on Him

10 “At that time,” says the LORD, “I will take away your horses, and I will destroy your chariots.

11 I will destroy the cities in your country. I will pull down all your fortresses.

12 You will no longer try to do magic. You will have no more fortune-tellers.

13 I will destroy your statues of false gods. I will pull down your sacred stones. You will not worship what your hands have made.

14 I will destroy the Asherah poles and your false gods.”

15 In my anger I will take revenge on the nations that refuse to obey me.”

The Lord’s Complaint

6 Now hear what the LORD says:

“Present your argument to the mountains.

Let the hills hear your story.”§

2 The LORD has a complaint against his people. Mountains, listen to the LORD’s complaint. Foundations of the earth, hear the Lord. He will prove that Israel is wrong!

3 “My people, tell me what I did! Did I do something wrong against you? Did I make life too hard for you?

4 I will tell you what I did. I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam to you. I brought you from the land of Egypt. I freed you from slavery.

5 My people, remember the evil plans of Balak king of Moab. Remember what Balaam son of Beor said to Balak. Remember what happened from Acacia to Gilgal,** and you will know the LORD is right!”

What Does God Want From Us?

6 Someone will say:

“What must I bring when I come to meet with the LORD?

What must I do when I bow down to God above?

Should I come to him with burnt offerings and year-old calves?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with a thousand rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil?

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*5:14 false gods Or “cities”.
§6:1 This is like a court case. The mountains and hills are the judge and jury.
**6:5 Acacia to Gilgal This story is found in Num. 22 – 25.
Micah 6:8
8 Should I offer him my first child to pay for my wrongs?
Should I sacrifice my very own child for my sins?”

8 Human, the LORD has told you what goodness is.
This is what he wants from you: be fair to other people,
love kindness and loyalty,
and humbly obey your God.

What Were God’s People Doing?
9 The LORD shouts to the city:
“A wise person respects the Lord’s name.††
So pay attention to the punishing rod and to the one who uses it!”‡‡
10 Do the wicked still hide treasures that they have stolen?
Do they still cheat people with baskets that are too small?¶¶
Yes, all this is still happening!
11 Some people carry special weights that they use to cheat people when they weigh their goods.
Should I pardon them?
12 The rich in that city are still cruel.
The people there still tell lies.
Yes, they tell their lies.
13 So I have begun to punish you.
I will destroy you because of your sins.
14 You will eat, but you will not become full.
You will still be hungry and empty.§§
You will try to bring people to safety, but people with swords will kill the people you rescued.
15 You will plant your seeds, but you will not gather food.

You will try to squeeze oil from your olives,
but you will not get any oil.
You will crush your grapes,
but you will not get enough juice to have wine to drink.
16 This is because you obey the laws of Omri* and do all the evil things that Ahab’s family did.
You have followed their teachings, so I will bring you to ruin.
You will be something terrible for people to see and talk about.
The people of other nations will laugh at your misfortune.”

There Is Nothing Good Left in Israel
7 I am upset because everything good is gone!
I feel like someone looking for fruit after the harvest.
It’s like all the good fruit has been picked.
There are no grapes left to eat.
There are no fresh figs that I love.
2 By this I mean that all the faithful people are gone.
There are no good people left.
Everyone is planning to kill someone.
Everyone is trying to trap their brother.
3 People are good at doing bad things with both hands.
Officials ask for bribes.
Judges take money to change their decisions in court.
“Important leaders” do whatever they want to do.
4 Even the best of them is as crooked

††6:9 the Lord’s name Literally, “your name”.
‡‡6:9 So pay attention … uses it The Hebrew text is not clear.
¶¶6:10 baskets … too small Literally, “short ephahs”. An ephah is about 1/2 bushel.
§§6:14 You … empty The Hebrew text is not clear.
as a tangled thorn bush.

**The Day of Punishment Is Coming**

Your watchmen, the prophets, said this day would come, and now that day has come. Now you will be punished. Now you will be confused!

5 Don't trust your neighbour or trust a friend! Don't even speak freely with your wife.

6 Your enemies will be the people in your own house.
A son will not honour his father.
A daughter will turn against her mother.
A daughter-in-law will turn against her mother-in-law.

**The Lord Is the Saviour**

7 So I will look to the LORD for help. I will wait for God to save me. My God will hear me.

8 I have fallen, but enemy, don’t laugh at me!
I will get up again.
I sit in darkness now, but the LORD will be a light for me.

**The Lord Forgives**

9 I sinned against the LORD, so he was angry with me. But he will argue my case for me in court.
He will do what is right for me. Then he will bring me out into the light, and I will see that he is right.

10 My enemies will see that he supports me, and they will be ashamed that they laughed and said, “Where is the LORD your God?” My eyes will see them defeated. They will be trampled like mud in the streets.

**The Jews to Return**

11 The time will come when your walls will be rebuilt.
At that time the country will grow.
12 Your people will come back to your land.
They will come back from Assyria and from the cities of Egypt.
They will come from Egypt and from the other side of the Euphrates River.
They will come from the sea in the west and from the mountains in the east.

13 The land was ruined by the people who lived there and by what they did.

14 So rule your people with your rod. Rule the flock of people who belong to you.
That flock lives alone in the woods and up on Mount Carmel.
That flock lives in Bashan and Gilead as they did in the past.

**Israel Will Defeat Its Enemies**

15 I did many miracles when I took you out of Egypt. I will let you see more miracles like that.
16 The nations will see those miracles, and they will be ashamed. They will see that their “power” is nothing compared to mine. They will be amazed and put their hands over their mouths. They will cover their ears and refuse to listen.

17 They will come from behind their strong walls, shaking with fear and crawling in the dust like snakes. They will come out to meet the LORD our God, trembling and afraid. They will stand in fear of you!
Praise for the Lord

18 There is no God like you.
You take away people’s guilt.
God will forgive his people who survive.
He will not stay angry with them forever,
because he enjoys being kind.

19 He will come back and comfort us again.
He will throw all our sins into the deep sea.

20 God, please be true to Jacob.
Be kind and loyal to Abraham,†
as you promised our ancestors long ago.

†7:20 Abraham Here, Abraham is used to mean all the people of Israel. See Abraham in the Word List.