**The Book of Micah**

***Preface***

Mic 1:1 A message came to Micah from the LORD. He was from the town of Moresheth. The message came while Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. This is the vision Micah saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Here is what he said.

***Judgement against Israel and Judah 1.2-3.12***

*Introduction*

(2) Listen to me, all of you nations! Earth and everyone who lives in it, pay attention! The LORD and King will be a witness against you. The Lord will speak from his holy temple in heaven.

*Predicted Destruction*

(3) The LORD is about to come down from his home in heaven. He rules over the highest places on earth. (4) The mountains will melt under him like wax near a fire. The valleys will be broken apart by water rushing down a slope. (5) All of that will happen because Jacob's people have done what is wrong. The people of Israel have committed many sins. Who is to blame for the wrong things Jacob has done? Samaria! Who is to blame for the high places where Judah's people worship other gods? Jerusalem! (6) So the LORD says, "I will turn Samaria into a pile of trash. It will become a place for planting vineyards. I will dump its stones down into the valley. And I will destroy it down to its very foundations. (7) All of the statues of Samaria's gods will be broken to pieces. All of the gifts its people gave to temple prostitutes will be burned with fire. I will destroy all of the statues of its gods. Samaria collected gifts that were paid to temple prostitutes. So the Assyrians will use the gifts to pay their own temple prostitutes."

*Lamentation for the destruction*

(8) I will sob and cry because Samaria will be destroyed. I'll walk around barefoot. I won't have anything on but my underwear. I'll bark like a wild dog. I'll hoot like an owl. (9) Samaria's wounds can't be healed. The LORD will also judge Judah. Enemies will march up to the very gate of my people. They will reach Jerusalem itself. (10) Don't tell the people of Gath about it. Don't let them see you sob. People in Beth Ophrah, roll in the dust. (11) You who live in the town of Shaphir, leave in shame and without your clothes. Those who live in Zaanan won't come out to help you. The people in Beth Ezel will sob. They won't be able to help keep you safe. (12) Those who live in Maroth will groan with pain as they wait for help. That's because the LORD will bring trouble on them. It will reach the very gate of Jerusalem. (13) You who live in Lachish, get your horses ready to pull their chariots. You trust in military power. That was the beginning of sin for the people of Zion. The wrong things Israel did were also done by you. (14) People of Judah, you might as well say good-by to Moresheth near Gath. The town of Aczib won't give any help to the kings of Israel. (15) An enemy will attack you who live in Mareshah. Israel's glorious leaders will have to run away and hide in the cave of Adullam. (16) The children you enjoy so much will be taken away as prisoners. So shave your heads and sob. Make them as bare as the head of a vulture.

*Corruption in Micah’s Society*

(2:1) How terrible it will be for those who plan to harm others! How terrible for those who make evil plans before they even get out of bed! As soon as daylight comes, they carry them out. That's because they have the power to do it. (2) If they want fields or houses, they take them. They cheat men out of their homes and property. (3) So the LORD says to them, "I am planning to send trouble on you. You will not be able to save yourselves from it. You will not live so proudly anymore. It will be a time of trouble. (4) At that time people will make fun of you. They will tease you by singing a song of sadness. They will pretend to be you and say, "We are totally destroyed. Our enemies have divided up our land. The LORD has taken it away from us! He has given our fields to those who turned against us.'" (5) So you won't even have anyone left in the LORD's community who can divide up the land for you. (6) "Don't prophesy," the people's prophets say. "Don't prophesy about bad things. Nothing shameful is going to happen to us." (7) People of Jacob, should others say, "The LORD isn't angry with us. He doesn't do things like that"? The LORD replies, "What I promise brings good things to those who lead honest lives. (8) But lately my people have attacked one another as if they were enemies. You strip the rich robes off those who happen to pass by. They thought they were as safe as men returning from a battle they had won. (9) You drive the women among my people out of their pleasant homes. You take my blessing away from their children forever. (10) Get up! Leave this land! It is no longer your resting place. You have made it 'unclean.' You have completely destroyed it. (11) Suppose a prophet goes around telling lies. And he prophesies that you will have plenty of wine and beer. Then that kind of prophet would be just right for this nation!

*A message of hope despite the warning*

(12) "People of Jacob, I will gather all of you. I will bring together you who are still left alive in Israel. I will gather you together like sheep in a pen. You will be like a flock in its grasslands. Your country will be filled with people. (13) I will open the way for you to return. I will march in front of you. You will break through the city gates and go free. I am your King. I will pass through the gates in front of you. I will lead the way."

*Leaders condemned*

(3:1) Then I said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob's people! Pay attention, you rulers of Israel! You should know how to judge others fairly. (2) But you hate what is good. And you love what is evil. You are like someone who tears the skin off my people. You pull the meat off their bones. (3) You eat my people's bodies. You strip their skin off. You break their bones in pieces. You chop them up like meat. You put them in a cooking pot." (4) The time will come when Israel will cry out to the LORD. But he won't answer them. In fact, he'll turn his face away from them. They have done what is evil. (5) The LORD says, "You prophets are leading my people down the wrong path. If they feed you, you promise them peace. If they do not, you prepare to go to war against them. (6) So night will come on you. But you will not have any visions. Darkness will cover you. But you will not be able to figure out what is going to happen. The sun will set on you prophets. The day will become dark for you. (7) You who see visions will be put to shame. You who try to figure out what is going to happen will be dishonoured. All of you will cover your faces. I will not answer you." (8) The Spirit of the LORD has filled me with power. He helps me do what is fair. He makes me brave. Now I'm prepared to tell Jacob's people what they've done wrong. I'm ready to tell Israel they've sinned. (9) Listen to me, you leaders of Jacob's people! Pay attention, you rulers of Israel! You hate to do what is fair. You twist everything that is right. (10) You build up Zion by spilling the blood of others. You build Jerusalem by doing what is evil. (11) Your judges take money from people who want special favours. Your priests teach only if they get paid for it. Your prophets won't tell fortunes unless they receive money. But you still claim to depend on the LORD. You say, "The LORD is with us. No trouble will come on us." (12) So because of what you have done, Zion will be ploughed up like a field. Jerusalem will be turned into a pile of trash. The temple hill will be covered with bushes and weeds.

***Hope for Israel and Judah (Chapters 3 and 4)***

*The coming Kingdom*

(4:1) In the last days the mountain where the LORD's temple is located will be famous. It will be the most important mountain of all. It will stand out above the hills. And nations will go to it. (2) People from many nations will go there. They will say, "Come, let us go up to the LORD's mountain. Let's go to the house of Jacob's God. He will teach us how we should live. Then we will live the way he wants us to." The law of the LORD will be taught at Zion. His message will go out from Jerusalem. (3) He will judge between people from many nations. He'll settle problems among strong nations everywhere. They will hammer their swords into plows. They'll hammer their spears into pruning tools. Nations will not go to war against one another. They won't even train to fight anymore. (4) Every man will have his own vine and fig tree. And no one will make them afraid. That's what the LORD who rules over all has promised. (5) Other nations worship and trust in their gods. But we will worship and obey the LORD. He will be our God for ever and ever. (6) "The time is coming when I will gather those who are disabled," announces the LORD. "I will bring together those who were taken away as prisoners. I will gather those I have allowed to suffer. (7) I will make the disabled my faithful people. I will make those who were driven away from their homes a strong nation. I will rule over them on Mount Zion. I will be their King from that time on and forever. (8) Jerusalem, you used to be like a guard tower for my flock. City of Zion, you used to be a place of safety for my people. The glorious kingdom you had before will be given back to you. Once again a king will rule over your people." (9) Why are you crying out so loudly now? Don't you have a king? Have your advisers died? Is that why pain comes on you like the pain of a woman having a baby? (10) People of Zion, groan with pain. Cry out like a woman having a baby. Soon you must leave your city. You must camp in the open fields. You will have to go to Babylonia. But that's where the LORD will save you. There he will set you free from the powerful hand of your enemies. (11) But now many nations have gathered together to attack you. They say, "Let Jerusalem be polluted. We want to see others laugh when Zion suffers!" (12) But those nations don't know what the LORD has in mind. They don't understand his plan. He will gather them up like bundles of grain. He will take them to his threshing floor. (13) The LORD says, "People of Zion, get up and crush your enemies. I will make you like a threshing ox. I will give you iron horns and bronze hoofs. So you will crush many nations." They got their money in the wrong way. But you will set it apart to the LORD. You will give their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

*The coming King*

(5:1) Jerusalem, you are being attacked. So bring your troops together. Our enemies have surrounded us. They want to slap the face of Israel's ruler. (2) The LORD says, "Bethlehem, you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come a ruler over Israel for me. His family line goes back to the early years of your nation. It goes all the way back to days of long ago." Bethlehem was also called Ephrathah. (3) The LORD will hand his people over to their enemies. That will last until the promised ruler is born. Then his relatives in Judah will return to their land. The LORD will rule over them and the people of Israel. (4) The promised ruler will stand firm and take care of his flock. The LORD will give him the strength to do it. The LORD his God will give him the authority to rule. His people will live safely. His greatness will reach from one end of the earth to the other. (5) And he will bring them peace.

*Victory for the People of God*

The Assyrians will attack our land. Enemies will march through our forts. But we will raise up many shepherds against them. We'll send out against them as many leaders as we need to. (6) They will use their swords to rule over Assyria. They'll rule the land of Nimrod with swords that are ready to strike. The Assyrians will march across our borders and attack our land. But the promised ruler will save us from them. (7) Jacob's people who are still left alive will be scattered among many nations. They will be like dew the LORD has sent. It doesn't wait for a man's command. They will be like rain that falls on the grass. Rain doesn't wait for someone to give it orders. (8) So Jacob's people will be scattered among many nations. They will be like a lion among the animals in the forest. They'll be like a young lion among flocks of sheep. Lions attack and tear as they move along. No one can keep them from killing what they want. (9) LORD, your powerful hand will win the battle over your enemies. All of them will be destroyed. (10) "At that time I will destroy your war horses," announces the LORD. "I will smash your chariots. (11) I will destroy the cities in your land. I will tear down all of your forts. (12) I will destroy your worship of evil powers. You will no longer be able to put a spell on anyone. (13) I will destroy the statues of your gods. I will take your sacred stones away from you. You will no longer bow down to the gods your hands have made. (14) I will pull down the poles you used to worship the goddess Asherah. And I will destroy your cities completely. (15) I will pay back the nations that have not obeyed me. My anger will burn against them."

***The Lord’s case against Israel***

*The Lord’s accusation*

 (6:1) 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. *The coming Judgement*

(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 rich 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."

***Gloom Turns to Triumph***

*Micah laments the corruption of his Society*

(7:1) I'm suffering very much! I'm like someone who gathers summer fruit in a vineyard after the good fruit has already been picked. No grapes are left to eat. None of the early figs I long for remain. (2) Faithful people have disappeared from the land. Those who are honest are gone. All men hide and wait to spill the blood of others. They use nets to try and trap one another. (3) They are very good at doing what is evil. Rulers require gifts. Judges accept money from people who want special favours. Those who are powerful always get what they want. All of them make evil plans together. (4) The best of them are as harmful as thorns. The most honest of them are even worse. The time your prophets warned you about has come. God is about to punish you. Panic has taken hold of you. (5) Don't trust your neighbors. Don't put your faith in your friends. Be careful of what you say even to your own wife. (6) Sons don't honour their fathers. Daughters refuse to obey their mothers. Daughters-in-law are against their mothers-in-law. A man's enemies are the members of his own family.

*Micah’s personal assurance of hope*

(7) So I will look to the LORD. I'll put my trust in God my Savior. He will hear me.

*A bright future for God’s people*

(8) The people of Jerusalem say, "Don't laugh when we suffer, you enemies of ours! We have fallen. But we'll get up. Even though we sit in the dark, the LORD will give us light. (9) We've sinned against the LORD. So he is angry with us. That will continue until he takes up our case. Then he'll do what is right for us. He'll bring us out into the light. Then we'll see him save us. (10) The people of Nineveh will see it too. And they will be put to shame. After all, they said to us, "Where is the LORD your God?' But we will see them destroyed. Soon they will be stomped on like mud in the streets." (11) People of Jerusalem, the time will come when your walls will be rebuilt. Land will be added to your territory. (12) At that time your people will come back to you. They'll return from Assyria and the cities of Egypt. They'll come from the countries between Egypt and the Euphrates River. They'll return from the lands between the seas. They'll come back from the countries between the mountains. (13) But the rest of the earth will be deserted. The people who live in it have done many evil things.

*Victory for God’s Kingdom*

(14) LORD, be like a shepherd to your people. Take good care of them. They are your flock. They live by themselves in the safety of a forest. Rich grasslands are all around them. Let them eat grass in Bashan and Gilead just as they did long ago. (15) The LORD says to his people, "I showed your people my wonders when they came out of Egypt long ago. In the same way, I will show them to you." (16) When the nations see those wonders, they will be put to shame. All of their power will be taken away from them. They will be so amazed that they won't be able to speak or hear. (17) They'll be forced to eat dust like a snake. They'll be like creatures that have to crawl on the ground. They'll come out of their dens trembling with fear. They'll show respect for the LORD our God. They will also have respect for his people. (18) LORD, who is a God like you? You forgive sin. You forgive your people when they do what is wrong. You don't stay angry forever. Instead, you take delight in showing your faithful love to them. (19) Once again you will show loving concern for us. You will completely wipe out the evil things we've done. You will throw all of our sins into the bottom of the sea. (20) You will be true to Jacob's people. You will show your faithful love to Abraham's children. You will do what you promised to do for our people when you took an oath long ago.