

Micah

¹ Here is the message that the Lord gave to Micah of Moresheth at the time when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. This is what he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

² Listen, all the nations! Pay attention, everyone on earth! The Lord God testifies against you from the Lord's holy Temple. ³ Look! The Lord is coming, leaving his place and coming down, and is walking on the high places of the earth.

⁴ The mountains melt beneath him, the valleys burst apart, like wax in front of a fire, like water rushing down a slope. All this is happening because of the rebellion of the descendants of Jacob, the sins of the people of Israel.

⁵ What is the rebellion of the descendants of Jacob? Isn't it what is happening in Samaria? Where are the idolatrous high places* of Judah? Aren't they right in Jerusalem?†

⁶ Therefore I will make Samaria a pile of rubble in a field, a place for planting vineyards. I will roll its stones down into the valley; I will lay bare its foundations. ⁷ All their carved idols will be smashed to pieces. All that was earned by their temple prostitutes will be burned. All of their idols will be destroyed, for what she collected

* **1:5** The high places were where pagan gods were worshiped.

† **1:5** Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom, and Judah the capital of the southern. This indicates the extent of the apostasy.

through the earnings of temple prostitutes will be taken away and used to pay other temple prostitutes. ⁸ Because of this I will weep and wail, I will walk barefoot and naked, and will howl like jackals and mourn like owls.

⁹ Their[†] wound cannot be healed, it has extended to Judah, and reached right to the gates of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Don't mention it in Gath; don't weep at all. [§] People of Beth-le-aphrah, roll in the dust.* ¹¹ Leave,[†] people of Shaphir, naked and ashamed. People of Zanaan don't come out. People of Beth Ezel mourn, for you have lost your support.[‡] ¹² The people of Maroth wait anxiously for relief, but disaster has come down from the Lord on the gate of Jerusalem. ¹³ Harness the team of horses to the chariot, you people of Lachish, because the sins of the people of Jerusalem[§] began with you, for the sins of Israel were first found in you.

[†] **1:9** Referring back to the people of Samaria. **§ 1:10** Gath was a Philistine city. The meaning is that this tragic situation should not be shared with Israel's enemies, so that they do not take advantage or gloat. * **1:10** Rolling in the dust was a way of showing extreme grief. In addition, there is a wordplay on the names of the towns mentioned in this section, but some of the meanings have been lost. [†] **1:11** This is thought by some to refer to the exile. [‡] **1:11** Meaning uncertain. **§ 1:13** Literally, "daughter of Zion."

¹⁴ Send your goodbye gifts to Moresheth.* The town of Achzib is a deception to the kings of Israel. ¹⁵ I will bring a conqueror to attack you, people of Moresheth. The leaders of Israel will go to Adullam.†

¹⁶ Shave your heads, for the children you love will be taken away; make yourselves as bald as a vulture, for they will be exiled far away from you.

2

¹ How disastrous it will be for those who devise evil plans as they lie awake at night. They get up in the morning to carry them out, because they have the power to do just that. ² They seize any fields they want. They take any houses they want. They cheat people of their houses, and steal their inheritance.

³ So this is what the Lord says. Watch out! I am planning to bring disaster on such families. They won't be able to escape. You will no longer walk around arrogantly, for this will be a time of disaster. ⁴ On that day they will make up a saying to taunt you. With a mocking lament they will say, "We are totally ruined! Our possessions are being sold off. They've taken everything

* **1:14** Micah's hometown. Some see these gifts as related to the dowry given to a daughter when she married, before she left. In other words, the people of Israel were saying goodbye to Moresheth—perhaps by enemy conquest since it appears to be close to the border with the Philistines. † **1:15** Adullam was the cave where David hid when he was running away from king Saul (1 Samuel 22:1). In other words, the leaders of Israel will run away to hide.

away, and given our fields to your conquerors.”

⁵ Consequently at that time there will be none of you in the assembly of the Lord responsible for the division of the land.*

⁶ But you preach at me, saying,[†] “Don't preach such things. Don't prophesy like this. Such a humiliation won't happen to us!”

⁷ Should you talk like that, descendants of Jacob? You ask,[‡] “Can the Lord run out of patience? Is this what he does?” Are not my words good to those who do what is right? asks the Lord. § ⁸ Lately my people have risen up against me like an enemy. You steal the coats off the backs of those passing by, men returning from war who expect to be safe in their homeland. ⁹ You drive the women of my people from their comfortable homes; you have robbed their children of my blessings forever. ¹⁰ Get up! Leave! For this is not a place for you to stay. It is defiled and totally ruined. ¹¹ If a false prophet should come to you and lie, saying, “I'll preach to you about the virtues of wine and alcohol,” he would be the perfect prophet for your kind of people.

¹² I will certainly gather all of you, descendants of Jacob, I will certainly bring back together those who are left, Israel. I will place them like

* **2:5** This refers back to the original division of the Promised Land by lot. Once the land has been conquered, Israel no longer has any say about who owns it, or who lives where. † **2:6** Implied. ‡ **2:7** Implied. § **2:7** Implied. Who is saying what is confusing in this verse.

sheep in the fold, like a flock in its pasture. The land will be filled with people celebrating. ¹³ The One who opens the way for them will lead them, breaking through the gate and going out. Their King will lead them; the Lord himself will be at their head.

3

¹ Then I said, "Please listen, leaders of the descendants of Jacob, people of Israel. You are meant to know the difference between right and wrong, ² you who hate good and love evil! You tear off their skin, and rip the flesh from their bones. ³ You eat the flesh of my people, you strip off their skin, you break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the saucepan, like flesh for the cooking pot."

⁴ Then they'll cry out to the Lord, but he won't answer them. He will turn away* from them at that time because of the evil things they have done.

⁵ This is what the Lord says about the prophets who deceive my people. To those who feed† them they prophesy peace to them, while to those who do not they prophesy war against them. ⁶ Therefore it will be like night for you, with no visions; dark, with no predictions. The sun will set on these prophets; their day will end in darkness. ⁷ The seers will be disgraced, the fortune-tellers put to shame, and they will cover

* **3:4** Literally, "hide his face." † **3:5** Literally, "biting with their teeth."

their faces because none of them receive any answer from God.

⁸ But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord. I am filled with justice and strength to make clear to the descendants of Jacob their rebellion, and to the people of Israel their sin.

⁹ Listen to me, leaders of the descendants of Jacob and the people of Israel, you who hate justice and distort all that is right. ¹⁰ You are building Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with evil. ¹¹ Your leaders judge for a bribe, and your priests teach for a price, and your prophets only prophesy for pay. Yet they all lean on the Lord saying, "Isn't the Lord here with us? Nothing bad can happen to us!" ¹² Therefore because of you Zion will become a ploughed field and Jerusalem a heap of rubble, and the Temple mount will be overgrown.

4

¹ In the last days, the mountain where the Lord's Temple stands will be recognized as the highest of all mountains, rising above other hills. Crowds of people from many places will travel to it. ² Many nations will come and say, "Let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. There God will teach us his ways and we will follow his directions."* God's teachings will spread out from Zion, his word from Jerusalem. ³ The Lord will decide the cases of the nations, he will settle arguments between

* **4:2** Literally, "walk in his paths."

distant powerful nations. They will hammer their swords and turn them into plough blades, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not fight against each other anymore; they will no longer learn methods of warfare. ⁴ Everyone will be able to sit under their own vine and their own fig tree, for there will be no one to make them afraid. I the Lord Almighty has spoken! ⁵ Even though all the other nations follow their gods, we will follow the Lord our God forever and ever.

⁶ On that day, declares the Lord, I will gather those who are lame, I will bring together those who have been scattered in exile, those whom I punished. ⁷ I will make those who remain, crippled and driven far away, into a strong nation, and the Lord will rule them from Mount Zion forever and ever. ⁸ And as for you, Jerusalem,[†] watchtower of the flock,[‡] your former royal rule and power will be returned to you: the kingdom will be given back to Jerusalem.

⁹ So why are you screaming aloud? Don't you have a king? Has the king who advises you died so that pain has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? ¹⁰ Thrash around in agony like a woman giving birth, people of Zion—for you will be expelled from the city, forced to camp out in the open, and exiled to Babylon. But the Lord will bring you back, and rescue you from the power of your enemies.

[†] **4:8** Literally, “hill of the daughter of Zion.” [‡] **4:8** Migdal Edar, mentioned in Genesis 35:21 as the place where Jacob camped.

¹¹ Right now many enemies are gathered against you, saying, “Let us attack and violate her, so we can look with gloating over Zion!”

¹² But they don't know what the Lord is thinking, and don't understand what he is planning. He has brought them together like bundles of grain to the threshing floor. ¹³ People of Zion, get up and start threshing, for I will make for you iron horns and bronze hooves[§] so you can break many nations into pieces. You will present their stolen plunder to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

5

¹ Gather your troops together, Jerusalem!* An enemy is besieging us. They will strike Israel's leader on the cheek with a rod. ² But from you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, (though you are only a small place in Judah), will come a ruler of Israel to do my will. His existence is from the ages of eternity past. ³ So the Lord will give up on them until the woman in labor has given birth. Then the rest of his brothers will return to the people of Israel. ⁴ He will stand up and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will live in safety because his greatness is recognized all over the world. ⁵ He will be our source of peace when the Assyrians invade our land and destroy our

[§] **4:13** As if Jerusalem was like a bull, the Lord will give them the extra strength like metallic horns and hooves to defeat their enemies. * **5:1** “Jerusalem”: literally, “daughter of troops.”

fortresses. Then we will appoint many strong leaders,[†] ⁶ and they will rule Assyria with their swords, the land of Nimrod with drawn swords. He shall rescue us from the Assyrians when they invade our land, marching across our borders.

⁷ Then those who are left of the people of Jacob shall be in the center of many nations, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which wait for no one, and which no one can delay.

⁸ Those who are left of the people of Jacob shall be among many nations, in the center of many peoples. They will be like a lion among the wild animals of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, clawing and tearing as it passes through, with no one to come to the rescue. ⁹ Lift your hand in triumph against your enemies; all of them will be destroyed.

¹⁰ On that day, says the Lord, I will kill your horses and break your chariots.[‡] ¹¹ I will tear down your city walls and demolish your fortresses. ¹² I will stop the witchcraft you practice; there will be no more fortune-tellers for you. ¹³ I will smash down the idols and stone pillars that stand among you: you shall not bow down and worship idols that you make with your own hands any more. ¹⁴ I will pull up the

[†] **5:5** Literally, “seven shepherds and eight leaders.” The numbers are not considered of particular significance; they simply indicate there would be sufficient for the situation.

[‡] **5:10** The Lord is intent on removing everything the people trusted in apart from himself—in this case their military power.

Asherah poles[§] that you have and destroy your pagan places.* ¹⁵ In anger and fury I will execute vengeance on those nations that do not obey me.

6

¹ Listen to what the Lord is saying. Stand up and plead your case. Let the mountains and the hills hear your voice.

² And now, mountains, hear the Lord's argument. Listen, everlasting foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a case against his people. He will bring charges against Israel.

³ My people, what have I done to you? What is it that I have done to make you tired of me?

⁴ For I brought you out of the land of Egypt and rescued you from slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you. ⁵ My people, remember what Balak, king of Moab, planned to do, and what Balaam, son of Beor, told him*, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,[†] so you could know all the good things the Lord does.

⁶ What should I take with me when I approach the Lord, when I bow down before the God of heaven? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I sacrifice my

§ 5:14 Idol poles set up as part of pagan worship. * 5:14 Or “cities.” * 6:5 Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites, but Balaam was only able to speak blessings. See Numbers 22 to Numbers 24. † 6:5 Between Shittim and Gilgal Israelites crossed the Jordan River.

firstborn child for my rebellion, my own flesh and blood for the sins I have committed?

⁸ The Lord has told you what is good, and what the Lord asks from you: to do what is right, to love kindness, and to walk in humility[†] with your God.

⁹ The voice of the Lord calls to the city—to respect your name is to be wise—pay attention to the rod and who summoned it.[§] ¹⁰ Are there still ill-gotten gains in the houses of the wicked? Are they still using dishonest measures in selling grain? ¹¹ How can I accept those who use unfair scales and dishonest weights? ¹² Your rich people make money by using violence; they tell lies and practice deceit. ¹³ So I will strike you to make you ill; I will ruin you because of your sins. ¹⁴ You will eat, but never be satisfied; inside you will still feel hungry. Even though you try to save money, what you save won't be worth anything because I will give it to the sword.* ¹⁵ You will sow, but you won't reap; you will press your olives, but not use the oil; you will make your wine, but drink none of it.

¹⁶ You have kept the laws of Omri, and adopted all the practices of the house of Ahab,[†] you have followed their ways. So I will make your country

[†] **6:8** Or “respectfully.” **§ 6:9** This is taken to mean the “rod” of punishment through the invasion by foreign armies. *** 6:14** “Give it to the sword.” This could mean either that what is saved will be destroyed, or that it will be taken by the invaders. **† 6:16** King Omri and his son Ahab were two of the most evil kings of Israel.

desolate and the people who live there an object of scorn; you will bear the shame of my people.

7

¹ I'm totally miserable! I've become like someone trying to glean summer fruit after the grape harvest is over. I can't find any grapes to eat, and there are no early figs that I love.

² All the good people in the country are gone, there's no one who does right left anywhere. Everyone is looking to murder others; they try to trap even their own brothers. ³ They are experts

at evil;* both officials and judges ask for bribes; the powerful demand their evil desires; and they scheme together to get what they want. ⁴ Even

the best of them is like a thorny bush, the most honest like a thorn hedge. Your day of judgment

that was announced by the prophets,[†] your time of punishment, has arrived. You're thrown into complete confusion. ⁵ Don't trust a neighbor,

don't rely on a friend. Watch what you say even to the one who lies in your arms. ⁶ For a

son treats his father with contempt; a daughter opposes her mother, and a daughter-in-law her mother-in-law. Your enemies are members of your own family.

⁷ But as for me, I look to the Lord. I will wait for the God who saves me. My God will hear me.

⁸ Don't gloat over me, my enemies! Even though

* **7:3** Literally, "they do evil with both hands well." † **7:4** Literally, "the day of your watchmen."

I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light.

⁹ I will endure the Lord's anger because I have sinned against him. But after that he will argue my case and give me justice. He will bring me into the light and I will see his integrity. ¹⁰ Then my enemies will see it and cover their faces in shame for taunting me, asking, "Where is the Lord your God?" With my own eyes I will see what happens to them; they will be trodden down like mud in the streets.

¹¹ On that day it will be time to build your walls. On that day your boundaries will be extended. ¹² On that day people will come from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt to the Euphrates River, from sea to sea, from mountain to mountain. ¹³ But the rest of the earth will become desolate because of what those who live there have done.

¹⁴ Protect your people with your shepherd's rod. Take care of your flock, your special people,[†] who live alone in the wilderness and in cultivated land. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as they did long ago.

¹⁵ Like the time when you left the land of Egypt, I will do miracles for you. ¹⁶ The nations will see, and they will be humiliated despite their strength. They will cover their mouths with their hands, and their ears shall become deaf. ¹⁷ They will lick the dust like snakes; they will be like the creepy-crawlies of the earth. They will come

[†] **7:14** Literally, "inheritance." Also in verse 18.

trembling from their fortresses to meet the Lord our God, fearful and afraid before him.

¹⁸ Who is a God like you who forgives sin and passes over the rebellion of those who are left of his special people? You do not remain angry forever because you delight in showing faithful love. ¹⁹ You will have compassion on us again.

You will tread our sins under your feet, and you will throw our sins into the depths of the sea.

²⁰ You will give your trustworthy truth to the people of Jacob, your faithful love to the people of Abraham, as you promised our forefathers long ago.

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