

Micah 1 - Intro & Background; Micah's Ministry and Place in History; Sins Against God

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I. Introductory superscription (Micah 1:1)

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- (2) When: Days of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1b)
- (3) What: Samaria and Jerusalem (1:1c)

1 The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, *and* which he saw regarding **Samaria and Jerusalem**.

1 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.

1 This message from the LORD came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah concerning the vision he saw about Samaria and Jerusalem:

1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

- Moresheth was a small country village about 20 miles SW of Jerusalem

— Archaeologists have identified it with the ruins of Tell-el-judeideh, near Gath, which was on the Philistine border

- "...Samaria and Jerusalem" - although Micah prophesied from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, his prophecy also concerns the Northern Kingdom during the time that it was under attack by Assyria. It would ultimately be carried away by the Assyrians.

II. God's judgment coming (Micah 1:2—2:13)

(1) Introduction to God's court case against His nation (1:2)

2 **Hear**, you peoples, all of you; Listen carefully, earth and all it contains, And may the Lord GOD be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple.

2 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.

2 "Listen, people! All of you! Earth! Pay attention, and all you inhabitants of it! May the Lord GOD be a witness against you— the Lord from his holy Temple.

2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

- "Hear" - these focus on three prophetic strains (Micah 1:2; 3:1-5; 6:1—7:20)

(2) Coming judgment (1:3-7)

(A) Lord's coming (1:3)

3 For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the **high places** of the earth.

3 For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.

3 Look here! The LORD is coming from his place! He will come down and will trample down the high places throughout the land.

3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

- "...high places" - locations of idol worship (Cf. 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; Ezek 6:6)

(B) Nature's reaction (1:4)

4 The mountains will melt under Him And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, Like water poured down a steep place.

4 The mountains will melt under Him And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, Like water poured down a steep place.

4 The mountains will melt under him and the valleys will split apart, like wax in the presence of fire and like water gushing down a steep incline.

4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

- Similar language is found in the Scriptures from Judges to Habakkuk (Cf. Ps 18:7-10)

(C) Cause of the judgment: sins of Samaria and Jerusalem (1:5)

5 All this is due to the wrongdoing of Jacob And the sins of the house of Israel. What is the wrongdoing of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the **high place** of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

5 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?

5 All this comes about due to the transgression of Jacob, and due to the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob's sin? It's Samaria, isn't it? And what's Judah's high place? It's Jerusalem, isn't it?

5 For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?

- Both Northern and Southern Kingdoms are in view here (Samaria and Jerusalem were the capitals of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms)

— Both had become corrupt. They both had abandoned their heritage after 200 years...

— "...high place" - mountains and hills where pagan altars were erected (2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; Ezek 6:6)

— The reformation of the godly king Hezekiah in the fifth year of his reign had not taken place yet

(D) Condemnation of Samaria (1:6-7)

(a) Condemnation described (1:6-7a)

6 For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a **vineyard**. I will hurl her stones down into the valley, And lay bare her foundations.

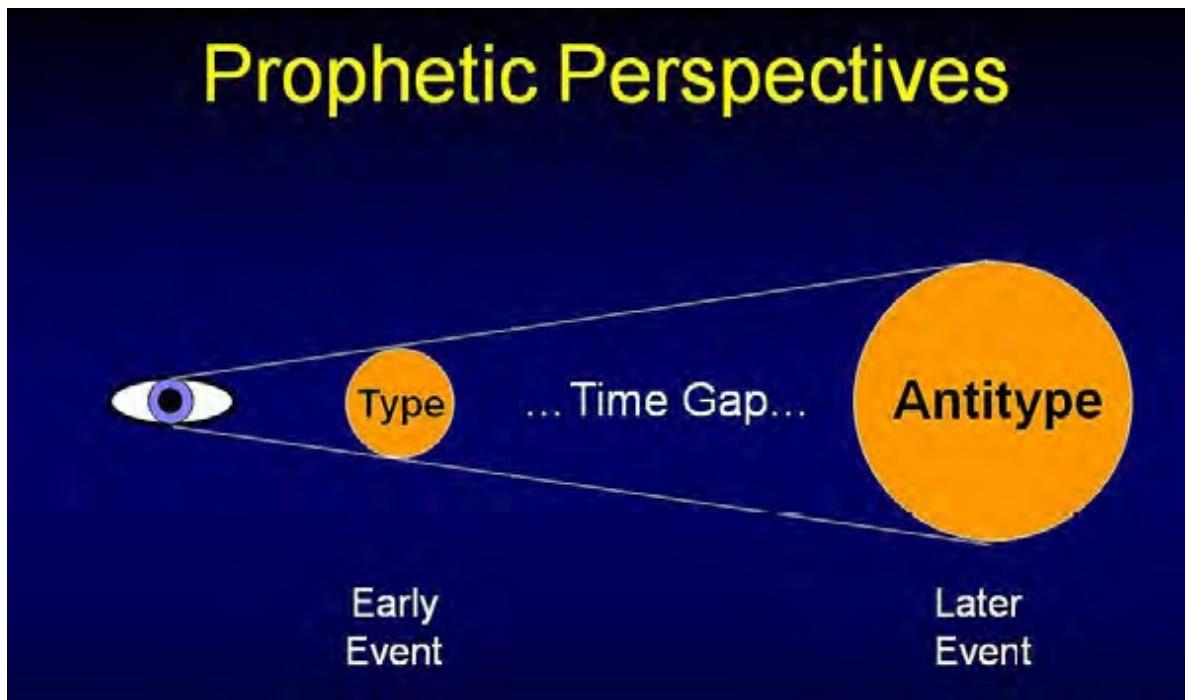
6 For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley And will lay bare her foundations.

6 "So I will turn Samaria into a mound of dirt in a field, a place to plant vineyards. And I will dump her building stones into the valley, uncovering her foundation.

6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

- Micah focuses on the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 17:1-18)
- Although Micah's primary target will be his own Southern Kingdom, he first highlights the plight of the Northern Kingdom (v4-9)
- This was the same approach that Amos used: his opening chapters pronounced judgments on a number of nations: Syria (NE), Philistia (SW), Tyre (NW), Edom (SE), Ammon (E), Moab (E), *and then* Judah (S) and, finally, Israel
- The fall of the capital of the Northern Kingdom actually occurred in the memory of Micah's listeners
- "...vineyard" - it probably was a vineyard originally (1 Kings 16:24)
- Today it lies in ruins as Micah so aptly describes. What the Assyrians began was fulfilled by John Hyrcanus [Josephus, *Antiquities*, xii.28.1].

This local disturbance (v6-16; Cf. 2 Kings 17:1-18) gives rise to the prophecy of the greater invasion in the last days (Micah 4:9-13), and of the Lord's deliverance at Armageddon (Rev 16:14; 19:17).



(b) Cause of condemnation: harlotry (1:7b)

7 All of her idols will be crushed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire, And all of her images I will make desolate; For she collected *them* from a prostitute's earnings, And to the earnings of a prostitute they will return.

7 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.

7 All of her carved images will be crushed to pieces, all the earnings of her prostitution will be burned up, and I will destroy all her idols; because she collected the wages of prostitution, and to the wages of prostitution they will return."

7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

- Amos, too, had denounced the Northern Kingdom for their sexual immorality, cultic prostitution, etc. (Amos 2:7-8. Cf. Deut 23:18; Hosea 9:1; Is 23:17)

(3) Prophet laments coming judgment (1:8-16)

(A) Mourning for Samaria (1:8)

8 Because of this I must mourn and wail, I must go **barefoot and naked**; I must do **mourning like the jackals**, And a mourning like the ostriches.

8 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.

8 "Therefore I will cry out and grieve loudly; I will walk around stripped and naked. I will cry out like a jackal and mourn like a company of ostriches.

8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

- Micah is not asking them to do anything he isn't doing himself

- "...barefoot and naked" - a sign of mourning (2 Sam 15:30)

- "...mourning like the jackals" - wailing like jackals and ostriches (Cf. Job 30:29)

(B) Mourning for Jerusalem (1:9-16)

(a) Jerusalem's fall (1:9)

9 For her wound is incurable, For it has come to Judah; It has reached the gate of my people, *Even to Jerusalem*.

9 For her wound is incurable, For it has come to Judah; It has reached the gate of my people, *Even to Jerusalem*.

9 For Samaria's injury is fatal, reaching all the way to Judah, extending even to the gate of my people—to Jerusalem."

9 For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

The evils of the north have infected the South. (The South had a entire century to learn from the judgment that fell on the North: 722-606 BC; Cf. Is 10; 36). The rest of the book will now focus on Judah and Jerusalem.

One of the reasons that Micah's ministry reaped results was his *specificity*: he applies six (of the 16) verses of this chapter to list the very cities that will participate in the coming disaster—including his home town (v14). The cities listed in v10-15 were in west Judah, Micah's home territory, and were devastated by the Assyrians, along with the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom. Micah's flow was from Samaria to Jerusalem.

(b) Disaster to come upon Jerusalem and her surrounding cities (1:10-15)

10 Do not tell *it* in Gath, Do not weep at all. At **Beth-le-aphrah** roll yourself in the dust in mourning.

10 Tell it not in Gath, Weep not at all. At Beth-le-aphrah roll yourself in the dust.

10 "Don't discuss it in Gath! Don't cry bitterly in Akim! Roll in the ashes, Beth-leaphrah!"

10 Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

"...Beth-le-aphrah" - "house belonging to Aphrah" or "house to (i.e. of) dust." The citizens will cover themselves with dust as a traditional rite of mourning.

- Micah sets the tone for this section by an introductory quotation from David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan after the Israelite defeat on Mount Gilboa (Cf. 2 Sam 1:19-20)

11 Go on your way, inhabitant of **Shaphir**, in shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of **Zaanan** does not escape. The mourning of **Beth-ezel**: "He will take from you its support."

11 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 from you its support."

11 Run away, you residents of Shaphir, displaying your shameful nakedness. Don't come out, you residents of Zaanan! Your firm standing will disappear as Beth-ezel mourns.

11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethezel; he shall receive of you his standing.

- "...Shaphir" - sounds like the word for "beautiful" yet not for long: Their citizens will be marched away naked and in shame...

- "...Zaanan" - sounds like the Hebrew word for "exit," "march," or "go out." Again, in contrast, they will be shut up inside their city like animals until it falls

- "...Beth-ezel" - means "the nearby city." But it will not be near in that day—it will be taken up with its own mourning that it will be of no help to the others

12 For the inhabitant of **Maroth** Waits for something good, Because a disaster has come down from the LORD To the gate of Jerusalem.

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth Becomes weak waiting for good, Because a calamity has come down from the LORD To the gate of Jerusalem.

12 Even though the inhabitants of Maroth long for success, nevertheless evil descended from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem.

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

- "...Maroth" - "bitterness"

13 Harness the chariot to the team of horses, You inhabitant of **Lachish**— She was the beginning of sin To the daughter of Zion— Because in you were found The rebellious acts of Israel.

13 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.

13 "You inhabitants of Lachish, harness your chariot to your swiftest steed— the daughter of Zion has begun to sin—" because within you the transgressions of Israel were revealed.

13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

- "...Lachish" - a well-known military city about 30 miles SW of Jerusalem, famous for chariot horses. They are being harnessed up to flee, not to fight.

— This town first introduced idolatry in Judah as Jeroboam the son of Nebat had in Israel; it was the link of idolatry between Israel and Judah.

— This important city was taken years later at the time of Sennacherib's invasion. He considered its conquest significant enough to have scenes of its encirclement and fall decorate his great palace at Nineveh. These reliefs are now in the British Museum.

14 Therefore you will give parting gifts In behalf of **Moresheth-gath**; The houses of **Achzib** will become a deception To the kings of Israel.

14 Therefore you will give parting gifts On behalf of Moresheth-gath; The houses of Achzib will become a deception To the kings of Israel.

14 Therefore give your gifts to Moresheth-gath; that is, the houses of Achzib as a deceitful symbol to the kings of Israel.

14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-Gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.

- "...Moresheth-Gath" - Micah's home town, sounds like *me'oreshet*, "betrothed"

— He speaks of giving the city wedding gifts as she passes from the rule of her own family to the authority of her cruel new husband, the invader

- "...Achzib" - sounds like 'aksab, "deceitful, disappointing"

- Micah says she will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel
- Achzabim are brooks that are dry in the summer, deceiving the thirsty traveler (Cf. Jer 15:18)

15 Moreover, I will bring on you The one who takes possession, You inhabitant of **Mareshah**. The glory of Israel will enter **Adullam**.

15 Moreover, I will bring on you The one who takes possession, O inhabitant of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will enter Adullam.

15 Nevertheless, I will deliver an heir to you, inhabitants of Mareshah— to Adullam the glory of Israel will come.

15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

- "...Mareshah" - related to the word *yoresh*, "possessor, heir" and she will be possessed by someone else.
- "...Adullam" - was the place of refuge to which David had gone during the dismal days when he was in flight from King Saul (Cf. Joshua 15:35; 1 Sam 22:1)
- It will happen again, says Micah, for the aristocracy of Israel will be forced to take refuge in this area

(c) Lamentation (1:16)

16 Shave yourself bald, yes, 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**.

16 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.

16 "Shave your head and cut off your locks as you mourn your beloved children. Make yourself bald as an eagle, because they will go from you into exile!"

16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

- "...children" - the chapter closes with an appeal to Jerusalem as the parent of her children: the outlying villages. They were instructed under Mosaic law to not trim their beards (Deut 14:1).
- Nevertheless, this was an ultimate form of shame, grief, and remorse (Cf. Is 15:2; Jer 16:6)
- "...baldness like the eagle" - they are to shave their heads in mourning for they are to be taken away into captivity: Exile!
- "...exile" - this is the climactic word that all has been leading up to: exile; slavery