

The Book Of Micah

Presenting The Picture

Of God

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Micah

OVERVIEW

The casual use of such words as “love” and “hate” has emptied them of their meaning. We no longer understand statements that describe a loving God who hates sin. So we picture God as gentle and kind—a cosmic “pushover”; and our concept of what he hates is tempered by our misconceptions and wishful thinking.

The words of the prophets stand in stark contrast to such misconceptions. God’s hatred is real—burning, consuming, and destroying. He hates sin, and he stands as the righteous judge, ready to mete out just punishment to all who defy his rule. God’s love is also real. So real that he sent his Son, the Messiah, to save and accept judgment in the sinner’s place. Love and hate are together—both unending, irresistible, and unfathomable.

In seven short chapters, Micah presents this true picture of God—the almighty Lord who hates sin and loves the sinner. Much of the book is devoted to describing God’s judgment on Israel (the northern kingdom), on Judah (the southern kingdom), and on all the earth. This judgment will come “because of Jacob’s transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel” (Micah 1:5). And the prophet lists their despicable sins, including fraud (Micah 2:2), theft (Micah 2:8), greed (Micah 2:9), debauchery (Micah 2:11), oppression (Micah 3:3), hypocrisy (Micah 3:4), heresy (Micah 3:5), injustice (Micah 3:9), extortion and lying (Micah 6:12), murder (Micah 7:2), and other offenses. God’s judgment will come.

In the midst of this overwhelming prediction of destruction, Micah gives hope and consolation because he also describes God’s love. The truth is that judgment comes only after countless opportunities to repent, to turn back to true worship and obedience—“to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). But even in the midst of judgment, God promises to deliver the small minority who have continued to follow him. He states, “Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head” (Micah 2:13). The king, of course, is Jesus; and we read in Micah 5:2 that he will be born as a baby in Bethlehem, an obscure Judean village.

As you read Micah, catch a glimpse of God's anger in action as he judges and punishes sin. See God's love in action as he offers eternal life to all who repent and believe. And then determine to join the faithful remnant of God's people who live according to his will.

THE BLUEPRINT

Micah emphasized the need for justice and peace. Like a lawyer, he set forth God's case against Israel and Judah, their leaders, and their people. Throughout the book are prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah, who will gather the people into one nation. He will be their king and ruler, acting mercifully toward them. Micah makes it clear that God hates unkindness, idolatry, injustice, and empty ritual—and he still hates these today. But God is very willing to pardon the sins of any who repent.

1. The trial of the capitals (Micah 1:1-2:13)

The Lord gave these messages to Micah of Moresheth during the years when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. The messages concerned both Samaria and Jerusalem, and they came to Micah in the form of visions.

[2] Attention! Let all the people of the world listen! The Sovereign Lord has made accusations against you; the Lord speaks from his holy Temple.

[3] Look! The Lord is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and comes to earth, walking on the high places. [4] They melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire, like water pouring down a hill.

[5] And why is this happening? Because of the sins and rebellion of Israel and Judah. Who is to blame for Israel's rebellion? Samaria, its capital city! Where is the center of idolatry in Judah? In Jerusalem, its capital!

[6] "So I, the Lord, will make the city of Samaria a heap of rubble. Her streets will be plowed up for planting vineyards. I will roll the stones of her walls down into the valley below, exposing all her foundations. [7] All her carved images will be smashed to pieces. All her sacred treasures will be burned up. These things were bought with the money earned by her prostitution, and they will now be carried away to pay prostitutes elsewhere."

[8] Because of all this, I will mourn and lament. I will walk around naked and barefoot in sorrow and shame. I will howl like a jackal and wail like an ostrich. [9] For my people's wound is far too deep to heal. It has reached into Judah, even to the gates of Jerusalem.

[10] Don't tell our enemies in the city of Gath; don't weep at all. You people in Beth-leaphrah, roll in the dust to show your anguish and despair. [11] You people of Shaphir, go as captives into exile—naked and ashamed. The people of Zaanan dare not come outside their walls. The people of Beth-ezel mourn because the very foundations of their city have been swept away. [12] The people of Maroth anxiously wait for relief, but only bitterness awaits them as the Lord's judgment reaches even to the gates of Jerusalem.

[13] Quick! Use your swiftest chariots and flee, you people of Lachish. You were the first city in Judah to follow Israel in the sin of idol worship, and so you led Jerusalem into sin. [14] Send a farewell gift to Moresheth-gath; there is no hope of saving it. The town of Aczib has deceived the kings of Israel, for it promised help it could not give. [15] You people of Mareshah, I will bring a conqueror to capture your town. And the leaders of Israel will go to Adullam.

[16] Weep, you people of Judah! Shave your heads in sorrow, for the children you love will be snatched away, and you will never see them again. Make yourselves as bald as an eagle, for your little ones will be exiled to distant lands.

[2:1] How terrible it will be for you who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans. You rise at dawn and hurry to carry out any of the wicked schemes you have power to accomplish. [2] When you want a certain piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it by fraud and violence. No one's family or inheritance is safe with you around!

[3] But this is what the Lord says: "I will reward your evil with evil; you won't be able to escape! After I am through with you, none of you will ever again walk proudly in the streets."

[4] In that day your enemies will make fun of you by singing this song of despair about your experience:

"We are finished,
completely ruined!
God has confiscated our land,
taking it from us.
He has given our fields
to those who betrayed us."

[5] Others will set your boundaries then, and the Lord's people will have no say in how the land is divided.

[6] "Don't say such things," the people say. "Don't prophesy like that. Such disasters will never come our way!"

[7] Should you talk that way, O family of Israel? Will the Lord have patience with such behavior? If you would do what is right, you would find my words to be good. [8] Yet to this very hour my people rise against me! You steal the shirts right off the backs of those who trusted you, making them as ragged as men who have just come home from battle.

[9] You have evicted women from their homes and stripped their children of all their God-given rights. [10] Up! Begone! This is no longer your land and home, for you have filled it with sin and ruined it completely.

[11] Suppose a prophet full of lies were to say to you, "I'll preach to you the joys of wine and drink!" That's just the kind of prophet you would like!

[12] "Someday, O Israel, I will gather the few of you who are left. I will bring you together again like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture. Yes, your land will again be filled with noisy crowds! [13] Your leader will break out and lead you out of exile. He will bring you through the gates of your cities of captivity, back to your own land. Your king will lead you; the Lord himself will guide you."

2. The trial of the leaders (Micah 3:1-5:15)

Listen, you leaders of Israel! You are supposed to know right from wrong, [2] but you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh off their bones. [3] You eat my people's flesh, cut away their skin, and break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the cooking pot. [4] Then you beg the Lord for help in times of trouble! Do you really expect him to listen? After all the evil you have done, he won't even look at you!

[5] This is what the Lord says to you false prophets: "You are leading my people astray! You promise peace for those who give you food, but you declare war on anyone who refuses to pay you. [6] Now the night will close around you, cutting off all your visions. Darkness will cover you, making it impossible for you to predict the future. The sun will set for you prophets, and your day will come to an end. [7] Then you seers will cover your faces in shame, and you diviners will be disgraced. And you will admit that your messages were not from God."

[8] But as for me, I am filled with power and the Spirit of the Lord. I am filled with justice and might, fearlessly pointing out Israel's sin and rebellion. [9] Listen to me, you leaders of Israel! You hate justice and twist all that is right. [10] You are building Jerusalem on a foundation of murder and corruption. [11] You rulers govern for the bribes you can get; you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim you are depending on the Lord. "No harm can come to us," you say, "for the Lord is here among us."

[12] So because of you, Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to rubble! A great forest will grow on the hilltop, where the Temple now stands.

[4:1] in the last days, the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship. [2] Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the Lord's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem.

[3] The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. [4] Everyone will live quietly in their own homes in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord Almighty has promised this! [5] Even though the nations around us worship idols, we will follow the Lord our God forever and ever.

[6] "In that coming day," says the Lord, "I will gather together my people who are lame, who have been exiles, filled with grief. [7] They are weak and far from home, but I will make them strong again, a mighty nation. Then I, the Lord, will rule from Jerusalem as their king forever."

[8] As for you, O Jerusalem, the citadel of God's people, your royal might and power will come back to you again. The kingship will be restored to my precious Jerusalem. [9] But why are you now screaming in terror? Have you no king to lead you? He is dead! Have you no wise people to counsel you? All are gone! Pain has gripped you like it does a woman in labor. [10] Writhe and groan in terrible pain, you people of Jerusalem, for you must leave this city to live in

the open fields. You will soon be sent into exile in distant Babylon. But the Lord will rescue you there; he will redeem you from the grip of your enemies.

[11] True, many nations have gathered together against you, calling for your blood, eager to gloat over your destruction. [12] But they do not know the Lord's thoughts or understand his plan. These nations don't know that he is gathering them together to be beaten and trampled like bundles of grain on a threshing floor.

[13] "Rise up and destroy the nations, O Jerusalem!" says the Lord. "For I will give you iron horns and bronze hooves, so you can trample many nations to pieces. Then you will give all the wealth they acquired as offerings to me, the Lord of all the earth."

[5:1] Mobilize! Marshal your troops! The enemy is laying siege to Jerusalem. With a rod they will strike the leader of Israel in the face.

[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. [3] The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth to her son. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. [4] And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord's strength, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored all around the world. [5] And he will be the source of our peace.

When the Assyrians invade our land and break through our defenses, we will appoint seven rulers to watch over us, eight princes to lead us. [6] They will rule Assyria with drawn swords and enter the gates of the land of Nimrod. They will rescue us from the Assyrians when they pour over the borders to invade our land.

[7] Then the few left in Israel will go out among the nations. They will be like dew sent by the Lord or like rain falling on the grass, which no one can hold back. [8] The remnant of Israel will go out among the nations and be as strong as a lion. And the other nations will be like helpless sheep, with no one to rescue them. [9] The people of Israel will stand up to their foes, and all their enemies will be wiped out.

[10] "At that same time," says the Lord, "I will destroy all your weapons—your horses and chariots. [11] I will tear down your walls and demolish the defenses of your cities. [12] I will put an end to all witchcraft; there will be no more fortune-tellers to consult. [13] I will destroy all your idols and sacred pillars, so you will never again worship the work of your own hands. [14] I will abolish your pagan shrines with their Asherah poles and destroy the cities where your idol temples stand. [15] I will pour out my vengeance on all the nations that refuse to obey me."

3. The trial of the people (Micah 6:1-7:20)

Listen to what the Lord is saying: "Stand up and state your case against me. Let the mountains and hills be called to witness your complaints.

[2] "And now, O mountains, listen to the Lord's complaint! He has a case against his people Israel! He will prosecute them to the full extent of the law. [3] O my people, what have I done to make you turn from me? Tell me why your patience is exhausted! Answer me! [4] For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from your slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you.

[5] "Don't you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia to Gilgal, when I, the Lord, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness."

[6] What can we bring to the Lord to make up for what we've done? Should we bow before God with offerings of yearling calves? [7] Should we offer him thousands of rams and tens of thousands of rivers of olive oil? Would that please the Lord? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for the sins of our souls? Would that make him glad?

[8] No, O people, the Lord has already told you what is good, and this is what he requires: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

[9] Listen! Fear the Lord if you are wise! His voice is calling out to everyone in Jerusalem: "The armies of destruction are coming; the Lord is sending them. [10] Will there be no end of your getting rich by cheating? The homes of the wicked are filled with treasures gained by dishonestly measuring out grain in short measures. [11] And how can I tolerate all your merchants who use dishonest scales and weights? [12] The rich among you have become wealthy through extortion and violence. Your citizens are so used to lying that their tongues can no longer tell the truth.

[13] "Therefore, I will wound you! I will bring you to ruin for all your sins. [14] You will eat but never have enough. Your hunger pangs and emptiness will still remain. And though you try to save your money, it will come to nothing in the end. You will save a little, but I will give it to those who conquer you. [15] You will plant crops but not harvest them. You will press your olives but not get enough oil to anoint yourselves. You will trample the grapes but get no juice to make your wine.

[16] "The only laws you keep are those of evil King Omri; the only example you follow is that of wicked King Ahab! Therefore, I will make an example of you, bringing you to complete ruin. You will be treated with contempt, mocked by all who see you."

[7:1] What misery is mine! I feel like the fruit picker after the harvest who can find nothing to eat. Not a cluster of grapes or a single fig can be found to satisfy my hunger. [2] The godly people have all disappeared; not one fair-minded person is left on the earth. They are all murderers, even setting traps for their own brothers. [3] They go about their evil deeds with both hands. How skilled they are at using them! Officials and judges alike demand bribes. The people with money and influence pay them off, and together they scheme to twist justice. [4] Even the

best of them is like a brier; the straightest is more crooked than a hedge of thorns. But your judgment day is coming swiftly now. Your time of punishment is here.

[5] Don't trust anyone—not your best friend or even your wife! [6] For the son despises his father. The daughter defies her mother. The daughter-in-law defies her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household.

[7] As for me, I look to the Lord for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me. [8] Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord himself will be my light. [9] I will be patient as the Lord punishes me, for I have sinned against him. But after that, he will take up my case and punish my enemies for all the evil they have done to me. The Lord will bring me out of my darkness into the light, and I will see his righteousness. [10] Then my enemies will see that the Lord is on my side. They will be ashamed that they taunted me, saying, "Where is the Lord—that God of yours?" With my own eyes I will see them trampled down like mud in the streets.

[11] In that day, Israel, your cities will be rebuilt, and your borders will be extended. [12] People from many lands will come and honor you—from Assyria all the way to the towns of Egypt, and from Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River, and from many distant seas and mountains. [13] But the land will become empty and desolate because of the wickedness of those who live there.

[14] O Lord, come and rule your people; lead your flock in green pastures. Help them to live in peace and prosperity. Let them enjoy the fertile pastures of Bashan and Gilead as they did long ago.

[15] "Yes," says the Lord, "I will do mighty miracles for you, like those I did when I rescued you from slavery in Egypt."

[16] All the nations of the world will stand amazed at what the Lord will do for you. They will be embarrassed that their power is so insignificant. They will stand in silent awe, deaf to everything around them. [17] They will come to realize what lowly creatures they really are. Like snakes crawling from their holes, they will come out to meet the Lord our God. They will fear him greatly, trembling in terror at his presence.

[18] Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy. [19] Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!

[20] You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised with an oath to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Perverting faith

EXPLANATION:

God will judge the false prophets, dishonest leaders, and selfish priests in Israel and Judah. While they publicly carried out religious ceremonies, they were privately seeking to gain money and influence. To mix selfish motives with an empty display of religion is to pervert faith.

IMPORTANCE:

Don't try to mix your own selfish desires with true faith in God. One day God will reveal how foolish it is to substitute anything for loyalty to him. Coming up with your own private blend of religion will pervert your faith.

THEME: Oppression

EXPLANATION:

Micah predicted ruin for all nations and leaders who were oppressive toward others. The upper classes oppressed and exploited the poor. Yet no one was speaking against them or doing anything to stop them. God will not put up with such injustice.

IMPORTANCE:

We dare not ask God to help us while we ignore those who are needy and oppressed, or while we silently condone the actions of those who oppress them.

THEME: The Messiah—King of Peace

EXPLANATION:

God promised to provide a new king to bring strength and peace to his people. Hundreds of years before Christ's birth, God promised that the eternal king would be born in Bethlehem. It was God's great plan to restore his people through the Messiah.

IMPORTANCE:

Christ our king leads us just as God promised. But until his final judgment, his leadership is only visible among those who welcome his authority. We can have God's peace now by giving up our sins and welcoming him as king.

THEME: Pleasing God

EXPLANATION:

Micah preached that God's greatest desire was not the offering of sacrifices at the temple. God delights in faith that produces justice, love for others, and obedience to him.

IMPORTANCE:

True faith in God generates kindness, compassion, justice, and humility. We can please God by seeking these results in our work, our family, our church, and our neighborhood.

TIMELINE

Hosea becomes a prophet 753 B.C.
Jotham becomes king of Judah 750
Tiglath-Pileser III invades Israel 743
Micah becomes a prophet; Pekahiah becomes king 742
Isaiah becomes a prophet 740
Ahaz becomes king of Judah 735
Israel (the northern kingdom) falls 722
Hosea's ministry ends; Hezekiah becomes king of Judah 715
Sennacherib surrounds Jerusalem 701
Micah's ministry ends 687

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary

