

Micah's prophesies came at a time when the LORD's judgment on Israel using Assyrian conquerors was nearing and Judah's judgment was also on the horizon. In the first two chapters, Micah describes the LORD as coming forward as a witness of the people's sins, describing both them and the judgment that He will be bringing against them. However, the LORD also promises blessings for the remnant that He will save.

Micah 1

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.

We know little of Micah. Here (and in v. 14) we find that he is from Morastheth-Gath, a town SW of Jerusalem. This indicates that he was a prophet of Judah, which is probably why he named three kings of Judah to identify the timespan of his prophecies. Micah also declares that his writings are comprised of the word that the LORD gave him concerning the capitals of both Israel and Judah (Samaria and Jerusalem).

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.

Micah calls on the people of the earth (particularly Israel and Judah) to listen to the "witness" (testimony) that the LORD is making against them. The LORD will testify of their sins and also call them to repentance.

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

Micah then describes the awesome and powerful way in which the LORD comes down from the temple mount to testify against Israel and Judah. The "high places" were the elevated places where the false gods were worshiped, but these supposedly sacred places are tread underfoot by the LORD. Micah wants the people to be amazed at the power of the awesome presence of the LORD as the mountains and valleys melt underneath the weight of His glorious and powerful footsteps.

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?

"For the transgression [*rebellion*] of Jacob *is* all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel" – What has motivated the LORD come forward and testify against the people of Israel and Judah? It is because of their transgressions and sins.

"What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria?" – Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and as such, it was the center of Jacob's (Israel's) transgressions. The influence of the king over the nation made him responsible for their sins.

"and what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?" – The "high places" represented the idolatry being practiced in Judah. Jerusalem, as the capital of Judah and the place where the king resided, was also held responsible as the center of the nation's sins and the leader of it.

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.

The LORD describes the coming judgment by promising to turn Samaria into a heap of ruins with the ground torn up as if it had been plowed for planting. The stones used to construct its buildings and walls would be thrown down into the valley and the foundations of the city would be "discovered" (uncovered). He is predicting the devastation that will happen when Assyria conquers and destroys the capital city of Samaria.

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.

"And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces" – The idols that Israel has been worshiping will be destroyed by the Assyrians, broken into pieces for their raw material (gold, silver, brass, etc.) so that they can be melted down for other uses. This pictures the impotence of these gods since they will not be able to prevent their own destruction.

"and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire" – The gifts and money that had been given in worship of these gods will be burned.

"and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate" – The idols will be demolished, putting an end to the worship of them in Israel.

"for she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot" – Much of the worship of these gods involved hiring the services of temple prostitutes and this money went toward creating the idols and the instruments used for worshiping them. This money and materials will be taken by the Assyrians and used in the worship of their own gods.

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

"Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked" – Micah expresses his own lament at the judgment that is coming to his own people (v. 9). He will wail and howl in anguish, stripping off his outer garments in an expression of his grief.

"I will make a wailing like the dragons [*jackals*?], and mourning as the owls" – Micah compares the sound of his wailing in grief to the sounds of wild animals, such as a dragon or the screeching of an owl. Many commentators believe that "dragons" refers to jackals, which make a dreadful howling at night.

"For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem" – Samaria's sins have crossed the point-of-no-return and their judgment is inevitable. Micah is grieving because Judah can't seem to stop sinning ("her wound is incurable") and the LORD is now at the gate of Jerusalem, ready to execute His judgment against the city.

Micah 2

1 Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

“Woe to them that devise iniquity [wickedness], and work evil upon their beds!” – The picture is of people who spend every idle moment planning wickedness, even planning the next day’s evil deeds as they lay on their bed before falling asleep.

“when the morning is light, they practise it” – When they wake up the next morning, they are ready to put their wicked plans into action. The expression “when the morning is light” may imply that they yearn for the light of day so that they can go practice their evil deeds. Perhaps they are willing to get up at the crack of dawn to do so.

“because it is in the power of their hand” – They practice this wickedness because they can. They believe that no one is willing or capable of preventing them from carrying through with their evil plans.

2 And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

“And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away” – They are willing to forcefully take what they want from those who are unable to resist them, whether it be land or houses.

“so they oppress [defraud; extort] a man and his house, even a man and his heritage [inheritance]” – When God gave Israel the promised land, each family was given a parcel of land as an inheritance that would be passed down to their descendants. This land was to remain within the family perpetually and could only be sold temporarily if the family was in deep need. If the land had been sold, it was to be restored to the family in the year of jubilee, which was every 50 years (Lev. 25). The LORD’s accusation here is that these people are depriving a man of the land that the LORD had given to his family as perpetual inheritance.

3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil.

The “family” refers to Israel and Judah and the “evil” (bad consequences) is the LORD’s judgment that He is planning to execute against them. They will not be able to escape this judgment (“ye shall not remove your necks”), nor will they retain their pride when it is finished. The magnitude of this judgment will humble them because it is “evil” (bad; unpleasant; a distress).

Verses 4-5: Everything that they took from others by force or deceit will also be taken away from them.

6 Prophesy ye not, say *they to them that* prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, *that* they shall not take shame. 7 O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? *are* these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

“Prophesy ye not, say *they to them that* prophesy” – This line could be worded “They say to them that prophesy, do not prophesy.” The prophets are forbidden to prophesy because the people do not want to hear the words of judgment that come from the LORD.

“they shall not prophesy to them, *that* they shall not take shame” – They refuse to allow the prophets to prophesy to them because they do not want to accept the shame that came because the prophets were rebuking them for their sins.

“O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob” – These people claim the heritage of Jacob and yet they are not following his example when they do not allow the prophets to prophesy.

“is the spirit of the LORD straitened [restrained; contained]?” – Does forbidding the prophets from speaking the word of the LORD restraining the Spirit of God in any way?

“are these his doings?” – Is forbidding the prophets from prophesying something that Jacob, your patriarch, would do?

“do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?” – The word of the LORD spoken by the prophets are beneficial to those who are walking uprightly. This implies that those who are forbidding the prophets from speaking are not walking uprightly.

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

By forbidding the prophets from speaking for the LORD, the people have become an enemy of the things of God as well as those who would benefit from hearing the word of the LORD. Micah uses the image of taking the clothes off the backs of people who pass by “securely” (unaware) such as those “averse” (returning) from war.

Verses 9-11: Micah mentions other victims of these enemies and states that the people will only listen to prophets saying what they want to hear.

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of* men. 13 The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

Micah switches from speaking of the people’s sins to future blessings when the LORD will gather “the remnant” (the genuine faithful of Israel) together into His fold and the number of these remnants will be enough to create a great noise. “Bozrah” was a place known for having flocks and pastures and the reference to “the sheep of Bozrah” speaks of the LORD’s ability to provide for His sheep. This remnant will be led by “the breaker,” a reference to the Messiah (Jesus Christ), Who will break them out of bondage and lead them to safety as their Shepherd, King and LORD (indicating His deity).