

# Micah

## Author

Micah wrote this book. He came from Moresheth Gath (see Micah 1:14) which was in the lowlands of Judea and about 20 miles south west of Jerusalem. Micah's name meant "Who is like the Lord?"

## Date

Micah lived in the 700's B.C. Micah 1:1 reveals Micah received his messages from the Lord during the reigns of the Judean Kings Jotham (ruled 750-731 B.C.), Ahaz (reigned 731-715 B.C.) and Hezekiah (ruled 715-686 B.C.).

## Background

Under the reign of King Uzziah or Azariah from 792 to 740 B.C., the southern kingdom of Judah prospered and gained territory. 2 Chronicles 26:3-5 records: *"Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper."*

2 Chronicles 26:6-15 reveals God prospered and empowered Uzziah and the people of Judah during Uzziah's reign.

The next king of Judah, Jotham was a godly king but the people of Judah acted corruptly and wickedly under his reign. 2 Chronicles 27:1-2 records: *"Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the temple of the Lord). But still the people acted corruptly."*

Despite the wickedness of the people of Judah, God prospered their nation and helped them to win battles in war (see 2 Chronicles 27:3-5). 2 Chronicles 27:6 states: *"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."*

God blessed the nation of Israel:

1. though His undeserved grace and mercy. They deserved punishment but He still prospered them.
2. because of King Jotham's trust in and obedience to God and His commands.

The next ruler of Judah was Ahaz, Jotham's son. Ahaz was very different to his father. 2 Chronicles 28:1-4 records: *"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he*

*reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.”*

As a result, God delivered King Ahaz and the nation of Judah into the hands of the wicked nations of Syria and Israel. 2 Chronicles 28:5-8 states: *“Therefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king’s son, Azrikam the officer over the house, and Elkanah who was second to the king. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters; and they also took away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.”*

Despite their great backsliding and evil, God in wonderful mercy commanded the prophet Oded to tell the people of the northern kingdom of Israel to free the captives from Judah from slavery. In response, a few of the more godly leaders of Israel said in 2 Chronicles 28:13: *“...You shall not bring the captives here, for we already have offended the Lord. You intend to add to our sins and to our guilt; for our guilt is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.”* So as a result, the Israelites sent the Judean captives home (see 2 Chronicles 28:14-15).

Despite this gracious act of God, the king of Judah – Ahaz – and his people did not turn from their sins back to Him. So God handed them over to be attacked by the Edomites (see 2 Chronicles 28:16-19). 2 Chronicles 28:19 records: *“For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord.”*

God also permitted the nation of Assyria to cause great trouble for the people of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 28:20-21). But instead of Ahaz turning to God from his sins in his time of need, Ahaz devoted himself more to wickedness. 2 Chronicles 28:22-25 states: *“Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, ‘Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.’ So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers.”*

Ahaz commanded the High Priest to change and paganise numerous other aspects of the worship of the Lord (see 2 Kings 16:10-18).

After King Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah began to rule in his place. Hezekiah was a very godly man whom God prospered greatly (see 2 Kings 18:1-20:21 and 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33). 2 Chronicles 31:20-21 records: *“Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of*

*the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.”*

2 Kings 18:5-8 states: *“He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.”*

2 Chronicles 32:27-30 says: *“Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. And he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of desirable items; storehouses for the harvest of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks, moreover he provided cities for himself, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much property. This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works.”*

During Hezekiah’s reign, God saved the nation of Judah from being conquered by the powerful Assyrians. God had His angel kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night in order to deliver the Judeans from conquest (see 2 Chronicles 19:35-36).

It was during the reigns of these three kings and in the times of the above events that God spoke through the prophet Micah.

## Themes of Micah

The main themes of the Book of Micah are:

1. *God’s Judgment.* Micah 1:1-10 describes God’s judgment and punishment of the northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah because of their unfaithfulness to Him and continual blatant disobediences to His commands and statutes found in the Mosaic Covenant.

Micah predicted that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed (see Micah 3:12) and the people would be deported into captivity in Babylon (see Micah 1:16 and 4:10).

In Micah 6:1-3, God declares His complaint and charges against His people: *“Hear now what the Lord says: ‘Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord’s complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will contend with Israel. O, My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me.’”* Note here God shows His justice and judgments are like a court case before a combined absolute king and supreme judge. In Hebrew, the word “*contend*” is “*yakah*” which means “judge, prove, rebuke, reprove, correct”.<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew word “*yakah*” is used in Genesis 31:37 as “*they may judge*” in the context of Jacob and Laban’s relatives acting as judges to see whether Jacob had committed the crime of theft. “*Yakah*” is used in Genesis 31:42 in the sense of God judging and in 1 Chronicles 12:18 in relation to God rebuking someone for wrong. Psalm 50:8, 50:21, Isaiah 1:18 and

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 376.

Hosea 4:4 contain similar usages of “yakah” in relation to God’s judgments. These judgments have *both divine court-room and covenantal* senses and not just either one.

Micah 1:2-9 is God’s prophecy about Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel before its fall in 701 B.C.

2. *God’s anger.* In Micah 5:10-15, God reveals that He will execute vengeance or totally deserved punishment in great anger and fury on all those who worship idols and images and who practice sorcery or witchcraft. In Micah 5:15, God states: **“And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.”**

But note Micah 7:18 reveals God desires to not be angry with people but instead loves to show His mercy and to pardon their evil thoughts and actions.

3. *God’s gracious merciful promises to Abram, Isaac and Jacob.* Despite the continual, unrepented of blatant disobediences of the nations of Israel and Judah to the commands and statutes of the Mosaic Covenant, God promised to still act in great grace and mercy towards them. The Book of Micah concludes with an emphasis on God’s grace, forgiveness and mercy linked to His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Micah 7:18-20 states: **“Who is God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.”**

God’s gracious promises included:

- a) restoring a remnant of His people (see Micah 2:12-13) and bringing them back from Babylon (see Micah 4:10).
- b) the coming Messiah shall be born in Bethlehem and do great things (see Micah 5:2-5).
- c) God’s future reign in Zion and Jerusalem (see Micah 4:1-13).
- d) in the latter days, non-Israelites would turn to God (see Micah 4:1-2).

The false prophets in Judah and Israel were slick salesmen-like speakers who preached a distorted view of God and His Word. They promised the people great material prosperity and peace from war (see Micah 2:11 and 3:5). This is even though the people were not turning from their sins. Micah 2:11 states: **“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink’, even he would be the prattler of this people.”** God said these false prophets **“make my people stray...”** (see Micah 3:5).

4. *The differences between true and false prophets.* The Book of Micah reveals the differences between true and false prophets. Micah 3:5-12 states: **“Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people stray; who chant ‘Peace’ while they chew with their teeth, but who prepare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths: therefore you shall have night without vision, and you shall have darkness without divination; the sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be dark for them. So the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners abashed; indeed they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God. But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.**

***Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, 'Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.' Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest."***

Here we see a true prophet of God:

- a) is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.
- b) declares to people what are their evil philosophies and practices.

Also Micah 1:8-13 reveals a true prophet of God will mourn deeply about the punishments which God promises He will bring on people.

Micah 3:5-12 shows false prophets:

- a) focus much on receiving money from their hearers,
- b) attack those who do not give them money
- c) and claim that they have great faith in God, His Presence is manifesting among them and He will never punish them. At the same time, these prophets live sinful lives in disobedience to the commands of the written Word of God.

5. *God hates religion and worship without high moral standards and humility.* In Micah 6:6-8, God declares that He is more concerned about people living lives with high ethical standards and in walking in true humility before Him than in them giving generous gifts to Him in worship: ***"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"***

In Hebrew, the word ***"justice"*** here is ***"mishpat"*** which means in this context ***"justice, right, rectitude"***.<sup>2</sup> Rectitude refers to rightness of principle or practice as determined by moral law, moral uprightness.<sup>3</sup> In Micah 6:8, ***"mishpat"*** relates to right moral or just judgments which agree with God's standards. So Micah 6:8 was referring to ***both justice issues and moral standards.***

2 Chronicles 28:19 is a key verse which is relevant to the time of Micah and his prophecies to the nation of Judah: ***"For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord."***

Note this verse says the Lord punished the nation of Judah because:

- a) King Ahaz was unfaithful to Him

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 1048.

<sup>3</sup> "Modern Home Dictionary", Collins, London, 1974, page 821.

b) And Ahaz encouraged a great decline in moral or ethical standards in Judah.

Many Christians today speak often about Jesus Christ, the Gospel, salvation, faith, redemption, God's blessings, prosperity, miracles, worship, Christian music, prayer and intercession, giving to God, communion, and so on – all good things. But they have unbiblical declining moral standards in relation to matters like abortion, homosexuality, sexual petting before marriage, de-facto marriages, divorce, modesty, nudity, watching movies with pornographic scenes and smoking marijuana. These churchgoers are imitating the tragic error of the Judeans in Micah's time. This error involves trying to follow God while taking sins lightly and compromising greatly.

Worshippers of God like those in the Book of Micah *will give anything to God except their most treasured sins.*

Micah 3:9-11 shows that the rulers, judges, priests and false prophets were all living wicked lives. Violence, oppression, theft (see Micah 2:1-2), murder (see Micah 3:10), injustice (see Micah 3:9), bribing (see Micah 3:11) and human sacrifice (see Micah 6:7 and 2 Chronicles 28:3), idolatry and sorcery or witchcraft (see Micah 6:12-14) were common sins in the nation. Micah 7:6 reveals that family life in Israel was in a very bad way: ***“For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.”***

In Micah 6:4-5, God emphasised how gracious He was to the Israelites in Moses' time. But then in Micah 6:6-8, He insisted they live righteous lives. In Micah 6:9-16, He warned He would punish them if they did not change.

6. *Religious hypocrites hate good and love evil.* In Micah 3:2, God said to the rulers of Israel: ***“You who hate good and love evil...”*** These religious people had the opposite attitude to Jesus Christ Who loved righteousness and hated evil. Hebrews 1:9 records this about Him: ***“You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”***

In Romans 12:9, God commands us: ***“...Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”*** In Amos 5:15, God states: ***“Hate evil, love good...”*** 1 Corinthians 13:6 states: ***“does not rejoice in iniquity...”*** Isaiah 5:20 commands us: ***“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”***