

1 Micah – Who, What, Why, When?

◆ **Written by whom?**

- The book itself says that Micah was the author. Many scholars believe that some of the chapters were written by prophets after Micah, since the book was circulated for some five centuries. This is actually a collection of his speeches, and the messianic parts were probably added long after his original oracles.

◆ **Written when and where?**

- He was probably from Moresheth in Judah, the Southern Kingdom. This was a town near Isaiah's home, which may explain why there are some similarities between the prophecies.
- The opening lines put Micah in 8th century B.C. He refers to the destruction of Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom) and speaks to social and religious corruption, which fits well the time of Ahaz. The prophet Jeremiah refers to Micah, which puts at least a part of his message in the time of King Hezekiah. By the time this book was written, Judah was a small buffer state between Assyria and Egypt.

◆ **Written to whom?**

- This prophecy was directed primarily toward both Samaria and Jerusalem, the capital cities of the northern and southern kingdoms.

◆ **What's it about?**

- Micah's influence was great during his own day as a powerful force for the needy and the oppressed. He opposed the rich and powerful, and was committed to the idea that there was no true religion without moral obedience to God.

◆ **Written for what purpose?**

- He was against the defective moral and religious conditions of his day. He pointed out the inescapable connection between sin and its punishment. He saw that these sins would lead to political ruin, and he believed that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of its sins.

2 Micah – Chapter 1– Scripture Questions

1. Which three kings reigned during Micah's prophetic career? (vs. 1)
2. Who would give witness against the people? (vs. 2)
3. How does Micah describe the coming of the Lord? (vs. 3, 4)
4. Why was the Lord coming in judgment? (vs. 5)
5. What would happen to Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom)? (vs. 6-7)
6. How did Micah feel about this destruction? (vs. 8)
7. Where had the sins of Samaria spread? (vs. 9)
8. Who was bringing disaster to the gates of Jerusalem? (vs. 12)
9. How would the nobles of Israel react to this disaster? (vs. 15)
10. Where would the children of the nobles go? (vs. 16)

3 Micah – Chapter 1- What Did It Mean To Them?

The opening paragraph was added by a later editor. It gives the name, a hometown, a historical context, says that the message to follow is the word of Yahweh, and identifies Samaria and Jerusalem as the primary focus for Micah's prophetic judgment.

“Micah” is a symbolic name, a short form of Micaiah. It means “Who is like Yahweh”. Micah doesn't speak of his own faith experience. However, he does call for the attention of the entire world. Yahweh is about to make a very dramatic intervention, and it is significant that it is not local. No nation lives outside the concern of God. Every person experiences life in the sight and presence of God.

Micah's listeners would not have been surprised to hear that Samaria's fate was tied to her sins. However, they would have been startled to hear that Jerusalem was also in danger. Samaria had been a center for the worship of false gods—idols were easily found, temple prostitution had been implemented as an income stream, and the worship of Yahweh had been reduced to rote and ritual. Apparently Micah considered Samaria responsible for infecting the entire country of Palestine with their moral sickness.

We can't tell whether or not Micah actually roamed about naked. Most likely he went about in a loincloth or simple girdle. He was a visible parable of what was going to happen to Jerusalem. This would have been jarring to his hearers because there had been about 40 years of prosperity and ease. This prosperity would have seemed to be evidence that they were elect people of God, under his favor. They, like we, suffered from pride and selfishness, mistaking gifts and blessings as rights rather than responsibilities.

4 Micah – Chapter 1 - Application Questions

1. During Micah's career as prophet, religion had become ceremonial. It was a formal institution, with little impact on people's lives. How does this compare to religion today? Can you think of denominations that go against this trend?
2. Prophets like Micah were people compelled by God to speak His messages. They were wildly unpopular, nearly always offending and confusing those who heard the messages. Do you know of any present-day prophets? Where should we look for them?
3. Micah believes that moral corruption is the sin causing the decay and fall of Samaria and Jerusalem. How would you define "moral corruption"? Is it specific sins, or does it describe something deeper?
4. Micah had no trouble with the idea that spiritual sin could cause political trouble. What do you think about this idea? Could it be that our current (say, the last 20 years) of political upheaval have been caused by spiritual sins? Why or why not?

5 Micah – Chapter 2 – Scripture Questions

1. Why do people plot evil? (vs. 1)
2. What do these powerful people do against those who have no power? (vs. 2)
3. Who is planning disaster against these evil people? (vs. 3)
4. In the end, what kind of treatment would the evil people receive? (vs. 4)
5. What did the false prophets try to tell Micah? (vs. 6)
6. The rich and powerful were becoming blatant in their sins. What were they doing? (vs. 8, 9)
7. What kind of prophet did Micah think the sinful people would want? (vs. 11)
8. How does the word of God comfort the remnant, the faithful few? (vs. 12)
9. Who will lead the faithful remnant back to their homeland? (vs. 13)

6 Micah – Chapter 2 - What Did It Mean To Them?

In the next section, Micah goes into specifics of the ways that the rich and powerful are brutalizing the poor and politically powerless. In his day, these upper class people were defrauding the poor, making themselves rich. He speaks of them as if they were lying awake at night coming up with new ways to get what they want, waking up early to take what belonged to others. This greed for riches and power was the basis for the national crisis and the future collapse of the nation.

Micah makes it clear that there was no way to save themselves. The captivity was unavoidable, and the humiliation would be so great that they would be unable to hold their heads up among the other nations. Their blatant disregard for social concerns demanded by their covenant with Yahweh put them in rebellion against the Lord; the punishment would be to suffer the same indignities.

Micah speaks of the land, which had been assigned to them by Yahweh, as something that would be taken away from them and become the property of her enemies. The 'land' was a strong part of their identity as a people. To lose this land was to lose their very identity, but it would happen because their sins had defiled the land.

The last two verses are widely considered to be an addition by a later editor, one who (seemingly) could not leave the people without hope. Whether or not it was spoken by Micah, the stark contrast makes the hopefulness stand out. The hope was not for the current generation, but for a remnant that would someday be led by their king from captivity to deliverance. This goes beyond a specific hope for the hearer's children into a picture of the future Messiah, "the Breaker" who would lead them to glory.

7 Micah – Chapter 2 - Application Questions

1. Micah is livid about people of power who take advantage of those unable to stand against abuse. Can you think of ways that this happens today? (Example: landlords who refuse to make repairs and threaten to evict renters that complain.) What should Christians do about this type of evil?
2. Micah thinks that the only kind of prophet the people want to hear is one who promises them good times and wine. What kind of prophet do you think people want today? Do people prefer those who promise good times are coming, or do they prefer prophets who flood the blogs with predictions of doom?
3. There is a promise that God will bring disaster on those who do evil. Looking around this world, it sure seems that evil is winning. Is this promise still good? Why do you think so?

8 Micah – Chapter 3 – Scripture Questions

1. How should the rulers of Israel behave? (vs. 1)
2. How does Micah describe the actions of the leaders? (vs. 2, 3)
3. What will happen when these same rulers are in trouble? Why? (vs. 4)
4. As for the false prophets, what do they consider to be ‘peace’? How do they behave toward anyone who refuses to support them? (vs. 5)
5. What would happen to these false prophets? (vs. 6, 7)
6. How does Micah describe himself? (vs. 8)
7. Why was Micah given this power? (vs. 8)
8. Micah describes the state of Judah: the leaders made legal decisions based on _____, the priests would teach only for a _____, and the prophets told fortunes for _____. (vs. 11)
9. In spite of their sin, what did the leaders, priests and prophets believe about the Lord? (vs. 11)
10. Because of these leaders, priests and prophets, what was going to happen to Jerusalem? (vs. 12)

9 Micah – Chapter 3 - What Did It Mean To Them?

After a brief hopeful couple of verses, Micah returns to his main theme with incredibly vivid images of brutality against the people. In spite of knowing their responsibilities, the leaders (both political and religious) ‘hate good and love evil’. Micah describes this betrayal in terms of slaughtering, skinning and cooking meat. And not just slaughtering: viciously maiming living victims. It is as though the shepherds who have been given care of the flock are themselves devouring the sheep. Micah speaks the eternal truth that deeds have consequences. Payback and punishment may be delayed, but they will come.

It would be easy to think that these leaders were openly bad and wicked, but that is probably not true. In the popular sense, they may even have seemed good. They kept the formal requirements of their religion; praying, giving charitably, offering sacrifices. However, religion has to work its way into daily living. The way these leaders lived showed that their hearts were not on God.

The false prophets here were men who preached whatever good news seemed to be wanted, as long as the price was right. Most likely they were members of a professional guild, a job like being a farmer, a lawyer, or a mechanic. It was not a calling, but a way to make a living. Micah, on the other hand, preached with ‘power and the Spirit’, even when it was extremely unpopular.

The perversion of justice, the greed for power, was so great that the leaders were blinded to the moral issues involved. It had gotten so bad that the entire nation was built on the misery, suffering, hardship, and exploitation of the needy and helpless. The whole society would pay the price for the decadence and moral decay of the nation.

10 Micah – Chapter 3 - Application Questions

1. In Micah's opinion, those who were supposed to be the leaders of the nation were the ones who were leading them to ruin. Our leaders seem to have the same kind of failings as in Micah's time. Should we be worried that God will bring our nation to rubble as punishment? Why or why not?
2. Do you know any good political leaders? Who are they? How can you tell they are good?
3. During every national administration, there have been religious leaders who used their platforms to advance political agendas. According to Micah, God takes a dim view of this kind of behavior. How do you feel about religious leaders being involved in politics? Is it a good idea or a bad idea? Why?
4. The Israelites of Micah's time felt that because they were God's chosen people, nothing really bad could happen to the nation. Though it took a century, Micah's prophecy was fulfilled. How safe is America from this kind of destruction? Do you feel that our relationship with God is better than, say, his relationship with North Korea? Why or why not?

11 Micah – Chapter 4 – Scripture Questions

1. In the future, where will God's Temple be located? Who will come there? (vs. 1)
2. What will those who come to the Temple say? (vs. 2)
3. How will people behave after God's judgment? (vs. 3)
4. What sort of safety will be available to people? (vs. 4)
5. Who will be gathered up by God to become his new nation? (vs. 6, 7)
6. What would be Jerusalem's place in God's Kingdom? (vs. 8)
7. Before this great time, where would the people be taken? (vs. 10a)
8. Who would save the people? (vs. 10b)
9. What would the restored people (Daughter Zion) do to the nations that came against them? (vs. 13a)
10. How would the victorious nation of Israel use the wealth of the defeated nations? (vs. 13b)

12 Micah – Chapter 4 - What Did It Mean To Them?

What a difference between these sections! After a harsh, judgmental prophecy that seems to imply ruin and destruction for the nation of Israel, here is a wonderful promise that the chosen people will be restored because Yahweh has promised this, and his promise cannot be broken.

There is some conflict between scholars about whether this chapter (and the following one) were actually written by Micah. There is a section in Isaiah 2:2-4 which is almost identical. Was Micah quoting Isaiah, or Isaiah quoting Micah? Or did the later editor insert this section? At any rate, we see that God stays with his people, even when they are chastised and punished. Their land may be taken and divided, the people broken down to a tiny remnant, but God is faithful. He sees history from the beginning to the end, and in the End all will see his power and faithfulness.

In our world today, it is considered presumptuous to say that another nation can be so important that everyone wants to go there, to learn there. Micah, however, affirms that there will come a time when Yahweh will be so well known and respected that people will be drawn to him. The Hebrew for ‘paths’ in verse 2 means to tread. The word ‘teach’ means to shoot, or throw. The word for ‘ways’ means to travel with. So you could say that in times to come, God will shoot into us knowledge of his well-worn paths, then we will walk along sharing his daily life. This is important because it is God himself who puts the desire in our hearts to be with him. As Jesus said, “I will draw all men unto me.” And, having been drawn to him and into relationship with him, there will be no more need for conflict and hatred.

13 Micah – Chapter 4 - Application Questions

1. What do you think it will be like in God’s Kingdom? Micah sees a peaceful place. Do you think we will keep doing what we are doing now, just with no fighting or killing?
2. In Micah’s prophecy, he sees the End of the Age bringing the remnant of the nation of Israel back to Jerusalem to become a mighty nation. A Gallup survey in 2015 found that 65% of Israelis say they are either “not religious” or “convinced atheists”, while 30% say they are “religious”. Do you think that this means the End of the Age is still a long way off? Is it possible to use the state of the current nation of Israel as a kind of “canary in the coal mine” for the Second Coming of Jesus?
3. Micah seems committed to the idea that only suffering can bring eventual redemption. How important is it to have suffering in our lives? What are the benefits?
4. Nations that do not know God are spoken of as “ignorant”; that is, they simply don’t know who they are up against. If we think of these other nations like this, how does it change our attitude toward them and their people?

14 Micah – Chapter 5 – Scripture Questions

1. When Jerusalem was attacked, how would they treat Israel's ruler? (vs. 1)
2. Where was Israel's new ruler to come from? (vs. 2)
3. What was going to happen to the people of Israel until the promised leader arrived? (vs. 3)
4. Who would give this promised ruler the authority and strength to rule the people? (vs. 4)
5. What would this promised leader bring to the people? (vs. 5)
6. From whom would the promised leader save the people? (vs. 6)
7. Where would the scattered people of Jacob be, those few who were left alive? (vs. 7)
8. Who would actually win the battle over the enemies of Israel? (vs. 9)
9. In this time of peace, what would the Lord destroy? (vs. 10-14)
10. What would happen to the nations who were disobedient to the Lord? (vs. 15)

15 Micah – Chapter 5 - What Did It Mean To Them?

This chapter is a bit difficult. It seems to swing back and forth between prophecies about the Messiah and warnings about the coming destruction. It also seems possible that at least one verse, and possibly a section of verses, may have been inserted after the original prophecy. Overall, the theme is that the people will be unable to save themselves, and that someday God will send a savior who (by the power and authority of God) will save his people.

There was a popular expectation that some fantastic, amazing sign would show when to expect the coming of the Messiah. It was believed that the Messiah would have a divine origin, that he would be born of woman, and that he would bring in a new era of prosperity and peace. Since these ideas already existed, Micah's prophecy about a coming messiah were not unusual. Micah shared with Isaiah the idea that the coming Messiah would come from the line of Jesse, whose region was that of Bethlehem.

This coming time, called the messianic age, would have three main features:

1. All the scattered branches of the house of Israel would be reunited.
2. The messianic king would be different. He would be a shepherd king rather than a warrior king.
3. The kingdom would be peaceful, and not just locally: this peace would be worldwide. Not only so, but the coming Messiah would be so admired and respected that he will be considered great to the ends of the earth.

16 Micah – Chapter 5 - Application Questions

1. Micah sees that Jerusalem will be made entirely helpless. A savior will come from tiny, insignificant Bethlehem. Imagine our country being devastated and a leader coming to our rescue...from Puerto Rico. What does this teach us about the qualities of leaders chosen by God?
2. When Micah is talking about ‘the remnant’ he implies that God’s ultimate purpose is not dependent upon man, but works itself out independently, as his dews and showers water the earth. How do we make this mesh with Jesus’ command to ‘Go and make disciples of all nations’ as if it depends on us?
3. Micah mentions three different kinds of idols: images (carved likenesses of men and animals), pillars (standing or stacked stones), and asherah (sacred poles). What are some specific things that people worship today?
4. One of the main reasons that Israel was chosen was so that she could teach other nations the ways of the Lord. Jesus told his followers to “Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” How do you think our mission work stacks up against this command?

1. Israel, listen to the Lord's message. He says to me, "Stand up in court. Let the mountains serve as witnesses. Let the hills hear what you have to say."
2. Hear the Lord's case, you mountains. Listen, you age-old foundations of the earth. The lord has a case against his people Israel. He is bringing charges against them.
3. The Lord says, "My people, what have I done to you? Have I made things too hard for you? Answer me.
4. I brought your people up out of Egypt. I set them free from the land where they were slaves. I sent Moses to lead them. Aaron and Miriam helped him.
5. Remember how Balak, the king of Moab, planned to put a curse on your people. But Balaam, the son of Beor, gave them a blessing instead. Remember their journey from Shittim to Gilgal. I want you to know that I always do what is right.
6. The people of Israel say, "What should we bring with us when we go to worship the Lord? What should we offer the God of heaven when we bow down to him? Should we take burnt offerings to him? Should we sacrifice calves that are a year old?
7. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? Will he take delight in 10,000 rivers of olive oil? Should we offer our oldest sons for the wrong things we've done? Should we sacrifice our own children to pay for our sins?
8. The Lord has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you. You must treat people fairly. You must love others faithfully. And you must be very careful to live the way your God wants you to.
9. The Lord is calling out to Jerusalem. And it would be wise to pay attention to him. He says, "Listen, tribe of Judah and you people who are gathered in the city.
10. You sinful people, should I forget that you got your treasures by stealing them? You use dishonest measures to cheat others. I have placed a curse on that practice.
11. Should I forgive you who use dishonest scales? You use weights that weigh things heavier or lighter than they really are.
12. The right people among you harm others. You are always telling lies. You try to fool others by what you say.
13. So I will strike you down. I will destroy you because you have sinned so much.
14. You will eat. But you will not be satisfied. Your stomachs will still be empty. You will try to save what you can. But you will not be able to. If you do save something, it will be destroyed in battle.
15. You will plant seeds. But you will not harvest any crops. You will press olives. But you will not use the oil for yourselves. You will crush grapes. But you will not drink the wine that is made from them.
16. You have followed the evil practices of King Omri of Israel. You have done what the family of King Ahab did. You have followed their bad example. So I will let you be destroyed. Others will make fun of you. The nations will laugh at you.

18 Micah – Chapter 6 – Scripture Questions

1. What type of image does Micah use to describe the confrontation between God and the people of Israel? (vs. 1, 2)
2. Which events did the Lord use to remind the people of his past grace to them? (vs. 4, 5)
3. When the people were talking about worship, what sort of gifts did they discuss? (vs. 6)
4. How did Micah exaggerate their sacrifice ideas about what they thought God wanted? (vs. 7)
5. In reality, what did God want from his people? (vs. 9)
6. How did the people of Jerusalem/Israel get their riches (their treasures)? (vs. 10)
7. What sort of things were they doing to cheat one another? (vs. 11, 12)
8. Why was God going to destroy the people? (vs. 13)
9. Name the ways that the people tried to satisfy themselves which would no longer work. (vs. 14, 15)
10. How did the examples of King Omri and King Ahab affect the nation? (vs. 16)

19 Micah – Chapter 6 - What Did It Mean To Them?

The language and style of Micah's words are that of a courtroom. This seems to be a common practice among the prophets, and they used Nature itself as a witness against the people. The basis of the lawsuit is that of a breach of promise. Because Israel had been chosen as God's people, they had an obligation to follow him and behave in certain ways. They have failed in their part of the covenant/contract, and so are subject to the consequences of their failure.

God begins by reminding Micah's hearers of the greatest gift: he redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. He even provided them with leaders—Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The reminder of King Balak of Moab and Balaam (non-Jewish prophet) are peculiar until we remember that Balaam advised King Balak to destroy the people of Israel by seducing them into Baal worship. This idolatry included adultery with the prostitutes of Baal. This idolatry began in the city of Shittim, where “they began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab” (Numbers 25:1). Another moral disaster happened at Gilgal, where Saul was anointed King when the people rejected God as their King. Micah wanted his hearers to know that their destruction resulted from the long process of rejection of God's lordship.

The famous verse which speaks of the Lord's plan for good does not mean that these are the only behaviors needed to make God happy. Taken in context, we understand that sacrifices of any kind are meaningless unless they are accompanied by ethical behavior. It isn't that sacrifices are wrong, but that if there is no evidence in one's life of commitment to the Lord, these sacrifices are simply not relevant.

20 Micah – Chapter 6 - Application Questions

1. In the court scene that Micah imagines, God lists the ways that he has blessed the people. What are some ways that God has blessed our country?
2. Verse 8 is famous for being a simple explanation of God's expectations for his people. Our relationship with God is different now, after Christ. How have God's expectations changed?
3. In both the Old and the New Testament, God is very particular about the actions of his people. In Israel, people were using dishonest weights, being deceitful, lying to one another. If you were going to name the worst aspects of our national sins, what would you choose?
4. Micah accuses his listeners of following the bad examples of King Omri and King Ahab. We need some good examples to follow: can you think of any men or women who could serve as good examples to us?

21 Micah – Chapter 7 – Scripture Questions

1. How does Micah describe his suffering? (vs. 1)
2. In Micah's opinion, what has happened to all the good people in the Land? (vs. 2)
3. What has happened to the powerful, the rulers, the judges? (vs. 3, 4)
4. How will relationships be affected by the coming destruction? (vs. 5, 6)
5. Who does Micah turn to for safety? (vs. 7)
6. What is the attitude of the people of Israel about their punishment? (vs. 8, 9)
7. How does the prophet comfort his listeners? (vs. 10-12)
8. What words does the prophet use to ask the Lord for protection? (vs. 14)
9. How will the nations react to the Lord's salvation of his people? (vs. 16, 17)
10. In the last words of praise, how does the prophet speak of the Lord? (vs. 18-20)

22 Micah – Chapter 7 - What Did It Mean To Them?

Like a day that begins with a storm and ends with a beautiful sunset, this chapter begins with gloom and ends in hope. It seems likely that Micah's prophecies were followed by a hymn or poem of praise, in order to remind the readers of Yahweh's promises to his people.

Micah begins by sorrowing over the lack of remorse by those who had control of society. They are not simply corrupt: they are openly corrupt. Even the best of them were capable of betrayal, and the worst of them were destructive of everyone around them if it was to their benefit.

However, all is not lost. The prophet trusts God to act and to answer prayer. There is a vivid contrast between the people of God sitting in darkness and the wonderful effect of the light of God that will shine among them. Ultimately, the remnant will be exalted and the hostile nations of the world will be covered in shame and trampled like mud.

The ending of this chapter is a description of the eventual triumph of the remnant and praise of their faithful Lord. This triumph comes about because of their relationship to God. To the prophets, the Exodus was the central event in the theology of history. This Exodus would happen again and again, but in new and greater ways. Ultimately, this Exodus theme would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

23 Micah – Chapter 7 - Application Questions

1. How familiar are Micah's complaints and sorrows about his society? What does this say about humanity?
2. When destruction came to Jerusalem, relationships were broken and ruined. Family members were at each other's throats. How can God help us repair broken relationship? What do we do?
3. Israel yearned to see the return of their respect among the nations. This hasn't happened yet. Do you think it seems likely that it ever will?
4. The last three verses seem to be a hymn of praise to the Lord. It is very hard to avoid cynicism about the Lord's care when our world seems to be so broken and sinful. How can we keep up our faith in God's goodness in the face of so much evil?