

Review of the Twelve Minor Prophets  
Dr. Steven R. Cook

Overview of the Twelve Minor Prophets<sup>1</sup>

Prophet	Audience	Date B.C.	Contemporaries	World Power
Hosea	Israel	756-725	Isaiah, Amos, Micah	Assyria
Joel	Judah Pre-exilic	830-810	Elisha	Assyria
Amos	Israel	760-757	Hosea	Assyria
Obadiah	Judah (Edom)	848	Elijah	Assyria
Jonah	Nineveh	ca. 800	None	Assyria
Micah	Judah Pre-exilic	735-690	Isaiah, Hosea	Assyria
Nahum	Judah Pre-exilic	ca. 640	Zephaniah	Assyria
Habakkuk	Judah Pre-exilic	608-597	Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel	Babylonia
Zephaniah	Judah Pre-exilic	640-630	Nahum, Jeremiah	Assyria
Haggai	Judah Post-exilic	520	Zechariah	Medo-Persia
Zechariah	Judah Post-exilic	520-475	Haggai, Esther	Medo-Persia
Malachi	Judah Post-exilic	ca. 435	Nehemiah	Medo-Persia

The word *prophet* translates the Hebrew word נָבִי *nabi* (Grk. προφήτης *prophetes*), which means “speaker, herald, preacher,”<sup>2</sup> and refers to one who was called to be the spokesman for another. The prophets were channels of communication who received God’s revelation directly and then communicated it to others (Exo 4:12; Jer 1:9; Amo 1:3), and sometimes they served as intercessors to God (Gen 20:7; Exo 32:10-14; 1 Sam 12:17, 19). There were true prophets to be obeyed (Deu 18:18; 34:10-11; Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11) and false prophets to be ignored (Deu 13:1-5; 18:21-22; Jer 23:25-28; Mat 7:15; 24:24; Acts 13:6; Rev 2:20). The OT prophets often served as guides and counselors to Israel’s monarchical leaders, always directing them to live in conformity to God’s law. When God’s leaders and people turned away from Him, the prophet functioned as a prosecuting attorney, pointing out their violation of the law and the pending consequences if they did not turn back to the Lord (i.e. repent). If Israel persisted in sin, God would execute His judgments in ever increasing severity, until they were eventually destroyed and removed from the land. It can be said of God’s prophets: 1) they were individually called from all walks of life (unlike kings and priests who were to follow a strict lineage), 2) they were God’s voice of revelation to His covenant people, 3) they were forthtellers and foretellers, 4) they served as God’s prosecuting attorneys against those who violated His laws, 5) and they were reformers, calling God’s people back to orthodoxy and obedience from the heart.

<sup>1</sup> Some of this material, including dates and audience, is derived from Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 346.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 661–662.

Much of the language of the prophets is judgmental and assumes their hearers know they are in a covenant relationship with God which clearly pronounced promises of blessing and cursing dependent on whether they obey or disobey His Word (Deu 28:1-68; 30:15-20). The word *blessing* translates the Hebrew noun בְּרָכָה *berakah*, which occurs sixty seven times in the OT. In Deuteronomy 28, the word refers to the tangible goodness that makes life enjoyable and rich, which is promised to His covenant people, Israel, if they would simply obey His commands. Areas of blessing include: 1) healthy offspring, crops, and livestock (Deu 28:4-5, 8, 11), 2) military success (Deu 28:7), 3) fruitful labor (Deu 28:8, 12a), 4) international recognition and respect (Deu 28:9-10), 5) financial prosperity (Deu 28:12b), and 6) serving as an international leader to other nations (Deut. 28:13). God also promised to bring curses, which would undo all the blessings and bring Israel down, if they disobeyed (Deu 28:15-68). In Deuteronomy 28:16-19, Moses uses the Hebrew verb אָרַר *arar* six times, which means, “to bind with a curse.”<sup>3</sup> The form of the verb is passive, which means a curse is received by the nation of Israel if they turn away from God. The cursing could be avoided if God’s people would simply obey the Lord (Deu 28:15, 20, 45-47, 58-59, 62; 29:25-28; 30:17-18).

Throughout much of Israel’s history, the leaders and people repeatedly pursued idols and human alliances to satisfy their desires and solve their problems, and thus they entered into a prolonged period of rebellion. God eventually brought destruction, as He’d promised, and He used the Assyrians and Babylonians as His disciplinary agents. The Assyrians were aggressive in their efforts to conquer surrounding kingdoms, and God used them to destroy the 10 northern tribes known as Israel. This destruction occurred in 722 B.C. Later, God used the Babylonians to destroy the 2 southern tribes known as Judah, and this happened in 586 B.C. Eventually, God released His people from Babylonian captivity and many returned to repatriate the land from which they’d come. God sent several prophets to help them adjust, and to remind them about their obligation to keep the Mosaic Law and remain faithful.

In summary, the study of the Minor Prophets considers the lives and ministries of men who were called from all walks of life to serve as God’s messengers to His disobedient people. The prophets were forthtellers and foretellers, addressing issues such as monarchical pride, national idolatry, socio-economic injustice on the poor, and pronouncing judgment if God’s people would not turn back to Him. In addition to the promise of judgment, God also spoke positively of future blessings that He would bring upon His people; and this is based upon His merciful character, and His integrity to be faithful to His unconditional covenant promises through Abraham and David.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 91.

Introduction to Micah  
Dr. Steven R. Cook

**Author:**

Micah is the author of this book. His name (Heb. מִיכָה Mikah) means “Who is like Yahweh?” His name implies the incomparability of God. Micah is referred to in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 26:18; cf. Mic 3:12).

**Audience:**

Micah prophesies both to Israel and Judah (Mic 1:1, 5, 9; 5:2), but the primary audience is Israel (Mic 1:5, 13-15; 3:1, 8-9; 5:1-3; 6:2).

**Date of ministry:**

Micah received His messages from the Lord during the reigns of Jotham (742-735 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.). This would place his ministry roughly between 740-700 B.C.

**Historical Background:**

Micah was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah. “Like his contemporary Isaiah, Micah prophesied about the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the later defeat of the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians.”<sup>4</sup> Micah would have witnessed the destruction of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, in 722 B.C. (2 Ki 17:1-23). As well as the near destruction of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in 701 B.C. (2 Ki 18:13—19:36). Micah reveals the reasons his people were under attack was because of their sinful rebellion against God in violation of the Mosaic Covenant (Deu 28:15-68). Micah prophesied against idolatry (Mic 1:7; 5:12-14), the abuse of the helpless (Mic 2:1-2, 8-9), greed among the nation’s leaders (Mic 3:1-12; 7:3), and economic injustice and violence from the wealthy (Mic 6:11-12).

**Message:**

Micah presents three messages to his fellow Israelites, and each begins with the call to “Hear” (Heb שָׁמַע *shama*; Mic 1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Micah sees much of the nation’s sin as originating among the nation’s leaders, namely: the princes, priests and prophets. He

---

<sup>4</sup> John A. Martin, “Micah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1474–1475.

states, “Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money” (Mic 3:11).

Micah identified all three major types of Judahite rulers as corrupt: civil leaders (the princes), religious leaders (the priests), and moral leaders (the prophets). The judges were judging according to who paid them best. The priests were teaching the people but only for what they could get out of it. The prophets were not really prophesying messages from the Lord but were divining; they were practicing sorcery and witchcraft for money and passing these revelations off as the word of the Lord. In every case, ministry was being conducted, but for selfish motives, for what the ministers could get out of ministering.<sup>5</sup>

The Mosaic Covenant was God’s standard of judgment for Israel in Micah’s day; specifically, the blessings and cursings God promised would come, depending on their obedience (Deu 28:1-14) or disobedience (Deu 28:15-68) to His commands. Though Micah pronounces judgment against Israel, leading to their captivity (Mic 1:16), he also provides messages of hope (Mic 4:1-8; 7:11-20), as God will send forth a Ruler who will shepherd the nation, which is Lord Jesus Christ (Mic 5:2-5; cf. Mat 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-20).

Though the theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah’s three messages, the prophet also stressed restoration. Micah mentioned the “remnant” in each of his three messages (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7–8; 7:18). He was confident that someday the Lord would restore the people of Israel to a place of prominence in the world under the Messiah. This emphasis would have greatly encouraged the righteous remnant in Micah’s day.<sup>6</sup>

For the nation and its citizens, Micah gives them God’s expectation, which is, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what the LORD requires of you: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

### **Outline:**

1. Israel and Judah’s judgment because of their sin (1-2).
2. God promises future blessing after judgment (3-5).
3. Indictment of sin and promise of future blessing (6-7).

---

<sup>5</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jon 4:10.

<sup>6</sup> John A. Martin, “Micah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1474–1475.

## Micah 1:1-16

The word of the LORD which came *to* Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem [i.e. Israel and Judah].<sup>2</sup> Hear, O peoples, all of you [everyone]; listen, O earth and all it contains, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you [legal indictment; cf. Mic 6:1-2], the Lord from His holy temple [in heaven].<sup>3</sup> For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place [for judgment]. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.<sup>4</sup> The mountains will melt under Him and the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place [perhaps a picture of an earthquake].<sup>5</sup> All this [judgment] is for the rebellion of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? [the capital of Israel] What is the high place [of idolatry] of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? [the capital of Judah]<sup>6</sup> For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country [through Assyrian destruction], planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley and will lay bare her foundations [Israel was destroyed in 722 B.C.; 2 Ki 17:1-23].<sup>7</sup> All of her idols will be smashed, all of her earnings will be burned with fire and all of her images I will make desolate, for she collected *them* from a harlot's earnings [an allusion to temple prostitution which was common at pagan worship centers], and to the earnings of a harlot they will return [wealth used to pay the temple prostitutes will likely be used by the destroyers—the Assyrians—to pay their own temple prostitutes according to their own pagan practices; “Since she collected the wages of a prostitute, they will be used again for a prostitute” CSB].<sup>8</sup> Because of this I [Micah] must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked [in humility, like Isaiah did; Isa 20:1-6]; I must make a lament like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches.<sup>9</sup> For her [Israel's] wound is incurable, for it has come to Judah [infected the southern tribes]; it has reached the gate of my people [where Micah lived], *even* to Jerusalem [which was nearly destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 B.C.; 2 Ki 18:13—19:36].<sup>10</sup> Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all. At Beth-le-aphrah [בֵּית לְעַפְרָה *Beth Leaphrah = house of dust*] roll yourself in the dust.<sup>11</sup> Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir [pleasant], in shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of Zaanan does not escape. The lamentation of Beth-ezel: “He will take from you its support.”<sup>12</sup> For the inhabitant of Maroth becomes weak waiting for good, because a calamity has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> Harness the chariot to the team of horses, O inhabitant of Lachish—She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion [it appears Lachish was the gateway city for Judah's idolatry]—because in you were found the rebellious acts of Israel.<sup>14</sup> Therefore you will give parting gifts on behalf of Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib *will* become a deception to the kings of Israel.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, I will bring on you the one who takes possession [Sennacherib, the Assyrian king], O inhabitant of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will enter Adullam [perhaps Israel's leaders would hide in caves at Adullam, where David hid when fleeing from Saul; see 1 Sam 22:1].<sup>16</sup> Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, because of the children of your delight; extend your baldness like the eagle, for they will go from you into exile [to Assyria in 722 B.C., cf. 2 Ki 17:6; Amo 7:11; 8:10].

## Summary:

Micah reveals he is a prophet of God from the town of Moresheth, which was about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem and nearly 20 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea (see map). He prophesied under the reign of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and gave prophecies both to Israel and Judah (Mic 1:1). Micah opens his message as though he were in a courtroom calling his fellow Israelites to hear the indictment that is coming against them from the Lord, saying, “Hear, O peoples, all of you; listen, O earth and all it contains, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple” (Mic 1:2; cf. 6:1-2). God is pictured as coming down from His throne in heaven, and He will “tread on the high places of the earth” (Mic 1:3), and the mountains and valleys will quake and melt away at His presence (Mic 1:4). God—Who is too great to be stopped—will intervene and disrupt the activities of His people because of “the rebellion of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel” (Mic 1:5a), both in Samaria and Jerusalem (Mic 1:5b). The Lord specifically promises to destroy Samaria, the capital of Israel, because it had become a place of idolatry for His people (Mic 1:6-7). “The Lord’s intervention was due to the Israelites’ sins and rebellion against their sovereign lord. Samaria personified the rebellion of the Israelites, and Jerusalem had become a high place for idolatry rather than for holy worship. These capital cities had become leaders in wickedness rather than in holiness.”<sup>7</sup> Due to Israel’s sin, which was an embarrassment to God’s people, Micah declared, “Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked” (Mic 1:8a). His contemporary, Isaiah, was called to do the same (Isa 20:1-6). Jackals and ostriches were known for their howling, which Micah replicated as an expression of his grief (Mic 1:8b). Micah is disturbed that Israel’s sin has influenced and corrupted Judah, even the city of Jerusalem, which was to be marked by holiness rather than idolatry (Mic 1:9). Israel’s “wound” led to her total destruction in 722 B.C., and the spiritual infection brought near destruction to Jerusalem in 701 B.C., as the Assyrian army besieged the capital of Judah and destroyed 46 of its surrounding towns. In verses 10-16, Micah uses words of destruction that are similar in sound to the names of the cities in the region, cities which would be destroyed by the invading Assyrian army. Micah makes a special comment in verse 13 when referring to the town of Lachish, saying, “She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion—because in you were found the rebellious acts of Israel.” The destruction that God was bringing on Judah could be traced back to a particular place in which idolatry was introduced to God’s people. Once the Judahites turned away from God, they no longer felt compelled to worship Him or obey His Word. Without God’s moral absolutes to guide them, they felt free to live as they please, engaging in property theft (Mic 2:1-2), robbery (Mic 2:8), and stealing from widows and

---

<sup>7</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mic 1:5.

children (Mic 2:9). Departure from God and His Word leads to a decline in morals in which people put self-interest above God's interests, or the interests of others.

## Micah 2:1-13

Woe [יֹהֵי *hoy* – *alas* – used to announce coming judgment; see [Isa 3:9-11](#); [5:8-22](#)] to those [disobedient Israelites] who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, for it is in the power of their hands. <sup>2</sup> They covet [in violation of the Law; see [Ex 20:17](#)] fields and then seize *them*, and houses, and take *them* away [stealing – [Ex 20:15](#)]. They rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance [i.e. his children who were to inherit]. <sup>3</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD [in defense of the helpless], “Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity [רָעָה *raah* – *evil, calamity, injury*; see [Isa 45:5-7](#); [Amo 3:6](#)] from which you cannot remove your necks [a picture of subjugation]; and you will not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. <sup>4</sup> “On that day [of Assyrian captivity] they will take up against you a taunt and utter a bitter lamentation and say, ‘We are completely destroyed! He exchanges the portion of my people; how He removes it from me! To the apostate He apportions our fields [i.e. God will give the land to foreigners].’ <sup>5</sup> “Therefore you will have no one [among the nation’s leaders] stretching a measuring line for you by lot in the assembly of the LORD [referring to the practice of allocating land by casting lots; see [Josh 14:1-5](#)]. <sup>6</sup> ‘Do not speak out,’ *so* they speak out [said the false prophets]. *but if* they do not speak out concerning these things, reproaches will not be turned back [or “They should not preach these things; shame will not overtake” CSB]. <sup>7</sup> “Is it being said, O house of Jacob: ‘Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these [judgments] His doings?’ [or, ‘The LORD’s patience can’t be exhausted– he would never do such things’? - NET]) Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly? [Micah corrects their false theology] <sup>8</sup> “Recently My people [those in power] have arisen as an enemy-- you strip the robe off the garment from unsuspecting passers-by, *from* those returned from war [who are weary from battle]. <sup>9</sup> “The women of My people you evict [i.e. helpless widows], each *one* from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever [*splendor*; Heb רָדָר *hadar* = a synonym for *the land*; cf. [Jer 3:19](#)]. <sup>10</sup> “Arise and go [into exile], for this is no place of rest because of the uncleanness [of sin] that brings on destruction, a painful destruction [their own sin brought God’s judgment]. <sup>11</sup> “If a man [i.e. false prophet] walking after wind and falsehood had told lies *and said*, ‘I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,’ he would be spokesman to this people. [or, “If a lying windbag should come and say, ‘I’ll promise you blessings of wine and beer,’ he would be just the right preacher for these people!” NET] <sup>12</sup> “I will surely assemble all of you [in the future], Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel [*remnant* = faithful believers]. I will put them together like sheep in the fold [reunite Israel as a nation in the millennial kingdom]; like a flock in the midst of its pasture they will be noisy with men [i.e. rejoicing]. <sup>13</sup> “The breaker [i.e. the good Shepherd who leads them] goes up before them; they break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king [Jesus] goes on before them, and the LORD at their head.” [Micah prophesies a future time when God will be their Shepherd and leader and will restore His people to their land and bestow blessing upon them]

## Summary:

In Micah 2:1-5 the prophet sets forth God's divine judgment upon the nation. It was the immoral behavior of God's people who had no excuse for their criminal conduct. It was these who had been rescued from slavery in Egypt, brought into a special relationship with Him and given the light of His revelation. Those who should have modeled the highest and best behavior were, in fact, modeling the lowest and worst. Micah pronounced woe on those who scheme iniquity on their beds at night, then carry out their plans in the morning (Mic 2:1). This is likely a reference to the wealthy in Israel, since they had the means to execute their sinful schemes. They violated the eighth and tenth commandments, which forbid coveting and stealing (Ex 20:15, 17). More so, they violated the command to love their neighbors (Lev 19:18); sadly, it was the poor and their children who were being victimized (Mic 2:2). But God is Judge of all the earth, and He pronounces judgment upon these criminals, promising to bring calamity on those who have violated His covenant commands and to turn the land over to the Assyrians (Mic 2:3-5). Here, the Israelites were reaping what they had sown; for they had stolen the land of others, and God would bring the Assyrians to steal their land from them. Micah then turns his attention to false prophets in Israel who were leading God's people astray and robbing citizens, soldiers, widows and children (Mic 2:6-11). These false prophets were trying to silence Micah (Mic 2:6a), as they had done his contemporaries (Isa 30:10; Amo 7:10-13). The false prophets did not like Micah's message and wanted only to hear positive things related to God's blessings, not His judgments. They were convinced God would not bring shame on them (Mic 2:6b). Micah then quotes his detractors, who say, "Is it being said, O house of Jacob: 'Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?'" (Mic 2:7a). But Micah replied, "Do not my words do good to the one walking uprightly?" (Mic 2:7b). It was not Micah's prophecies that were bringing judgment, but the people's disobedience to God's commands. By their choice, Micah's audience was forfeiting the blessings that could be theirs, if they would only obey. Micah then names the sins that were being committed, namely robbing unsuspecting travelers, weary soldiers, and helpless widows and their children (Mic 2:8-9). Apparently, the majority of citizens were following the corrupt values of Israel's leaders and embracing the feel-good messages of the false prophets. As a result, they would all go into exile because of the uncleanness of their sin which would bring on "a painful destruction" (Mic 2:10). Micah tells them if a preacher came preaching only positive messages of blessing, "he would be spokesman to this people" (Mic 2:11). Though Micah pronounces judgment to those who deserve it, he also provides a promise of future hope to the obedient remnant, that God will unite His dispersed people and be their good Shepherd Who will lead them into good pastures that they might enjoy the blessings of the land (Mic 2:12). Unlike the corrupt leaders of Micah's day, God Himself will lead His people, saying, "So their king goes on before them, and the LORD at their head" (Mic 2:13). This will occur after Christ returns at His second coming and establishes His millennial kingdom on earth.

Social Justice from a Biblical Perspective  
Dr. Steven R. Cook

Thus has the LORD of hosts said, “Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.”  
(Zec 7:9-10)

The phrase *social justice* is commonly used in America today in connection with socialism; and though the term is good, socialism is not.<sup>8</sup> From a biblical perspective, *social justice* refers to the divinely bestowed rights that God legislates concerning vulnerable persons in society; specifically, the poor, widows, orphans, and sojourners. These rights were theirs by divine law in which God commanded those blessed with resources to provide for the needs, protection, and just treatment of the vulnerable. Blessed Israelites were theologically obligated by God to help the less fortunate. In God’s theocratic kingdom, the dependent could expect the powerful and wealthy to help meet their needs and defend their rights. Solomon wrote, “The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor, the wicked does not understand such concern” (Pro 29:7).<sup>9</sup> The “righteous” are those who have regard for God and His laws and are “concerned for rights of the poor” (cf. Isa 10:1-2). Those who disregarded God’s laws concerning the vulnerable could expect to be judged by Him, as Moses wrote, “Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow” (Deu 27:19). God’s written law was the basis for “the justice due” to the vulnerable in society. According to God’s law:

1. If a person became poor and had to sell his land, it could be purchased back by a near relative, or by himself if able. However, if there was no one to buy the land, it was automatically returned to the owner in the Year of Jubilee, which came once every fifty years (Lev 25:23-28).
2. The poor could expect those whom God had blessed to be open-handed toward them and to give generously (Deu 15:7-11).

---

<sup>8</sup> Socialism is little more than thievery, in which governmental leaders extract wealth from one class of citizens—often the honest and hardworking—and redistributes it to others in order to create outcomes of equality. Socialism has brought nothing but social and economic ruin wherever it has been implemented.

<sup>9</sup> Solomon’s mother planted seeds of righteousness in the garden of her young son’s mind, hoping someday the landscape of his thinking would beautifully display the richness of God’s Word. She instructed her young son, saying “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy” (Pro 31:8-9). Oh, that mothers would instruct their children in the ways of the Lord; that children would grow up with godly values that instruct them to care for others and to help the less fortunate. That children would grow up to represent the highest and best within society and not the lowest and worst.

3. If a poor person sold himself as a slave to a fellow Israelite, he was to be set free in the seventh year, and sent away with abundant resources. But if the slave chose, he could stay with his master forever (Deu 15:12-17; cf. Lev 25:39-42). Moreover, slaves were to be treated fairly, as God declared, “You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God” (Lev 25:43).
4. If a poor person gave their cloak as a pledge, it was to be returned to him at sunset so that he would not get cold during the night (Deu 24:10-13).
5. If one of God’s people hired a poor person to perform labor, he was to be paid the same day (Deu 24:14-15).<sup>10</sup> This is because the poor person relied on that money to eat.
6. Sojourners, widows and orphans were free to eat the remnants of a crop after harvest (Deu 24:19-21).
7. Levites, sojourners, widows and orphans were to enjoy the tithe of produce that came every third year (Deu 14:28-29).

God called His people to be righteous, honest, truthful, protective and open-handed toward the less fortunate in society. Sadly, there were times when kings, princes, judges, wealthy, prophets and priests behaved wickedly and abused the poor.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, God raised up prophets such as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zechariah and others who called for His people to “Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, [and] plead for the widow” (Isa 1:17). This call for obedience was rooted in the ethics of the Mosaic Law, which God’s people were to follow. Unfortunately, God’s prophets were ignored or mistreated and the vulnerable continued to be exploited. When God’s people would not turn back to Him, He administered retributive justice, which brought about national discipline and eventual destruction (see Ex 22:21-24; Deu 10:17-18; Jer 21:12; Mal 3:5). God used both the Assyrians and Babylonians as His disciplinary agents to dispense retributive justice in Israel.

In the Church age, governmental leaders—both Christian and non-Christian—serve as conduits of His government and grace to help care for the needy in society. In this case, tax dollars are used for basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Scripture teaches us to think of government as a “minister of God” (Rom. 13:4), and to regard rulers as “servants of God” who do His will (Rom. 13:6), and to pray for them (1

---

<sup>10</sup> The Bible promotes a strong and honest work ethic. In fact, God’s expectation of compensation for work performed is so strong, it even extended to animals, as Moses wrote, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” (Deu 25:4). The animal that works has the right to benefit from its labor. In contrast, “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat” (2 Th 3:10).

<sup>11</sup> The wicked are described as those who “slay the widow and the stranger and murder the orphans” (Psa 94:6), who “deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans” (Isa 10:2). In addition, “They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor” (Jer 5:28).

Tim. 2:1-2). We realize there is a legitimate sense in which the governmental leaders of this world accomplish God's purposes by keeping harmony and promoting justice (Rom. 13:2-4; 6-7). Christian leaders who have a healthy walk with the Lord are ultimately directed by His Word. Non-Christian leaders are influenced directly by God who controls their hearts (Pro 21:1), their consciences (Rom 2:14-15), and through the influence of godly believers in their periphery (Dan 3:28-29; 6:25-27).

As Christians, we use the phrase *social justice* within the context of God's moral absolutes. We agree with the laws of man when those laws reflect God's laws. As a result, we are to advocate for the poor, widows, orphans, and all who are vulnerable to exploitation. In many cases, we are the proponents who affect that blessing as we open our hands to the destitute. This was true of the early church, "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need" (Acts 2:44-45). There is no model for socialism here, whereby the state acts as the mediator who takes from one and gives to another. Instead, these Christians willingly sold "their property and possession" to help others, and this was done freely in order to help "as anyone might have need." James writes, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (Jam 1:27). Individual Christians are to be open-handed when helping the poor, widows and orphans.<sup>12</sup> This can be done directly, or through the agency of others, including organizations that help the needy and defend their rights. We are called to be good stewards of God's resources, and this means compassion for others should be governed by wisdom from God's Word.

Simple ways to help the poor include: 1) spending personal time with them and treating them with respect, 2) sharing the gospel of Christ, 3) giving kind words and praying for them, 4) sharing Bible promises, 5) personally delivering freshly prepared meals or snacks, 6) giving clothes and blankets, 7) sharing information about local charities that might help them, 8) giving money, 9) volunteering at a homeless shelter, 10) offering gift cards that can be used at local restaurants such as McDonalds or Taco Bell, 11) giving to a local church that helps the poor, 12) or giving to a local charity such as Meals on Wheels or the Salvation Army.

Lastly, there will be no utopian government until Jesus returns and establishes His government in the world. At that time, "There will be no end to the increase of His

---

<sup>12</sup> Not all widows were eligible for support from the church, but only those who met the age requirements and displayed a life of humility and service to others (1 Tim 5:9-10). And, if a widow has children, they are to care for her (1 Tim 5:4). Younger widows were to seek remarriage and a godly life (1 Tim 5:11-14). And if a young woman has a dependent widow, she must care for her and not expect the church to do it (1 Tim 5:16).

government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (Isa 9:7; cf. Jer 33:15). During that time “He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth” (Isa 11:4).

When our Lord returns He will take the reins of government and rule the nations of this world as a benevolent dictator (Rev. 19:15). Then and only then will the world experience a time of righteousness, justice, social welfare, economic prosperity, and spiritual knowledge. He will show Himself to be King of kings and Lord of lords in the same arena where man’s rebellion against God took place.<sup>13</sup>

### **Summary:**

When Israel was a theocratic kingdom, God legislated certain benefits to the poor, widows, orphans and sojourners in order to meet their daily needs, and these were to be given by those whom He’d blessed with abundance. God instructed His leaders to uphold and defend the rights of the vulnerable, knowing there would be wicked persons who would seek to exploit them. Sadly, much of Israel’s history was marked by a breakdown among His people, as the leaders and wealthy in the land exploited the poor they were called to defend. Now, in the Church age, God provides care for the needy in society through human governments, as well as through individual Christians and local churches. Lastly, perfect government will come in the future when Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom on earth and provides righteous reign and care for all.

---

<sup>13</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 316.

## Micah 3:1-12

Micah addresses Israel's corrupt leaders (Mic 3:1-4, 9-11), false prophets (Mic 3:5-7, 11), and greedy priests (Mic 3:11) as the reason for the nation's future destruction (Mic 3:12).

And I said, “Hear now [שמעו *shama* – *to hear, listen* – Qal imperative], heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel [Jacob and Israel = all 12 tribes; see [Mic 1:5](#)]. Is it not for you to know justice? [Israel's civil magistrates were to know and execute God's Laws; cf. [1 Ki 10:9](#); [Psa 72:1-2](#); [Jer 22:1-3](#)] <sup>2</sup> “You who hate good [justice for others] and love evil [advance self-interest], who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones, <sup>3</sup> who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones and chop *them* up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle.” [Israel's leaders—like cannibals—consumed the lives of those under their care; cf. [Psa 53:4](#)] <sup>4</sup> Then they [the harmful rulers] will cry out to the LORD [when He judges them], but He will not answer them [just as they failed to hear the cries of their people]. Instead, He will hide His face from them [“hide His face” = anthropomorphic language = He will not hear their prayers] at that time [of judgment] because they have practiced evil deeds. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD concerning the [false] prophets who lead My people astray [with false messages]; when they have *something* to bite with their teeth, they cry, “Peace,” but against him who puts nothing in their mouths they declare holy war [greed was their god]. <sup>6</sup> Therefore *it will be* night for you—without vision, and darkness for you—without divination [divination was forbidden; see [Deu 18:10](#)]. The sun will go down on the [false] prophets, and the day will become dark over them [judgment is coming]. <sup>7</sup> The seers will be ashamed and the diviners will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover *their* mouths because there is no answer from God [*seers and diviners* became derogatory terms for the false prophets]. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand [in contrast to the false prophets who tailored their messages for money] I [Micah] am filled with power—with the Spirit of the LORD—and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin [Micah was faithful to God and His will]. <sup>9</sup> Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, <sup>10</sup> who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice [against the poor, widows, and orphans]. <sup>11</sup> Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe [which was forbidden; see [Ex 23:8](#); [Deu 16:19](#)], her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD [i.e. claim to trust the Lord] saying, “Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us.” [perception ≠ reality] <sup>12</sup> Therefore, on account of you [Israel's leaders, priests, and prophets] Zion will be plowed as a field [broken up], Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple *will become* high places of a forest [when the Babylonians destroyed the city and temple in 586 B.C.].

## Summary:

Micah begins with a command for the nation's leaders to hear his message from the Lord (Mic 3:1a). He opens with a rhetorical question, saying, "Is it not for you to know justice?" (Mic 3:1b). The answer, of course, is yes. Israel's good leaders were marked by righteousness and justice (see 1 Ki 10:9; Psa 72:1-2, 12-14; Jer 22:1-3). However, the leaders in Micah's day were so vicious, their behavior is likened to cannibalism, whereby they consumed the lives of those they were called to protect (Mic 3:2-3). The nation's leaders were guilty of theft (Mic 2:1-2, 8-9), gross injustice (Mic 3:9), bloodshed (Mic 3:10; 7:2), and bribery (Mic 3:11). "By contrast faithful leaders protected their charges and looked out for their welfare. David, the epitome of a good leader for God, was taken from shepherding sheep (1 Sam. 17:15) to become a shepherd of the people (2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7). The people in Micah's day were being betrayed by their leaders, for if they really cared about the people, they would have turned them back to the Lord."<sup>14</sup> God's judgment would eventually fall upon the nation, and because they refused to listen to His warnings, He would not hear their cries (Mic 3:4). God is omniscient and hears all prayers; however, He chooses not to answer the prayers of those who disregard Him and His Word (Deu 1:43-45; Pro 21:13; 28:9; Zec 7:11-13). Micah then addresses the false prophets who were leading God's people astray (Mic 3:5a), whose messages of peace or calamity depended on the pay of the hearer (Mic 3:5b). For these false prophets, money was their master. Micah pronounces judgment upon them, describing their doom as a time of night and darkness (Mic 3:6), in which God will make them ashamed and embarrassed (Mic 3:7a), saying, "Indeed, they will all cover their mouths because there is no answer from God" (Mic 3:7b). The silence of God means the messages of the false prophets were not from Him, but merely the product of their own imaginations (cf. Jer 23:16-22). In contrast with the false prophets, Micah declared, "I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the LORD—and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin" (Mic 3:8). Walking with God gave Micah the right perspective to see what was happening in the nation, as well as the moral fortitude to address their rebellion and sin. Being filled with the Spirit, Micah addressed the corrupt leaders of the nation, "Who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice" (Mic 3:9-10). The leaders included the magistrates, priests and prophets, who pronounce judgment for a bribe, instruct for a price, and prophecy for money (Mic 3:11a). Then they falsely claim that they trust in God, saying, "Is not the Lord in our midst?" and reject Micah's message, saying, "Calamity will not come upon us" (Mic 3:11b). Because of the failure of the nation's leaders, prophets and priests, Micah declares, "on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple *will become* high places of a

---

<sup>14</sup> John A. Martin, "Micah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1482.

forest” (Mic 3:12). This prophecy came to pass in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple. It occurred again by the Romans in A.D. 70.

## The Role of Prophets, Priests, Judges and Kings in Israel

Dr. Steven R. Cook

After God delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, He established Israel as a theocratic nation among the Gentile nations of the world. God Himself was their Ruler, and He gave them laws and leaders to direct their moral, religious, and civil life.<sup>15</sup> God's laws (תּוֹרָה *torah* – *instruction, direction*) were intended to establish standards of what is right, to promote order, to advance justice, to resolve disputes, and to protect freedom. God's leaders were to model what was right and influence the thoughts and actions of others to live in conformity to His will. Israel's leaders consisted primarily of prophets, priests, judges and kings, who were to know His Word, live it, and teach it to others.

### The Prophets

Early in Israel's history, God spoke directly to His prophets who were to communicate His message to others that they might live His will. The word *prophet* translates the Hebrew word נָבִיא *nabi*, which means *speaker* or *spokesman*, and refers to one who speaks on behalf of another. God's prophets were both forthtellers and foretellers, always communicating what He revealed. Moses was called as a prophet-leader to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 3:1-10), to mediate a bilateral covenant (Exo 19:1-8), and to communicate and inscripturate God's laws (Exo 34:27; Lev 26:46). As God assigned other national leaders, His prophets functioned as guides and counselors to them, always directing them to live in conformity to His law. When Israel's leaders and people turned away from Him, the prophet would function as a prosecuting attorney, pointing out their violation of the law (Hos 4:1-2; Mic 6:1-2), and the impending consequences if they did not turn back to the Lord (i.e. repent).

### The Priests

The word *priest* translates the Hebrew word כֹּהֵן *kohen*, which refers to those who drew near to God on behalf of others, usually in sacred matters of prayer and sacrifice. God originally intended the whole nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, saying, "and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exo 19:6). However, because of the sin of worshipping the golden calf (Exo 32:1-35), God took that privilege from the nation and confined the priesthood to the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites were to be their assistants (Num 3:1-10; 18:1-7). According to God's law, priests were to: 1) be holy in their behavior (Exo 19:6), 2) teach His law to others (Lev 10:11; Deu 33:10), 3) preserve the tabernacle and temple (Num 18:1-4), 4) perform official duties in the Holy

---

<sup>15</sup> The Mosaic Law refers to the 613 laws "which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai" (Lev 26:46). The Mosaic Law: 1) revealed the holy character of God (Ps 19:9; Rom 7:12), 2) was given specifically to Israel *circa* 1445 B.C. (Lev 26:46), and, 3) existed for nearly 1500 years before being rendered inoperative (2 Cor 3:7-11; Heb 8:13).

of Holies once a year (Exo 30:6-10; Lev 16), 5) inspect people and fabrics for cleanliness (Lev 13-14), 6) receive tithes (Num 18:21, 26; cf. Heb 7:5), and 7) offer sacrifices for sin (Lev chapters 4, 9, 16). Israel's priests were to educate and lead God's people in religious ceremonial activities (Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-5, 8).

### **The Judges**

Israel's Judges (שֹׁפֵט *shaphat*) were to adjudicate legal matters and serve as leaders among God's people. Moses was a judge (Exo 18:13-16), who instructed others in God's law (Exo 18:17-26). Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to choose "men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain" (Exo 18:21a), and to appoint them "as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens" (Exo 18:21b). The word *leader* translates the Hebrew word שָׂר *sar*, which means *chief, ruler, or governor*. After the leadership of Moses and Joshua, there was the period of the Judges, which is generally described as a time when "there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25). During this time, God raised up Judges who served as hero-leaders who defended the nation from enemy attacks and guided them into God's law (Judg 2:16-19). When there was no Judge to lead, the people repeatedly degenerated into idolatry and disobedience. The period of the Judges lasted for about 300 years and ended with Samuel, who regularly prayed for God's people and instructed them to seek and serve the Lord (1 Sam 12:20-24).

### **The Kings**

The word *king* translates the Hebrew word מֶלֶךְ *melek*, and was used of Israel's leaders from 1050 to 586 B.C. God had promised Abraham—the progenitor of Israel—that he would be the father of many nations, saying, "kings will come forth from you" (Gen 17:6). When God established His theocratic kingdom under Moses, He anticipated Israel would have a king who would serve as His viceregent, and he gave specific instructions concerning the selection of the king, his behavior, and education (Deu 17:14-20). According to the Mosaic law, Israel's king was to be a fellow Israelite of God's choosing; not self-selected (Deu 17:14-15). Furthermore, he was not to accumulate horses for his army (Deu 17:16), nor multiply wives (Deu 17:17a), nor amass great wealth (Deu 17:17b), as these would all pull him away from his devotion to the Lord. In order to stay true to God, the king was required to write out a personal copy of the law in the presence of the Levitical priests (Deu 17:18), and to carry it with him and read it all the days of his life. By doing this, the king would learn to fear God, obey His word, and not be lifted up in pride, so that he and his sons may live long and be blessed (Deu 17:19-20). The king who did this would serve as the ideal Israelite, not relying on self or resources, but wholly devoted to God and guided by sacred Scripture. David was God's ideal king who studied Scripture, walked with God, and led others to do the same (Psa 119:1-16, 33-35), and many of Israel's kings were compared with him (1 Ki 15:1-5; 2 Ki 16:2; 18:1-3; 22:1-2).

Though Solomon knew Scripture, he broke all three commands and this led to his ruin (1 Ki 10:14-15, 23, 26-28; 11:1-8).

Israel's kings exercised their authority in matters political, judicial, and economic (such as imposing taxes). They also had the authority to recruit citizens for military campaigns and public service projects (such as the building of the Temple).

## Micah 4:1-13

And it will come about in the last days [eschatological events referring to the millennial kingdom] that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains [mountains = earthly kingdoms; see [Dan 2:35, 45; 7:13-14](#)]. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. <sup>2</sup> Many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [i.e. Jerusalem] and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths [Israel will be a hub of wisdom].” For from Zion will go forth the law [תּוֹרָה *torah* – law, instruction, direction], even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations [in contrast to the leaders in Micah’s day who were perverting justice]. Then they [Gentile nations] will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war [while Christ is reigning on earth]. <sup>4</sup> Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree [i.e. at prosperous rest], with no one to make *them* afraid [of an enemy attack], for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken [in contrast to the false prophets in Micah’s day]. <sup>5</sup> Though all the peoples [in Micah’s day] walk each in the name of his god, as for us, we will [in the future] walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. <sup>6</sup> “In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted [i.e. He will gather disobedient Israel].” <sup>7</sup> “I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation [i.e. the weak are made strong under Messiah], and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion [Jesus will be their King] from now on and forever [into the future; see [2 Pet 3:10-13](#)].” <sup>8</sup> “As for you, tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come—even the former dominion will come [days of authority, such as under David and Solomon], the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem [i.e. the future millennial kingdom].” <sup>9</sup> “Now, why do you cry out loudly? [in Babylonian captivity] Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished [no authority to rule or wise to guide], that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? [once begun, Israel could not stop the suffering of exile]” <sup>10</sup> “Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth; for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon [Judah would go in captivity because of their unrepentant sins]. There you will be rescued [after seventy years]; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies [and restore them to the land under Nehemiah and Ezra].” <sup>11</sup> “And now many nations have been assembled against you [in Micah’s day] who say, ‘Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.’ [desiring Judah’s ruin]” <sup>12</sup> “But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD [no divine viewpoint], and they do not understand His purpose [for Israel and the nations]; for He has gathered them [Gentile nations] like sheaves to the threshing floor [for judgment].” <sup>13</sup> “Arise and thresh [in the future], daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze [make strong for war], that you may pulverize many peoples [Zec 14:12-15], that you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain and their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

## Summary:

Micah chapter four presents a future hope to Judah in the last days when God will bring in the millennial kingdom and blessings. At that time, God’s kingdom—pictured as a mountain—will be established in Jerusalem (Mic 4:1). The Gentile nations of the world will go there, seeking God’s wisdom, saying, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths” (Mic 4:2). This is in contrast to the Israelites in Micah’s day who did not care about God and His word. Though there was judicial corruption in Micah’s day, Messiah will, in the future, “judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations” (Mic 4:3a). There will be no war during the millennial reign of Christ, as everyone “will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war” (Mic 4:3b). This will be a time of universal peace and prosperity, in which earthly resources are used for good and not evil purposes (Mic 4:4), and Israel will walk with the Lord forever (Mic 4:5). In Micah’s day the weak and vulnerable were exploited; however, in the millennial kingdom, Messiah “will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those [rebels] whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation, and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever” (Mic 4:6-7). At that time God will establish His government in Jerusalem and sovereignty will be restored in Israel, as in the former days when David and Solomon were king (Mic 4:8). But Micah then pronounces near term prophesy concerning Judah, that the nation must go into captivity in Babylon. This will be a time when the nation has no king to govern or counselor to guide, and the unstoppable pain is likened to a woman in childbirth (Mic 4:9). Upon that generation, Micah states, “Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth; for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon” (Mic 4:10a). At the time Micah prophesied, Babylon was under Assyria; but the nation would eventually rise to regional dominance and would serve as God’s instrument of judgment upon His rebellious people. Micah then jumps ahead and mentions the return of his people to Jerusalem, saying, “There you will be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies” (Mic 4:10b). We know from Jeremiah, a prophet who lived a century after Micah, that the captivity of Judah would last seventy years (Jer 25:8-12; 29:1-14). The fulfillment of this short-term prophesy would validate Micah’s long-term predictions concerning the millennial kingdom. Micah mentions there were many nations in his day that desired Judah’s destruction, “Who say, ‘Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion’” (Mic 4:11). But these do not know God’s thoughts or purposes for them, that He will gather them for judgment because of their hostility toward His people (Mic 4:12). In the future, God will cause His people to rise again, saying, “For your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze, that you may pulverize many peoples, that you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain and their wealth to the Lord of all the earth”

(Mic 4:13). This will happen when God restores Jerusalem to prominence during the millennial reign of Christ.

## Micah 5:1-15

“Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops [i.e. prepare for war]; they [the Babylonians] have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek [likely referring to king Zedekiah; see 2 Ki 25:1-7].<sup>2</sup> “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah [birthplace of David; see 1 Sam 17:12; John 7:42], *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One [a descendant of David] will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel [a good King, in contrast to the failed leaders in Micah’s day]. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity [emphasizing His deity].” [Matthew identifies Jesus as this promised Leader; see [Mat 2:1-6](#)]<sup>3</sup> Therefore He will give them *up* [perhaps in Tribulation] until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel [referring to the nation’s regathering at Jesus’ Second Coming].<sup>4</sup> And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God [Jesus will rule in Israel]. And they will remain [established in the land], because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth [Jesus is strong and everlasting and His kingdom will be universal].<sup>5</sup> This One will be *our* peace. When the Assyrian invades our land [a typical term for the enemy of Israel], when he tramples on our citadels [likely during the end of the Tribulation], then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men [seven...and eight = a metaphor representing adequate leadership to defeat the enemy].<sup>6</sup> They [rulers under Messiah] will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and He will deliver *us* from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.<sup>7</sup> Then the remnant of Jacob [i.e. believing and obedient Israelites] will be among many peoples like dew from the LORD [i.e. refreshing among the nations], like showers on vegetation which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of men [i.e. come in God’s timing].<sup>8</sup> The remnant of Jacob [i.e. believing and obedient Israelites] will be among the nations [for blessing], among many peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest [i.e. strong to rule], like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which, if he passes through, tramples down and tears, and there is none to rescue.<sup>9</sup> Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, and all your enemies will be cut off.<sup>10</sup> “It will be in that day,” declares the LORD, “That I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy your chariots [i.e. remove sources of human strength].<sup>11</sup> “I will also cut off the cities of your land and tear down all your fortifications [in which they trusted].<sup>12</sup> “I will cut off sorceries from your hand [which were used to try to control others], and you will have fortune-tellers no more [used to try to predict the future].<sup>13</sup> “I will cut off your carved images and your *sacred* pillars from among you, so that you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands [worship of idols was really the worship of demons; see [1 Cor 10:19-20](#)].<sup>14</sup> “I will root out your Asherim from among you and destroy your cities [i.e. objects and places of worship].<sup>15</sup> “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed.” [Christ will defeat and rule over defiant nations at His Second Coming; see [Isa 63:1-6](#); [Rev 12:5](#); [19:15](#)]

## Summary:

In chapter five, Micah continues his message of near judgment and future hope; specifically, regarding the millennial kingdom. In his opening verse he describes an event that was about one hundred years into the future from his day, in which the Babylonians would lay siege against Jerusalem, and “with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek” (Mic 5:1). This humiliation is likely a reference to king Zedekiah who was captured, and who witnessed the slaughter of his sons just before his eyes were gouged out and he was put in chains and led into captivity (2 Ki 25:1-7). In contrast to the failed leadership in Micah’s day, God promised to send a good Ruler who would be born in the village of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). What follows in Micah 5:3-4 refers to the future rule of Messiah, who will, after the Tribulation, regather His people (Mic 5:3), and shepherd them in their own land, “and they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth” (Mic 5:4). Jesus’ universal and sovereign rule will guarantee Israel’s safety. Micah 5:2-4, like other biblical prophecies related to Jesus, combine the events of His first and second comings, such that they are seen, from the prophet’s perspective, as occurring immediately together (see Isa 9:6-7; 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:13-21). However, looking back on the prophecies and the events described, we realize there are at least two thousand years between His first and second coming. At the time of Jesus’ second coming, at the end of the Tribulation, He will appoint rulers under Him, who will help put an end to Gentile oppression (Mic 5:5-6). During the millennial kingdom, the remnant—believing and obedient Israelites—will be among the nations of the world as a refreshing blessing to them. Micah states, “Then the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on vegetation which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of men” (Mic 5:7). In addition, they will rule with supremacy and strength, like a lion in the forest or among sheep (Mic 5:8-9). In that day, Christ will destroy all human dependencies that give His people a false sense of strength and security, such as horses and chariots (military might; Mic 5:10), cities and fortifications (places of refuge; Mic 5:11), and sorceries and fortune-tellers (seeking demonic forces to control others and predict the future; Mic 5:12). And, He will destroy both the objects of false worship—carved images, sacred pillars, and Asherim—as well as their cities of worship (Mic 5:13-14). Lastly, at Jesus’ second coming, He will execute divine vengeance on those Gentile nations that have not obeyed Him, saying, “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed” (Mic 5:15). In all these events, the sovereignty of God is at work, for He not only declares what will come to pass, but He makes it happen in His time (Psa 115:3; 135:6; Isa 14:24, 27; 46:9-11; Dan 4:35).

## Micah 6:1-16

Hear now [שמע *shama* – to hear, listen – Qal imperative] what the LORD is saying [to Israel], “Arise, plead your case [ריב *rib* – strive, contend] before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice [i.e. call witnesses from all locations in defense of the Lord’s charges].”<sup>2</sup> “Listen, you mountains, to the indictment [ריב *rib*] of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, because the LORD has a case [ריב *rib*] against His people; even with Israel He will dispute [state charges that justify His judgments].”<sup>3</sup> “My people, what have I done to you, and how have I wearied you? Answer Me [i.e. how has God failed that His people would turn away from His leadership and behave so poorly].”<sup>4</sup> “Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery [displayed His love for them], and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam [gave them good leaders].”<sup>5</sup> “My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled [he wanted a curse placed on Israel] and what Balaam son of Beor answered him [he gave a blessing instead], and from Shittim to Gilgal [the encampments that marked the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land; see Josh 3:1; 4:15-19], so that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.”<sup>6</sup> With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high [i.e. what does God want from the Israelite facing judgment]? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves [typical animal sacrifices]?<sup>7</sup> Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil [i.e. external gifts]? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul [either as a pagan sacrifice, or in dedication for holy service to the Lord]?<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man [of Israel], what is good; and what the LORD requires of you: to do justice [in contrast to their criminal behavior; see Mic 2:1-2; 3:1-3, 9-11; 6:11], to love kindness [i.e. treat the helpless well; in contrast to their abuses; see Mic 2:8-9; 3:10-11; 6:12], and to walk humbly with your God? [in modest obedience; not arrogantly; see Mic 2:3]<sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD will call to the city—and it is sound wisdom to fear Your name: “Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time? [or, “Pay attention to the rod and the One who ordained it” - CSB]”<sup>10</sup> “Is there yet a man in the wicked house, along with treasures of wickedness and a short measure that is cursed?”<sup>11</sup> “Can I [the righteous God] justify wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights? [forbidden by the Law; see Lev 19:35-36; Deu 25:13; Pro 11:1; 20:23]”<sup>12</sup> “For the rich men of the city are full of violence [toward the poor, widows, orphans and helpless], her residents speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth [most everyone is corrupt].”<sup>13</sup> “So also I will make you sick, striking you down, desolating you because of your sins [promised judgment; see Deu 28:15-68].”<sup>14</sup> “You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, and your vileness will be in your midst [see Lev 26:26]. You will try to remove for safekeeping, but you will not preserve anything, and what you do preserve I will give to the sword [see Deu 28:33].”<sup>15</sup> “You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; and the grapes, but you will not drink wine [see Deu 28:39-40].”<sup>16</sup> “The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed [Omri and Ahab were two of Israel’s worst kings, known for advancing idolatry

and persecuting the righteous; see [1 Ki 16:23-26](#); [16:29-33](#)]; and in their devices you walk. Therefore, I will give you up for destruction and your inhabitants for derision, and you will bear the reproach of My people.”

### Summary:

Micah calls for Israel to hear the word from the Lord, who calls for them to arise and bring forth witnesses to a legal hearing (Mic 6:1). Micah then calls for the residents of Israel to hear the charges God is bringing against them, “Because the LORD has a case against His people; even with Israel He will dispute” (Mic 6:2). The Lord asks what He had done to wrong them, or weary them (Mic 6:3), that they should have turned from Him. He calls to their remembrance His goodness by delivering them from slavery in Egypt, by redeeming them, and sending them Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Mic 6:4). “God’s mention of Moses would remind the people of the Law, and the name of Aaron would bring to mind the priesthood. Perhaps Miriam is mentioned because her name would bring to mind her song to the Lord (Ex. 15:21) and her role as a prophetess (Ex. 15:20).”<sup>16</sup> The Lord also mentioned His blessing them, in spite of the desires of Balak and Balaam (Mic 6:5a), and His bringing His people into the promised Land, as the Israelites crossed the Jordan from Shittim to Gilgal (Mic 6:5b). All this was stated so that Israel “might know the righteous acts of the LORD” (Mic 6:5c). Micah poses a series of questions about how Israel might return to God and give Him what He desires; questions related to burnt offerings and yearly calves (Mic 6:6), the sacrifice of rams and the abundance of oil (Mic 6:7a). The sacrifices were intended to be outward expressions of inward humility before the Lord; however, they’d become outward rituals without the inward reality to validate them. It is likely that many thought of the sacrifices as a way of paying God off, so that His judgment would not fall on them. But sacrifices—by themselves—could not atone for Israel’s sins, not even one as extreme as devoting one’s firstborn to the Lord (Mic 6:7b). It is not clear whether Micah was referring to the giving of the firstborn child as an act of sacrificial devotion for holy service to the Lord, or to the pagan practice of child sacrifice. Either way, these things were not what God wanted from them. God told them about the good He wanted from them: to promote justice among their fellow Israelites, to treat the poor, widows, orphans and helpless with kindness, and to walk in modest obedience with the Lord (Mic 6:8). All of this they’d failed to do, as they engaged in criminal behavior (Mic 2:1-2; 3:1-3, 10-11; 6:11), abused the poor, widows, orphans and helpless (Mic 2:8-9; 3:10-11; 6:12), and walked arrogantly (Mic 2:3). God called the cities to hear His voice (Mic 6:9), and to the wicked house that had accumulated unjust wealth by means of corrupt scales (Mic 6:10), which He would not tolerate (Mic 6:11; cf. Lev 19:35-36; Deu 25:13; Pro 11:1; 20:23). He references the rich in the city who practice violence and the residents who practice deceit (Mic 6:12),

---

<sup>16</sup> John A. Martin, “Micah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1488.

pronouncing judgment, saying, “I will make *you* sick, striking you down, [and] desolating *you* because of your sins” (Mic 6:13). God promised they would not be satisfied with their wicked wealth, and that they would go into captivity (Mic 6:14-15; cf. Lev 26:26; Deu 28:30, 33, 39-40). His judgments upon them were because of their sinful choices to walk in the ways of Omri and Ahab, two of Israel’s worst kings, who were known for advancing idolatry and persecuting the righteous (1 Ki 16:23-26; 16:29-33). In all this, God is sovereign to rule, righteous to judge, and faithful to execute His promises.

## Micah 7:1-20

Woe is me! For I [Micah] am like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, *or* a first-ripe fig *which* I crave. <sup>2</sup> The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright *person* among men [except for the remnant]. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed [Isa 5:7]; each of them hunts the other with a net [to injure; cf. Mic 3:10; 6:12]. <sup>3</sup> Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe [corruption among rulers], and a great man speaks the desire of his soul; so they weave it together [i.e. ruler, judge, and great men conspire together to act corruptly]. <sup>4</sup> The best of them is like a briar, the most upright like a thorn hedge [i.e. injuring those who come in contact with them]. The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur. <sup>5</sup> Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips. <sup>6</sup> For son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household [neighbors, friends, and close relatives betray each other for self-interest]. <sup>7</sup> But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD [Micah has hope in God]; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me [and not betray his trust]. <sup>8</sup> Do not rejoice over me [Micah speaks as the representative of the nation], O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me [for hope and direction]. <sup>9</sup> I [the nation] will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, *and* I will see His righteousness. <sup>10</sup> Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look on her; at that time she will be trampled down like mire of the streets [when God delivers Israel]. <sup>11</sup> *It will be* a day for building your walls. On that day will your boundary be extended [a future hope when Christ returns and establishes His millennial kingdom]. <sup>12</sup> *It will be* a day when they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt even to the Euphrates, even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain [those who were once hostile to Israel, both near and far, will come to Jerusalem as friends; see Isa 19:23-25]. <sup>13</sup> And the earth [during the Tribulation, just before the time of blessing] will become desolate because of her inhabitants, on account of the fruit of their deeds. <sup>14</sup> [Micah asks God to bless His people as in former times, praying] Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, the flock of Your possession which dwells by itself in the woodland, in the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. <sup>15</sup> "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles." <sup>16</sup> [future] Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth, their ears will be deaf. <sup>17</sup> They will lick the dust like a serpent, like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; to the LORD our God they will come in dread and they will be afraid before You [who rules]. <sup>18</sup> Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. <sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup> You will

give truth to Jacob *and* unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old.

### **Summary:**

Micah opens as if he were a fruit-picker looking for fresh fruit to eat that he might be nourished; but there is none to be found (Mic 7:1). The fruit he's looking for is the fruit of righteousness, but instead he finds "the godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright *person* among men" (Mic 7:2a). Instead, he finds the vast majority of Israelites "lie in wait for bloodshed; each of them hunts the other with a net" (Mic 7:2b). The rulers, judges and prominent men were experts at doing evil; for what they desired, they worked together to make happen (Mic 7:3). The best of Israel's leaders were like thorn bushes that injure those who come in contact with them (Mic 7:4a). What the watchmen had predicted concerning Israel's judgment was about to come true (Mic 7:4b). The nation's corruption was so systemic that one could not even trust a friend, neighbor, or even the close members of a household (Mic 7:5-6a), for "A man's enemies are the men of his own household" (Mic 7:6b). Though the situation was extremely bad, Micah—and the faithful remnant—had hope in God, as the prophet declares, "But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me" (Mic 7:7). Micah's faith in God kept him from plunging into total pessimism. Next, Micah speaks as a representative of the nation of Israel, and though it falls and dwells in darkness, it will rise again, for the Lord is their light (Mic 7:8). Israel had violated God's law, and for that, they must "bear the indignation of the Lord" (Mic 7:9a). And this will continue until the Lord pleads their case and rescues them in the future (Mic 7:9b), at which time God will bring them into the light and they will see His righteousness (Mic 7:9c). Israel's enemy, who questioned them during the time of God's judgment, asking, "where is the LORD your God?" will be ashamed when the nation is delivered (Mic 7:10a). Because of the enemy's gloating and hostility toward Israel, God will judge that nation, and Israel will look on her oppressors, who "will be trampled down like mire of the streets" (Mic 7:10b). Micah then prophecies of the future millennial kingdom when Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the borders expanded (Mic 7:11). This will be a time when people will flock to the nation, from Assyria and Egypt (Israel's enemies), as well as from around the world, "from sea to sea and mountain to mountain" (Mic 7:12); and prior to this, the nations will be judged (Mic 7:13; cf. Matt 25:32-33, 46). Micah prays God will shepherd the nation (Mic 7:14a), leading them to fertile ground, like that found in Bashan and Gilead, east of the Jordan (Mic 7:14b). He asks that God would perform miracles and rescue His people from persecution, like He did when Israel was rescued from Egypt (Mic 7:15). At that time, the nations of the world will be ashamed of their behavior (Mic 7:16), and will be humbled, like the serpent who licks the dust (Mic 7:17a), they will approach the Lord in humility, trembling before Him, "To the LORD our God they will come in dread and they will be afraid before You" (Mic 7:17b). Micah then closes with praise to God who pardons their iniquity and delights in unchanging love (Mic 7:18), who will have compassion on them and "will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:19). God's loyal-love, merciful character, and faithfulness to His people were

encouraging words to Micah, as well as to the faithful remnant who were living in a corrupt society. Micah's hope was rooted in God's integrity, for He made oaths to Abraham and Jacob concerning Israel's future (Mic 7:20; cf. Gen 12:2-3; 28:13-14), and He cannot lie (Num 23:19; Heb 6:18). Jesus will bring this to pass when He ushers in the kingdom.