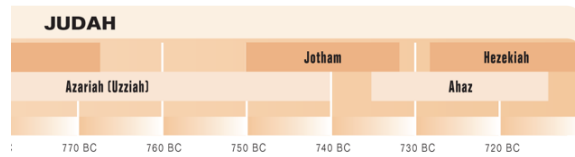
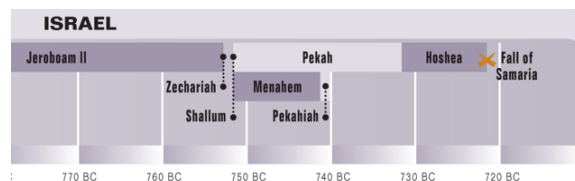


# SPENDING TIME WITH THE PROPHETS

the book of Micah

## Setting of the book:

The historical setting of Micah is given in the first verse of the book: “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.” As we have noted in previous lessons, Israel and Judah had both experienced a resurgence during the reigns of Jeroboam II (Israel) and Uzziah (Judah). While both kingdoms had experienced military success and prosperity, they had drifted even further from the Lord. Like the other prophets of his day, Micah chronicled the transgressions of God’s people: idolatry (Mic. 1.7; 5.12–14); the seizure of property (2.2, 9); the failure of civil leadership (3.1–3, 9–10; 7.3), religious leadership (3.11), and prophetic leadership (3.5–7, 11); the belief that personal sacrifice satisfies divine justice (6.6–7); and corrupt business practices and violence (6.10–12). For these many transgressions, God’s judgment was coming!



Assyria was weak during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, but during the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, the Assyrians had become a dominant power once again. “The

*reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, along with the increasing threat of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, provide the broad background for Micah. First, Ahaz stands out among the three Judean kings for his idolatry (2 Kings 16:1–4; Mic. 6:16) as well as for the help he sought from the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 b.c.) in the face of Syro-Ephraimite aggression against Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:5–9; 2 Chron. 28:16–21). Second, Samaria, the northern Israelite capital, experienced exile as it fell (2 Kings 17; Mic. 1:6–7) to the Assyrian Shalmaneser V (727–722 b.c.). Finally, Sennacherib (705–681 b.c.) captured numerous cities and*



villages of the Shephelah controlled by Hezekiah (1:10–16), but ultimately failed to capture Jerusalem in 701 (2 Kings 18:13–19:37)."<sup>1</sup> Micah's hometown of Moresheth lay in the path of the invading Assyrians, a fact contained in his prophecy (Micah 1.10-16). We can only imagine the sorrow of Micah and his fellow prophets as they foretold the destruction that awaited their own people if they would not repent. Yet, Micah was faithful to the Lord's charge as even the prophet Jeremiah would reference several years later (Jeremiah 26.18).

### **The Message of Micah:**

Micah's prophecy contains 3 cycles of judgment and restoration. Each cycle contains a call for the people to "hear".

1. Cycle One (Micah 1-2)
  - a. Judgment on Israel & Judah (1.2-2.11)
    - i. The Lord promises judgment on Israel & Judah (1.2-5)
    - ii. Samaria judged (1.6-7)
    - iii. Lament for Judah (1.8-16)
    - iv. Judgment on wealthy oppressors (2.1-5)
    - v. They rejected true prophets in favor of the false (2.6-11)
  - b. Promise to gather Jacob (2.12-13)
2. Cycle Two (Micah 3-5)
  - a. Present leaders denounced (3.1-12)
    - i. Indictment of leaders (3.1-4)
    - ii. Indictment of false prophets (3.5-8). Note the contrast with Micah in vs. 8.
    - iii. Jerusalem and temple would be destroyed because of wicked leaders and false prophets (3.9-12)
  - b. God's Kingdom established (4.1-13)
    - i. Establishment of the Lord's kingdom (4.1-5)
    - ii. Gathering of the Lord's people (4.6-8)
    - iii. The Lord would deliver from their present distress (4.9-13)
  - c. The Shepherd-King (5.1-15)
    - i. Nations arrayed against Jerusalem and her King (5.1)
    - ii. The shepherd-king from Bethlehem (5.2-6)
    - iii. Remnant of Israel restored (5.7-9)
    - iv. Every source of false hope removed (5.10-15)
3. Cycle Three (Micah 6-7)
  - a. Indictment of the nation (6)
    - i. The Lord's indictment of the people (6.1-5)
    - ii. What the Lord desired: justice, mercy & humility (6.6-8)
    - iii. Call to fear the Lord (6.9-12)
    - iv. Righteous judgment was coming (6.13-16)
  - b. The prophet's response (7)
    - i. Sorrow (7.1-6)
    - ii. Trust (7.7-13)
    - iii. Prayer and confidence (7.14-20)

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<sup>1</sup> Crossway Bibles. *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

### **Application:**

1. The Glorious Reality. In the second cycle of Micah's prophesy, things did not look well for Jerusalem and her leaders. The Lord declared that "Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple will become high places for a forest" (3.12). Jerusalem would fall, and so her ruler, "with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek" (4.13). But out of this grim reality would spring some of the most glorious revelations of the future. The Lord's Kingdom would be established, based on His ways (4.1-2). This Kingdom would be for all the nations and it would be one of peace (4.3-5). Furthermore, even though the leaders of Jerusalem had failed, God would raise a Shepherd-King from lowly Bethlehem (5.2). He would care for His people and give them victory over their enemies (5.4-9). But what was a glorious future for the faithful of Micah's day, is the glorious reality the faithful have now. We have a Kingdom which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12.28) and have a King who shepherds our souls (1Peter 2.25)!
2. What The Lord Requires. In chapter 6 God indicted His people for leaving Him in spite of how He had protected them (vss. 1-5). Vss. 6-7 seem to be Israel's response, asking what action or sacrifice the Lord might desire from them. Their questions were insulting to God, implying that He could be bribed and forgetting that what they might offer to the Lord already belonged to Him! The Lord wanted one thing: themselves! He wanted a people committed to justice, a quality of God they had failed to implement (2.1-2). He wanted a people that love "kindness" (idea of the Hebrew word is covenant faithfulness). He wanted a people who would walk humbly before their God. If God's people then had truly given themselves to Him then they would never have to wonder what the Lord required of them, for they would have already given Him their all. This is a principle for God's people throughout time.
3. The Righteous Response To A Sinful World. Following God's indictment of the people in 6.1-8, the Lord declared again that His righteous judgment was coming on these covenant breakers (6.9-16). Chapter 7 seems to contain Micah's response to God's impending judgment, and in his response we see how the righteous should feel about a sin-filled world that will receive its just punishment from God. We sorrow over this sinful world (vss. 1-6), while committing our trust to the Lord (vss. 7-13) who saves His people (vss. 14-20).