

Easy-to-Read Version

Language: English

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PDF generated on 2017-07-07 from source files dated 2017-07-07.

9417f999-1fb5-525b-a123-d5d84a7f35e1

ISBN: 978-1-5313-1294-7

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

1 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.

² 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.

³ See, the LORD is leaving his place to come down and walk on the high places[†] of the earth.

⁴ The mountains will melt under him like wax in a fire.
 The valleys will break apart and slide like water rushing down a hill.
⁵ 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 Moresbeth[§] 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.

[¶]1:13 *Jerusalem* Literally, "Daughter Zion". See Zion in the Word List.

[§]1:14 *Moresbeth* 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

2 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.

² 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

³ 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.

⁴ 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 Prophecy

⁶ The people say, "Don't prophesy to us. Don't say those bad things about us. Nothing bad will happen to us."

⁷ 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.

¹⁰ 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."

^{¶¶}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

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.

¹³ 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

3 Then I said:

“Listen, leaders of Jacob and officers of the nation[‡] of Israel!

You should know what justice is.

² But you hate good and love evil.

You tear the skin off the people and tear the flesh off their bones.

³ 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!

⁴ 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

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.

⁶ “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.

⁷ 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

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

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!

¹⁰ You build Zion by murdering people.[§]

You build Jerusalem by cheating people!

¹¹ 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."
¹²Leaders, 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

4 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.
²People 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.
³Then God will act as judge to end argu-
ments between people in many
places.
He will decide what is right for great na-
tions 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.
⁴They 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.
⁵All the people from other nations fol-
low their own gods,
but we will follow the LORD our God for
ever and ever! **

The Kingdom to Be Brought Back

⁶"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.
⁷Those 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.
⁸And 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

⁹Now, 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?

**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.”

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

^{‡‡}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.

⁷The 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.

⁸Those 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.

⁹You 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.

¹¹I will destroy the cities in your
country.

I will pull down all your fortresses.

¹²You will no longer try to do magic.

You will have no more fortune-tellers.

¹³I will destroy your statues of false
gods.

I will pull down your sacred stones.

You will not worship what your hands
have made.

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

¹⁵In 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.[§]

²The 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?

⁴I 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.

⁵My 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?

⁶Someone 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?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with a thou-
sand rams

or with ten thousand rivers of oil?

^f5:14 *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.

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 peo-
ple 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 peo-
ple 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 deci-
sions 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.

^{*}6:16 *Omri* A king of Israel who led his nation to worship false gods. See 1 Kgs 16:21-26.

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

¹⁸There 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.

¹⁹He will come back and comfort us
 again.
 He will throw all our sins into the deep
 sea.
²⁰God, 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.