

# **Micah**

## **Chapter 1**

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

**1:1** *word of the LORD that came.* God revealed His divine message to the prophet Micah. (TLSB)

*Micah.* Means “Who is like the LORD?” (CSB)

Common name; it means “Who is like the Lord?” Jeremiah refers to him as prophesying in the days of Hezekiah (Jer 26:18).

*Moresheth.* Probably located near Gath (v. 14), southwest of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.* For background on these kings and the book of Micah see 2Ki 15:32–16:20; 18–20. Isaiah, Hosea and Micah prophesied at roughly the same time (see Isa 1:1; Hos 1:1). (CSB)

Micah was active for about thirty-five years “during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” Jotham was basically a good king, but he impoverished his people by spending lavishly for luxuries and palaces. Ahaz not only tolerated idolatry but actively promoted it by introducing new false gods and rituals. Hezekiah has earned the name “good king Hezekiah” because he sincerely tried to reform his people, but moral and social conditions had become so bad that his reform was short-lived. (PBC)

*kings of Judah.* Jotham (750–735 BC), Ahaz (735–715 BC), and Hezekiah (715–686 BC). Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. *saw.* Suggests that the word came to Micah in the form of visions (Hab 1:1). (TLSB)

*Samaria and Jerusalem.* The capitals of Israel and Judah respectively. The judgment predicted by Micah involved these nations and not just their capital cities. (CSB)

Capitals of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The two cities are representative of the two nations (v 5) (TLSB)

*The Coming Destruction*

**2 Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. 3 For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. 4 And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. 5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? 6 Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. 7 All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return. 8 For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make**

**lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches. 9 For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. 10 Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all; in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust. 11 Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out; the lamentation of Beth-ezel shall take away from you its standing place. 12 For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, because disaster has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem. 13 Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish; it was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. 14 Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel. 15 I will again bring a conqueror to you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. 16 Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair, for the children of your delight; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.**

**1:2 Hear.** The Hebrew for this word introduces prophetic addresses also in 3:1 and 6:1, where it is translated “Listen” (see also 3:9; 6:2). (CSB)

*peoples ... earth.* All nations—an announcement that the day of the Lord is at hand, when God will call the nations to account. In view of that day Micah speaks in his prophecy of the impending judgments on Israel and Judah. (CSB)

The Lord addressed all nations. All people need to realize that God’s testimony against Samaria and Jerusalem applied equally to them. (TLSB)

*witness.* Courtroom imagery. The peoples stand accused, and God gives witness as their accuser. (TLSB)

*holy temple.* Heaven. (CSB)

Probably refers to God’s heavenly habitation rather than to the earthly temple (Ps 18:6). (TLSB)

**1:3–4** Imagery of earthquake and storm (cf Ex 19:16–18; Ps 18:7–12) portrays the Lord’s awesome arrival to judge the nations. All creation will tremble before Him. (TLSB)

**1:3** *The LORD is coming.* An OT expression describing the Lord’s intervention in history (see Ps 18:9; 96:13; 144:5; Isa 26:21; 31:4; 64:1–3). (CSB)

*high places.* May refer to mountains as well as to pagan shrines, since both are cited here (vv. 4–5). Cf. Am 4:13. (CSB)

Tops of the mountains. (TLSB)

**1:4** *mountains will melt.* See Ps 97:5; Na 1:5. (CSB)

The Lord’s judgment on sin is as sure and unavoidable as a river of molten lava flowing down a mountainside, sweeping everyone and everything in its path to certain death and destruction. (PBC)

**1:5** God will appear in judgment to punish the house of Israel (Jacob), which was not exempt from His universal verdict: guilty (v 2). Capital cities were most responsible for these transgressions. (TLSB)

*Jacob.* Jacob was an alternate name for Israel (see Ge 32:28). (CSB)

*Israel*. Here (and in v. 13) specifically the northern kingdom, but Micah uses the name also for the southern kingdom (see 3:1, 8–9; 5:1, 3) or for the whole covenant people (see vv. 14–15; 2:12; 5:2; 6:2). (CSB)

*high place*. Pagan center of idolatry (see 2Ch 28:25). (CSB)

Hilltops or elevated platforms set aside for idolatrous worship (2Ch 28:25). Term is used here to condemn false worship in the Jerusalem temple. Luth: “This expression ‘high places’ means altars. The sense, then, is this: ‘I will uncover for you the sin of both Israel and Judah.’ Israel sins in Samaria, Judah in Jerusalem. This is the source of every wickedness—namely, worship and sacrifices which God has not instituted and which the Word of God has not commanded. And here we see again—as we do in all Scripture—how it does not please God, and in fact, how He hates it, if we establish anything outside the Word of God, however good and holy it may appear” (AE 18:213). (TLSB)

**1:6–7** God is the speaker. This prophecy was fulfilled during Micah’s lifetime when Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722–721 B.C. (2Ki 17:6). (CSB)

**1:6** *heap*. Ruin. Once-densely inhabited place would become open country, fit for planting vineyards. (TLSB)

*into the valley*. Samaria was built on a hill (1Ki 16:24) (CSB)

Stones from her destroyed walls and fortified towers would roll down into the surrounding valley, 300 feet below, leaving her foundations bare. (PBC)

*uncover*. Destruction would be so complete that only city foundations remain. Term is associated with shame and exposing someone to nakedness (Lv 18:6–18; Eze 23:10). (TLSB)

**1:7** *prostitutes*. Prostitution is often an OT symbol for idolatry or spiritual unfaithfulness (Ex 34:15–16; Jdg 2:17; Eze 23:29–30). (CSB)

*wages*. The wealth that Samaria had gained from her idolatry will be taken by the Assyrians and placed in their own temples to be used again in the worship of idols. (CSB)

God would destroy the wealth from fees paid for sacred prostitution at the temple of idols. (TLSB)

**1:8** *this*. The coming destruction of Samaria. (CSB)

*lament and wail*. Prophet will weep over the sufferings of his people (Jer 9:1). (TLSB)

*stripped*. A sign of mourning (2Sa 15:30). It is possible that Micah actually walked stripped and barefoot through Jerusalem (cf. Isa 20:2). (CSB)

*naked*. Clothed only in a loincloth. (CSB)

Public expression of profound grief and mourning. (TLSB)

*jackals ... ostriches*. In the Bible, these two creatures, whose calls resemble the howls and groans of mourning, are often linked (Is 34:13; Jer 50:39). (TLSB)

**1:9** *wound*. The judgment about to overtake Samaria. (CSB)

*her wound is incurable.* Punishment would destroy even the temple city. (CSB)

*gate.* The Assyrian destruction of the northern kingdom will spread like a malignant disease to the gate of Jerusalem (v. 12). The gate was where the process of town government was carried on. (CSB)

Fatal infection that began in Samaria spread unstoppably through the entire body of God's people. (TLSB)

**1:10–16** Bible commentators describe the dirge here as difficult to interpret. Micah referred to many towns that are mentioned nowhere else in the OT and whose precise location is unknown. All of them are likely in the area where the prophet lived, southwest of Jerusalem. In the original Hbr, the names of the towns often suggested to Micah puns and plays on words. One needs to imagine a conquering army marching from town to town spreading panic and consternation. (TLSB)

**1:10–15** The towns mentioned lie in the Shephelah, i.e., the foothills (500-1,500 feet high) between the Mediterranean coastal plain and the mountains of Judah. (CSB)

**1:10** *Tell it not in Gath.* These words introduce a funeral lament over Judah. Micah did not want the pagan people in Gath to gloat over the downfall of God's people. Cf. 2Sa 1:20. (CSB)

David said these very words as he grieved the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2Sm 1:20). *Gath.* One of five chief cities of the Philistines and closest to the western border of Judah, not far from Micah's home (v 14). He does not want the Philistines to take pleasure in the suffering of God's people.

*roll in the dust.* As a sign of grief over the coming catastrophe. (CSB)

*Beth-le-aphrah.* Lit, "house of dust." *roll yourselves in the dust.* Wordplay on town's name expresses mourning. (TLSB)

**1:11** *nakedness and shame.* A reference to their future condition as prisoners (see Isa 20:4). (CSB)

Suggests a beautiful woman, stripped and violated, being led away captive after military defeat. (TLSB)

The people in Shaphir (Beautiful-town), apparently a Philistine city, are not going to look very beautiful when they're taken away in shameful nakedness, according to the custom of conquering nations (Jeremiah 13:22, 26). (PBC)

*will not come out.* Because of the invasion, the people will not dare to go outside their houses. (CSB)

*Zaanan ... do not come out.* Wordplay on town's name, which means "get out."

The inhabitants of Zaanan (Exit-town), south of Moresheth, will not leave their city when the enemy approaches – either because they're dead or because they're hiding in fear behind the walls. (PBC)

*Beth-ezel.* Means "house at the side of." (TLSB)

Beth Ezel (Neighbor-town) would be in such deep mourning it would not open its gates to protect its neighbors. (PBC)

*standing place.* Location from which to resist attack. (TLSB)

**1:12** *has come*. Micah foresees the future so clearly that to him it seems as though it has already come. (CSB)

*Maroth*. Play on Hbr words for “be bitter” and “be rebellious.” (TLSB)

In Maroth (Bitter-town) people will wait in vain for relief when attacked. But all they will get is bitterness, since they deserve the judgment coming on them from the Lord. And this disaster would reach “even to the gate of Jerusalem” (City of Peace), undoubtedly a reference to Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem in 701 BC. (PBC)

*disaster ... to the gate of Jerusalem*. The Lord’s judgment from the heavenly temple (vv 2–3) ultimately reached the gate of the earthly temple (v 9). (TLSB)

**1:13** *Lachish*. One of the largest towns in Judah. Later, Sennacherib was so proud of capturing it that he decorated his palace at Nineveh with a relief picturing his exploits. (CSB)

Fortress city 25 mi SW of Jerusalem, where horses and chariots were likely kept. *it*. Lachish was the starting point of Jerusalem’s sin, perhaps referring to trust in armed force rather than in the Lord. (TLSB)

Lachish may very well have been one of the chariot cities from which Solomon conducted his flourishing horse-trading business. (PBC)

*harness the steeds*. In order to escape. (CSB)

*beginning of sin* – Interest in financial gain and contact with other nations could easily lead God’s people into idolatry, as happened with Solomon (1 Kings 10:26-11:9). Later Israelites even practiced the idolatry of horses and chariots dedicated to the sun (2 Kings 23:11). In addition, the possession of horses and battle chariots could lead Israel to trust them rather than the Lord. Idolatry and lack of trust in the Lord had become Israel’s besetting sins. (PBC)

*Daughter of Zion*. A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

**1:14** *parting gifts*. The Hebrew for these words is translated “wedding gift” in 1Ki 9:16. Jerusalem must give up Moresheth Gath, as a father gives a “wedding gift” to his daughter when she marries. (CSB)

Probably the dowry, the parting gift a new bride takes with her to the house of her husband. (TLSB)

*Moresheth-gath*. Micah’s hometown (v 1). Sounds like Hbr word for “possession,” or “dowry,” suggesting that the residents of the city will be led into captivity. (TLSB)

Micah sees his hometown, Moresheth (Gift or Betrothal-town) being treated like a betrothed woman who given farewell gifts by her father before she leaves his house. Moresheth would be lost to Judah as a bride is lost to her family. (PBC)

*Aczib*. The word “deceptive” is used in Jer 15:18 to describe a brook that has dried up in summer. Like such a brook, the city of Aczib will cease to exist. (CSB)

Sounds like Hbr for “lie,” or “falsehood”; hence condemning the town as a “deceitful thing.” Probably located east of Moresheth. (TLSB)

The Judean town of Aczib (False-town) would live up to its name. As a stream that had run dry deceives the parched traveler who seeks its refreshing waters, so Aczib would prove deceptive. Under the Assyrian attack, it would fail to offer any help to the royal house of Israel who counted on its help. (PBC)

**1:15** Micah again represents God as speaking, as in vv. 6–7. (CSB)

*I will again bring a conqueror to you.* Possibly refers to Assyrian assault on Judah under King Sennacherib in 701 BC, when many towns were besieged and captured, though Jerusalem was spared (2Ki 18:13). (TLSB)

*Mareshah.* Sounds like Hbr word for “possessor,” “heir,” or “conqueror.” Located south of Moresheth (v 14). (TLSB)

Mareshah (Conqueror-town), located between Aczib and Gath, would likewise not escape the conquering Assyrians. (PBC)

*glory of Israel.* God himself (see 1Sa 15:29). (CSB)

When David was fleeing from King Saul, he hid in the cave of Adullam, located c 5 mi NE of Moresheth (1Sm 22:1). (TLSB)

*shall come to Adullam.* In judgment. (CSB)

Israel with all her riches and military strength, all she was once proud of, would be compelled to flee to Adullam (Refuge-town). (PBC)

Micah may be suggesting that Israel’s royalty will be forced to escape to just such a hideout when the conqueror attacks Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**1:16** Israel was taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722–721 B.C., and Judah by the Babylonians in 586. (CSB)

*bald.* Drastic ritual expression of mourning (Is 15:2; Jer 47:5; Am 8:10). *bald as the eagle.* Likely describes a vulture, which has no feathers on its head or neck. (TLSB)

The griffin vulture of the Orient, the entire forepart of whose head is without feathers. (Kretzmann)

*they.* The children. (TLSB)

*exile.* Prophecy of the coming Babylonian exile after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. (TLSB)

**Ch 1** The Lord acts as the witness for the prosecution in the case against His sinful people represented by their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem. His coming is marked by dramatic signs in the creation, reminding us of what will happen on the Last Day. All the earth needs to take note of what happened to Israel and Judah. Our sinful actions are also witnessed by God and deserve wrathful punishment. God has shown the depth of His justice in Christ Jesus, who in love took on Himself God’s just wrath so that we may stand holy and righteous before Him. • Lord Jesus, thank You for declaring me righteous and removing all fear of everlasting judgment against me. Amen. (TLSB)