



## Micah - Chapter One

### Summary of Chapter One

Following the introduction of where Micah comes from, the period in which he prophesied and his target audience, the prophecy then opens with the pronouncement of judgement on Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom (vv.2-7), with attention then switching to Judah in the south (vv.8-16).

### I Micah 1:1 - Superscription

**Micah introduces himself as coming from Moresheth in Judah, the period during which he received God's Word and that the prophecy concerned both the northern and southern kingdoms.**

<sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

### Micah 1:1

The word of the Lord. Nothing is really known about Micah's background or call, but it is known that he had a strong sense of his own calling as a prophet, and he says so: <<*But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin*>> (Micah 3:8).

The prophet identifies himself as Micah of Moresheth, which was his hometown, located about 22 miles or 35 km southwest of Jerusalem on the border lands between Judah and the Philistines. This means that the prophet Micah was like the Amos, a man from the country sent to the city to bring the word of the Lord. This is different from other prophets who tend to identify themselves by their family, for example: <<*The word of the Lord that came to Joel son of Pethuel*>> (Joel 1:1), and: <<*Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai*>> (Jonah 1:1). He is one of a few prophets to be referenced by another: <<*Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed*>> (New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised)

*as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height”>> (Jeremiah 26:18).*

In the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. This means that Micah ministered as a prophet some time between the years 739 BC, the start of the reign of Jotham, and 686 BC, the end of the reign of Hezekiah. Since Hezekiah was a noted reformer, it can be surmised that the sin Micah confronted mainly concerns the time before the important reforms of Hezekiah as detailed in 2 Kings Chapters 18-20. This makes Micah a contemporary of Isaiah: <<*The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*>> (Isaiah 1:1), and Hosea: <<*The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel*>> (Hosea 1:1).

Concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. The city of Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Micah looks to both the northern and southern kingdoms in his prophecy. In Judah during this time, King Ahaz was a particularly evil ruler. In Israel, there was a succession of evil kings. The sequence Samaria and Jerusalem anticipates the structure of Chapters 1-3.

## **II Micah 1:2-2:13 - The Announcement of Judgement on Israel and Judah**

**The first major section describes the impending judgement:**

- 1. God’s punishment of Samaria and Judah (1:2-16).**
- 2. Abuses and abusers of Yahweh’s land (2:1-11).**
- 3. The divine promise to gather Jacob (2:12-13).**

### **II.a Micah 1:2-16 - God’s Punishment of Samaria and Judah**

Refer to the chapter summary above.

#### **II.a.i Micah 1:2-7 - Judgement Pronounced against Samaria**

The coming of the Lord and the reason for his appearing (vv.2-5a) is followed by four rhetorical questions from the Lord (vv.5b-7). The undoing of creation (v.4) anticipates the undoing of Samaria (vv.6-7).

- <sup>2</sup> Hear, you peoples, all of you;  
listen, O earth, and all that is in it;  
and let the Lord God be a witness against you,  
the Lord from his holy temple.

## Micah 1:2

**Hear.** This verb, also translated as listen, marks the beginning of major divisions in Micah 1:2, 3:1 and 6:1.

As **a witness against** Samaria, the Lord will bring accusations and provide evidence: <<*He said to them, 'The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.'* And they said, 'He is witness'>> (1 Samuel 12:5), and: <<*Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts*>> (Malachi 3:5).

**His holy temple** refers to the Lord's dwelling in the heavens: <<*The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind*>> (Psalm 11:4), <<*But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!*>> (Habakkuk 2:20). It is parallel to 'his place' in v.3.

- <sup>3</sup> For lo, the Lord is coming out of his place,  
and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.

## Micah 1:3

**Coming out** implies Yahweh's marching out for battle: <<*Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water*>> (Judges 5:4), <<*For the Lord comes out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no longer cover its slain*>> (Isaiah 26:21), and: <<*Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle*>> (Zechariah 14:3). With vivid images, Micah sees the Lord descending from heaven to earth, and coming in judgement.

**The high places** designates either geographical heights: <<*For lo, the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, reveals his thoughts to mortals, makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth – the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!*>> (Amos 4:13), or the cultic Canaanite shrines located on them.

- <sup>4</sup> Then the mountains will melt under him  
and the valleys will burst open,  
like wax near the fire,  
like waters poured down a steep place.

### Micah 1:4

The mountains will melt. If the mountains and valleys cannot stand before the Lord, what hope does sinful, rebellious man have? Other Scriptures use similar imagery: <<*The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth*>> (Psalm 97:5), and: <<*The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who live in it*>> (Nahum 1:5).

- <sup>5</sup> 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?

### Micah 1:5

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. This dramatic, powerful descent of the Lord is only because of the sins of his people. It is easy to imagine that the people of Judah and Israel thought this was unfair. They looked around at the pagan nations surrounding them and saw that they were even more corrupt than themselves. Nevertheless, the principle stands: <<*For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God*>> (1 Peter 4:17). However, Christians also do well to remember the second part of that verse: <<*if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*>>.

Jacob; the house of Israel. These terms and the mention of the capital cities of Samaria (northern kingdom) and Jerusalem (southern kingdom) underscore that the whole nation is in view, both in judgement here and in eventual restoration: <<*I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people*>> (Micah 2:12).

- <sup>6</sup> Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country,  
a place for planting vineyards.  
I will pour down her stones into the valley,  
and uncover her foundations.

### Micah 1:6

Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country. I will expresses the Lord's intention to act, a repetitive theme for the prophecy. Micah prophesies the

coming judgement on Samaria, the capital city of Israel. This was fulfilled in 722 BC when Samaria fell to the Assyrians and was completely destroyed. A similar fate awaits Jerusalem: <<*Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height*>> (Micah 3:12). This was fulfilled in 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Solomonic Temple.

I will uncover her foundations. The threat speaks of judgement and introduces the concept of public shame: <<*Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, 'Let her be profaned, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion'*>> (Micah 4:11), and: <<*Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, 'Where is the Lord your God?' My eyes will see her downfall; now she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets*>> (Micah 7:10).

<sup>7</sup> All her images shall be beaten to pieces,  
all her wages shall be burned with fire,  
and all her idols I will lay waste;  
for as the wages of a prostitute she gathered them,  
and as the wages of a prostitute they shall again be used.

### Micah 1:7

All her images, all her wages, all her idols. Yahweh's judgement and destruction will be extensive. Micah combines the ideas of idolatry and spiritual adultery. Money spent on idols and their worship will be brought to nothing when the mighty army of the Assyrians destroys Samaria.

The wages of a prostitute. The spiritual infidelity of the city is likened to the actions of a prostitute, as elsewhere in the OT: <<*Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord; they did not follow their example*>> (Judges 2:17), and: <<*Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your whorings. So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different. Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whoring with your lovers, and because of all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, therefore, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated; I will gather them against you from all around, and will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness*>> (Ezekiel 16:33-36).

## II.a.ii Micah 1:8-16 - The Doom of the Cities of Judah

Micah's mourning (vv.8-9) is followed by a list of the cities that will face disaster (vv.10-15) and the threat of exile (v.16).

- <sup>8</sup> For this I will lament and wail;  
I will go barefoot and naked;  
I will make lamentation like the jackals,  
and mourning like the ostriches.

### Micah 1:8

I will go barefoot and naked. Mourning was usually signified by the wearing of sackcloth: <<*Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son for many days*>> (Genesis 37:34), <<*When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly*>> (1 Kings 21:27), and: <<*Lament like a virgin dressed in sackcloth for the husband of her youth*>> (Joel 1:8), and head covering: <<*But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went*>> (2 Samuel 15:30); hence this may be a more intense mourning, or else an image of going into exile: <<*Then the Lord said, 'Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt*>> (Isaiah 20:3-4).

I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches. Judah is pictured as a land laid waste: <<*Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches*>> (Isaiah 34:13), and: <<*Therefore wild animals shall live with hyenas in Babylon, and ostriches shall inhabit her; she shall never again be peopled, or inhabited for all generations*>> (Jeremiah 50:39). Micah cannot prophesy in a dispassionate, detached way. When he sees judgement coming upon his people, it makes him wail and howl like the jackals.

- <sup>9</sup> For her wound is incurable.  
It has come to Judah;  
it has reached to the gate of my people,  
to Jerusalem.

## Micah 1:9

For her wound is incurable. The only incurable wounds are the ones people refuse to bring to God. With him, all things are possible: <<*He replied, 'What is impossible for mortals is possible for God'*>> (Luke 18:27), but when his people refuse to bring their sin before him in repentance, then their wounds are incurable.

It has reached to the gate of my people probably refers to the yet-to-be-identified disaster (v.12). The delayed identification of what exactly has reached to the gate spotlights the subject when finally disclosed.

<sup>10</sup> Tell it not in Gath,  
weep not at all;  
in Beth-leaphrah  
roll yourselves in the dust.

## Micah 1:10

Tell it not in Gath. Micah seeks to prevent either sympathy or rejoicing from outside observers over the coming destruction. The city of Gath belonged to the Philistines, and it hurts Micah to think that the Philistines will rejoice at the pain of God's people. David's thoughts were very similar following the death of King Saul and David's beloved friend Jonathan: <<*Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon; or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult*>> (2 Samuel 1:20).

Beth-leaphrah, which means 'House of Dust,' plays on the similar sound of the Hebrew *'apar*, meaning dust.

Roll yourselves in the dust. Those under judgement must give full expression to their grief.

Using the names of towns taken by the Assyrians, Micah's extensive wordplay reflects the various disasters that Judah will face. These towns are clustered in the Shephelah, the lowlands between the coastal region and the mountains of Judah. Although Micah uses puns, this is not about clever word games, it goes back to the ancient idea that a name is not just a 'handle' but describes, sometimes prophetically, a person's character and destiny. In showing how the name of these cities is in some way a prophecy of their destiny, Micah shows how a person's character becomes their future.

Micah foretold the destruction that awaited Jerusalem and the towns that guarded the approach to the city. Although these towns lay to the southwest of Jerusalem, they lay along the route normally travelled by invading forces from the north who typically followed the Great Trunk Road south until they reached Gath. For the cities identified in vv.10-15, refer to the map below.



11 Pass on your way,  
 inhabitants of Shaphir,  
 in nakedness and shame;  
 the inhabitants of Zaanan  
 do not come forth;  
 Beth-ezel is wailing  
 and shall remove its support from you.

## Micah 1:11

Shaphir sounds like a related word for beautiful and contrasts with nakedness and shame: <<*and they shall deal with you in hatred, and take away all the fruit of your labour, and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whorings shall be exposed*>> (Ezekiel 23:29a).

Zaanan sounds like the Hebrew for ‘come forth.’ In fear, the trembling inhabitants do not come out for battle.

Beth-ezel or ‘House of Taking Away,’ expresses lamentation that the village was taken away or removed i.e. destroyed.

12 For the inhabitants of Maroth  
wait anxiously for good,  
yet disaster has come down from the Lord  
to the gate of Jerusalem.

## Micah 1:12

Maroth conveys the concept of bitterness. Thus, a bitter town longs for good.

The word disaster, Hebrew *ra'*, is a key word in Micah. The disaster from Yahweh, who <<*will come down*>> (v.3), has come down to Jerusalem’s gate (v.9). This is confirmed by: <<*When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah, he said to him, “The Lord your God decreed this disaster for this place. And now the Lord has brought it about; he has done just as he said he would. All this happened because you people sinned against the Lord and did not obey him”*>> (Jeremiah 40:2-3 NIV)

13 Harness the steeds to the chariots,  
inhabitants of Lachish;  
it was the beginning of sin  
to daughter Zion,  
for in you were found  
the transgressions of Israel.

## Micah 1:13

Steeds, Hebrew *larekesh*, is literally ‘to the steeds’ and sounds like Lachish, an important fortress city. Ironically, the people are urged to harness not chariot horses to fight but swift courier horses to flee.

It was the beginning of sin to daughter Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. Lachish was an Amorite city that had opposed Israel but

which Joshua had taken at the Lord's command. It is a city that figures prominently in the history of Israel, particularly in its wars. Daughter Zion is a reference to the southern kingdom and Jerusalem in particular: <<*He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love. Daughters of Jerusalem, come out. Look, O daughters of Zion, at King Solomon, at the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart*>> (Song 3:10-11), <<*For I heard a cry as of a woman in labour, anguish as of one bringing forth her first child, the cry of daughter Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands, 'Woe is me! I am fainting before killers!'*>> (Jeremiah 4:31), and: <<*How the Lord in his anger has humiliated daughter Zion! He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendour of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool on the day of his anger*>> (Lamentations 2:1).

<sup>14</sup> Therefore you shall give parting gifts  
to Moresheth-gath;  
the houses of Achzib shall be a deception  
to the kings of Israel.

#### Micah 1:14

Moresheth-gath. The town is here associated with the word *me'orasah* meaning 'one who is betrothed,' as used in: <<*If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbour's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst*>> (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). Assyria will receive a dowry, i.e. parting gifts, along with the bride, that is, Moresheth-gath.

Achzib sounds like the noun *'akzab*, which means deceptive or deceitful; it is used in this context in: <<*Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail*>> (Jeremiah 15:18).

The kings of Israel, expecting Achzib to provide a source of revenue from its pottery production, will be deceived.

<sup>15</sup> I will again bring a conqueror upon you,  
inhabitants of Mareshah;  
the glory of Israel  
shall come to Adullam.

## Micah 1:15

The Hebrew for conqueror or dispossessor is *yoresh*, and sounds like Mareshah; it is often used to describe Israel's dispossession of Canaan. Those who formerly dispossessed the Canaanites will now themselves be dispossessed.

The glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. The first town listed, Gath (v.10), recalls David's lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:19-27. The last town listed, Adullam, recalls David's flight to Adullam, where he was pursued by Saul; refer to 1 Samuel 22:1 and 2 Samuel 23:13. Now David's descendants likewise flee from a hostile conqueror.

<sup>16</sup> Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair  
for your pampered children;  
make yourselves as bald as the eagle,  
for they have gone from you into exile.

## Micah 1:16

Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair. This was one of the actions people took during periods of mourning or repentance: <<*On that day the Lord God of hosts called to weeping and mourning, to baldness and putting on sackcloth; but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'*>> (Isaiah 22:12-13), <<*They shall put on sackcloth, horror shall cover them. Shame shall be on all faces, baldness on all their heads*>> (Ezekiel 7:18), and: <<*I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day*>> (Amos 8:10).

Your pampered children have gone from you into exile. A time was coming for both Israel and Judah when the people would be taken away from their land into foreign exile.