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# Micah speaks a message from God to all the nations

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary) on the Book of Micah

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This commentary **has been** through Advanced Checking.

Words in boxes are from the Bible.

A word list at the end explains words with a \*star by them.

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## About the Book of Micah

*'People, the \*LORD told you what goodness is. This is what the \*LORD wants you to do. Be fair to other people. Love kindness. Live humbly with your God.'* (Micah 6:8).

Here are some facts about who Micah was.

- He was the 6th in order of the minor \*prophets. He was one of 12 minor \*prophets. 'Minor' means that these \*prophets wrote shorter \*prophecies than the 4 greater \*prophets. The greater ones were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
- Micah is called the Morasthite. This word means that he was an inhabitant of Moresheth Gath, a small village. It was about 22 miles south-west from Jerusalem.
- He was a \*prophet when Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. They were kings from 756 to 697 \*BC.

### Micah's name

Micah's name means 'Who is like Yahweh (God)?' Yahweh is a \*Hebrew name for God. And the answer to this question is that nobody is like God. Nobody is as wonderful as God is. Micah's parents gave him that name. The name describes God's wonderful character. In the end, God forgave his people. The end of Micah's book describes this. The people sang a song to praise God (Micah 7:18). In \*Hebrew, the song starts with the words 'Who is like God?' God is wonderful. There is nobody else like him. He is the God who has forgiven his guilty people. So Micah uses a form of his own name here. His name describes God's goodness. God pities his people. He is kind to them. He forgives their \*sins.

## About the nations called \*Israel and Judah

In the year 975 \*BC, King Solomon's nation, \*Israel, became divided. The nation had not obeyed God or his laws. But God did not destroy the nation. A long time before that he had given them a promise. He had promised to send someone who would save \*Israel. This person would come by means of Abraham's family. After Abraham, the plan would continue. It would continue by means of his \*descendant David. Then it would continue by means of David's \*descendants. God's plan would succeed. He would bring Jesus the \*Messiah into the world. He would save the world from \*sin.

There was a war between Solomon son, Rehoboam, and a servant of Solomon called Jeroboam. Solomon had blessed Rehoboam. He appointed Rehoboam to be the new king. But Jeroboam had more power with the army chiefs. In the end, Rehoboam ruled only the southern part of the nation. He called it Judah. Jeroboam formed his government in the northern part. He kept the name \*Israel for that part. Each man had declared himself to be the king that God had chosen.

At first, only Judah's family followed Rehoboam, the king of Judah. Then the larger part of Benjamin's family followed him too.

## What happened in Judah and in \*Israel, the divided nation

After Rehoboam's death, the disagreement continued. The northern 10 families called themselves \*Israel. The southern families called themselves Judah. The modern word '\*Jew' comes from that name. Judah remained loyal to the \*covenant. Kings from David's family continued to rule in Jerusalem, Judah's capital.

In the northern nation (\*Israel), there were several dynasties (groups of kings from the same family). This happened because the people did not obey the \*covenant. In various different periods, \*Israel's kings had different cities as capitals. The last capital was Samaria. The kings of \*Israel became powerful rulers. They controlled the people by means of changes to their religion. They changed the ways in which people prayed. They chose new \*priests. They built two new \*temples. One was at Dan (on the northern border of \*Israel). The other was at Bethel (on \*Israel's border with Judah). There were many wars between \*Israel and Judah.

Micah especially mentions three kings who ruled over the southern nation, Judah. They ruled in Jerusalem. But he does not mention the kings that ruled the northern nation in the same period. These kings ruled in \*Israel's capital, called Samaria. Micah would not have respected the northern nation. Neither would other \*prophets such as Isaiah and Hosea. The reason was that, in the northern nation, the people themselves had appointed their kings. God had not chosen these kings. That is how the \*prophets might have seen the situation. Micah, however, uses the name \*Israel for both nations.

## **The \*prophets**

God sent many \*prophets to Judah and \*Israel. Some \*prophets were \*priests. Other \*prophets were farmers. Some \*prophets were rich and they advised the kings. Other \*prophets lived much more simply. Some \*prophets wrote down the things that they taught (their prophecies). Many other \*prophets did not do that. But all the \*prophets taught the people. They taught about right judgements in the courts. They taught about how people should be fair to other people. They taught that people need to trust God for help.

Many \*prophets warned that the people would suffer defeat. Their enemies would take them away to different places abroad. That would happen if they did not start to obey God again. Some \*prophets had dreams from God about future success. They also dreamed about future punishments. They understood God's plans for their nation. They looked forward into the future. They looked forward to the time when a new king would come. He would rule the nation. Some \*prophets saw that this king would come from David's family. The new king would lead God's people. He would lead them into a wonderful new age. Some \*prophets described how this king would then rule always. Other \*prophets saw that he would also be a servant. He would suffer many things. The things that this king suffered would cause his people to come back to God.

But all the \*prophets saw that this king would be the \*Messiah. He would be the man that God had chosen. The \*Messiah would bring his people into the new age.

## **\*Israel's and Judah's enemies would destroy those two nations**

Some very important events happened during Micah's life.

God had warned \*Israel's people about things that might happen in the future. But they had not listened to him. So in 722 or 721 \*BC, an army came from a nation called Assyria. That army fought against the people in \*Israel's capital, Samaria. The \*Assyrians defeated the people in that city. They took the people from their homes. They took \*Israel's people away to various places all over the country called Assyria. Their relatives in Judah could not have communication with them any longer. The \*Assyrians then brought foreigners to live in \*Israel. \*Israel's \*priests taught these people. The \*priests taught them about the religion that Judah's and \*Israel's people had followed. Therefore many foreigners tried to obey the \*covenant. These people were called the Samaritans (2 Kings chapter 17).

Then the \*Assyrians tried to control Judah. They defeated the people in much of that country. But God saved Jerusalem. The people there defeated the king of Assyria. He returned to his home, where two of his sons killed him. God had saved Judah (2 Kings chapter 19).

Judah continued to exist for over 100 years after the defeat of \*Israel. But in the end the army from Babylon defeated Judah's people. The army led them away from Judah. So the people from Judah also became foreigners in another country.

## **Samaria**

This city is 30 miles north from Jerusalem. It is on a hill that has steep sides. The hill also has a long

flat top, which was difficult to reach then. King Omri chose that hill as the place where he intended to build a city. The city would be the capital of the nation called \*Israel. Omri bought the hill from a man called Shemer. Omri paid two pieces of silver for it. He built a city on the hill. He named the city Samaria. That name came from the name of the previous owner, Shemer (1 Kings 16:23, 24). This happened in 925 \*BC. The hill was called the hill of Samaria. The city called Samaria became the capital for the 10 northern families. And people also gave the same name to that northern nation.

## The structure of Micah's book

The book consists of \*prophecy. We can divide it into 3 sections:

Section 1 chapters 1-2

Section 2 chapters 3-5

Section 3 chapters 6-7.

Each section begins with the command 'hear' or 'listen'. It starts with blame. It starts with things about which Micah warned. Each section then continues from judgement to hope. And it ends with a promise.

The first section has a magnificent start. It describes God's punishment. God declares that he will punish \*Israel and Judah because of their \*sins. He will punish them because they \*worship idols (verses 2-4). (An idol is something that people \*worship instead of the one real God. It may be the sun, the moon, or any object or animal.) Then Micah describes how God will punish Samaria (verses 5-9). Its people will be slaves in another country (Micah 2:10). But immediately afterwards there is a promise about success and about a wonderful return (Micah 2:12-13).

The second section is especially for the rulers and leaders of the people. Their \*sins are these: They have evil desire and they steal from other people. God blames them with strong words. First he \*curses the people. Then he \*blesses them. Then there is a promise that one day they will return to their country.

The last section is in chapters 6 and 7. God calls his people to a meeting with him. He argues with them. He speaks to them about urgent matters. His actions are right for his people. He has good reasons for his actions. His reasons are right and proper.

The book ends with a grand song that expresses happiness. God will rescue his people. A long time ago, God brought his people out of Egypt. It will be like that again. Everyone will agree with God. They will know that he is a kind God. He is a loyal God. He has done what he promised to do (Micah 7:16-20). The last verse is similar to what Zacharias the \*priest later sang (Luke 1:72-73). Micah's \*prophecies are distinct and clear. He says that the Ruler (the \*Messiah) will come. The Ruler will come from the town called Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Micah writes like Hosea and Isaiah. The words that he writes are strong and firm.

The messages in this book were especially for Samaria. This was the capital of \*Israel. The messages were also for Jerusalem. This was the capital of Judah. God chose rulers to lead their nations. God intended that the rulers should \*worship him. And they should obey him. Instead they led their people badly. They taught their people to \*worship other gods. This was true about both nations. The rulers also cheated people. They robbed the poor people. God therefore had to punish \*Israel and Judah.

However, God promised that things would change. The people in \*Israel and in Judah would start to \*worship him again. His people would live in safety and peace (Micah 4:3-4).

## Sections in the Book of Micah

	1:1-2	Brief description of the book
<b>Section 1</b>	1:3-2:13	Punishment and Rescue
	1:2-16	God will punish the people in Samaria and Judah
	2:1-11	Evil leaders and false *prophets will suffer
	2:12-13	God will bring a *remnant back to Zion (another name for Jerusalem)
<b>Section 2</b>	3:1-5:15	Micah accuses false leaders. He promises that a good, fair King will come
	3:1-12	The false leaders of old Jerusalem will fail and that city will fall

	4:1-8	New Jerusalem will have a high position over the nations
	4:9-13	Zion's (Jerusalem's) people will suffer pains that will lead to the beginning of a new age
	5:1-6	The *Messiah's birth and his future greatness
	5:7-9	The *remnant will rule the nations
	5:10-15	God will protect his new *spiritually clean nation
<b>Section 3</b>	6:1-7:20	Third series of *prophecies. God will forgive the *remnant of his people
	6:1-8	Micah accuses *Israel's people because they have not obeyed the *covenant
	6:9-16	The *curses in the *covenant will all become true for Jerusalem's people
	7:1-7	Jerusalem's social structures will break apart
	7:8-20	The Song about Success

## Section 1

### Chapter 1

#### 1:1-2 Brief description of the book

**v1** The \*LORD's message came to Micah. Micah was from Moresheth. He saw a vision (dream) about Samaria and Jerusalem. This was during the time when the kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah ruled. They were kings of Judah.

**v2** Listen, all you people. Listen, Earth and everyone in it. My master is the \*LORD God. The \*Lord will come from his holy \*temple. He will come as a witness against you.

#### Verse 1

This description emphasises that Micah's message came from God. It was 'the \*LORD's message'. It was not 'the \*prophet's message'. (Look at Isaiah 1:1-2; Jeremiah 1:1-2; Amos 1:1-3.) This message 'came' to Micah with great power. That was because the \*LORD's Spirit came into Micah. And the Spirit controlled and used him at that time (Micah 3:8). Micah refers only to the kings of the southern nation (Judah). The northern nation (\*Israel) refused to obey God's \*covenant. Its people appointed kings without God's agreement (Hosea 8:4). Micah's book is God's word.

There is another way in which God's message came to Micah. Micah heard God's voice and he understood God's message. He also saw the things that God was saying. He saw God's plans in a vision (dream). Micah understood the things that he saw in his vision. Some people do have this gift. They can see what God is saying. God causes them to see pictures and dreams.

#### Verse 2

Micah gives an order to all the people in Samaria and Jerusalem. The people in \*Israel had a special relationship with God because they had made a \*covenant with him. But they had not followed the rules in the \*covenant. So God calls both \*Israel and the other nations to a court of law. He asks them to defend themselves. Yes, God would punish Samaria and Jerusalem. But the whole world must hear this message. The \*Lord will come to be a witness against \*Israel and against the whole world. Everyone and everything in the whole world must listen to these words.

#### 1:3-2:13 Punishment and Rescue

#### 1:3-16 God will punish Samaria and Judah

In verses 3 to 7, Micah describes how God will punish Samaria. Our God is the God about whom we learn in the Bible. He is the God who is alive. But many people take no notice of him. The people in

Samaria forgot God. They prayed to false gods. The way that God punishes Samaria will teach all people something. Everyone in the entire world must listen to these words. All people must obey this message. God chose \*Israel to be like an example for all the nations. God warns them in these verses. Then Micah describes how God will punish Judah. The style of Micah's message is like a sad song after a war. He uses the names of several cities. Each name has a meaning. And Micah uses these meanings to emphasise his message. But the war had not yet happened. Perhaps Micah was hoping that the people might confess their \*sins to God. They might change their behaviour so that God would forgive them. But, in the end, this did not happen. The people in Judah suffered greatly. Everything that Micah described happened.

**v3** Look, the \*LORD will come out of the place where he lives. He will step on the high places of the Earth. **v4** The mountains will melt under him. The valleys will split. The mountains will be like wax in front of the fire. (Wax is a substance. It melts when someone heats it.) Those mountains will be like water that pours down a steep hill.

#### Verses 3-4

'High places' and 'valleys' describes all places everywhere. It may mean strong, important institutions. People in other nations met together on the high places. They prayed to their gods there. God had ordered King Hezekiah to destroy such places (2 Kings 18:1-6). People feel safe as long as God stays in heaven. But he will come to the Earth. He will come to give judgement. He will come to punish \*sin. Nations and institutions will melt when they meet God's fire. They will realise that they must meet the holy God.

**v5** This will happen because of Jacob's \*sin (the \*sin by Jacob's family). It is because \*Israel's (Jacob's) family did wrong things. Those in Samaria have caused \*Israel's people to \*sin. Look at Jerusalem. Look at all the images there that represent sex and religion. These have caused Judah to \*sin.

#### Verse 5

Micah accuses 'Jacob' (the northern nation from Jacob's family) and he accuses \*Israel (all \*Israel). He accuses them about \*sin. The people have not obeyed the \*covenant that God made with \*Israel. They have not obeyed God's commands. 'Those in Samaria' (the northern capital) here means the bad leaders of the northern nation. 'Jerusalem' (the southern capital) refers to the bad leaders of the southern nation.

\*Sin here means that the people decided to oppose God. They did that on purpose. God gave to them a purpose that they should live for. But they have failed to achieve that purpose. They have gone their own way. God has given his \*covenant to them. This gives rules for them, to guide them. It is an agreement that God has made with \*Israel. But they have made a decision. They have decided that they will not obey God's \*covenant.

**v6** Therefore I, the \*LORD, will make Samaria become a heap of rubbish. It will be just an empty field. It will be rough ground like the ground where people plant bushes. I will destroy the buildings in Samaria. I will throw the bricks into the valley. Only the stones from the foundations (bases of the buildings) will remain. **v7** I will break all the images (false gods) into pieces. That silver and gold was the wages of \*prostitutes. The people in Samaria have behaved like \*prostitutes. They serve the images instead of me, the \*LORD. But I will burn their precious things. I will destroy all the images. Samaria's wealth is like the gifts that \*prostitutes receive. So the people in Samaria will hand over their wealth to the wicked people who taught them their wicked behaviour.

#### Verses 6-7

'Therefore' links the crime to the punishment. Samaria's people prayed to images. This showed that they did not understand God or his laws. Their evil religion did not teach good behaviour. In fact, it caused evil behaviour. It showed that they understood the world in a wrong way. When people serve images, there is a cause and effect in this. (Look at Romans 1:18-31.) It causes people to do bad things. And the effect is evil. 'They said that they were wise. But they became fools. They exchanged the greatness of the God who can never die for images. They made these look like men, birds, animals and snakes' (Romans 1:22-23). That is how Samaria's leaders acted against God's \*covenant. As a result of their actions, the people did all kinds of wrong things. Among these things was when people used sex in the wrong way.

God was like a husband to the people in Israel. They had a special relationship (called the \*covenant) with

him. But they were not loyal to him. They were like \*prostitutes, who leave their husbands to go with other men. The people in Samaria had become wealthy because of this wicked religion. But they would not keep their wealth. They had learned this behaviour from the other nations. And soon the other nations would control Samaria. The people in Samaria would become slaves. And the army from Assyria would take away their (Samaria's) wealth.

**v8** I will be very sad about what will happen. I will go about without shoes and clothes. I will cry like a jackal (wild dog). I will weep like an ostrich (large wild bird). **v9** There is no remedy for Samaria's problems. And Samaria's \*sin is like a disease that has spread to Judah. It has reached the gate of my people's city. It has spread all the way to Jerusalem.

#### Verses 8-9

Micah weeps as he speaks God's judgement. He feels as God feels. Micah has seen what will happen to Samaria. He knows that the situation is hopeless. There is no remedy for Samaria's problems. God's judgement is certain. Punishments from God must happen. A wicked enemy will overcome Samaria. This is very sad. Micah and God both cry. They cry like jackals and ostriches. Jackals move together in groups. They seem to cry in a sad way. Ostriches cannot fly but they can run fast. Both jackals and ostriches give the impression that they are unhappy. The \*sin is like a disease that has spread to Judah. Nobody can stop the disease. It has spread right into the centre of Jerusalem. The nature of \*sin is that it spreads.

**v10** Do not tell it in Gath. Do not weep in Acco. Roll yourself in the dust at Beth Aphrah.

#### Verse 10

Micah is thinking about the army from Assyria. It would soon come to Jerusalem. The towns that he mentions are close to Micah's home town, Moresheth Gath (verse 14). Without those towns, Jerusalem would not be a capital any longer. The \*Hebrew word for each town becomes a message about the future. Gath sounds like the \*Hebrew word for 'tell'. In the \*Hebrew language, 'in Acco' sounds like 'weep'. Beth Aphrah means 'House of Dust'. The message might be, 'Do not tell it in Tell town. Do not weep in Weep town. Roll yourself in the House of Dust.' The army from Assyria will defeat the people in those towns. Then Jerusalem's rulers will 'roll themselves in the dust'. This was a custom that showed complete despair.

In 701 \*BC, King Sennacherib advanced towards Jerusalem. He attacked 46 towns and cities, and he took control of them. These included the ones that Micah mentions here. We can understand why Micah felt so much pain. Earlier, David wept and he spoke these same words. David said 'Do not tell it in Gath' after Saul and Jonathan died (2 Samuel 1:20).

Gath was a town where people called Philistines lived. Earlier, David did not want the Philistines to be happy about their success. It is the same for Micah. He does not want the enemies (the \*Assyrians) to be happy about their success. \*Israel is like God's light to the nations. When the light becomes dark, the nations have no light and no hope.

**v11** You people that live in Shaphir, pass on your way. Be naked and ashamed. People that live in Zaanan will not come out. The people in Bethazel will cry. They will take away their support (help) from you (that is, from Judah).

#### Verse 11

Shaphir is the name of a city. Shaphir means 'beautiful'. Shaphir was a beautiful city. But its people will soon be prisoners. The \*Assyrians will take its people away to another country. They will make its people walk through the streets. Then those people from Shaphir will be naked and so they will be ashamed. Everyone will see their naked bodies. Their shame will be great. Their enemies will not care about them. But God sympathises. Jesus Christ, God's Son, suffered the same shame.

Zaanan means 'go forward'. But the people in the town called Zaanan will not go forward. They will not go to help their neighbours in the battle. Instead, they will hide behind their walls. Bethazel means 'house where they take away'. Its people will 'take away' their help. It means that they will not protect Judah any longer.

**v12** People that live in Maroth become weak. They are waiting for good news to come. But trouble has come down from the \*LORD. It has come even to the gate of Jerusalem city.

#### Verse 12

Maroth means 'bitter'. So Maroth is a town where the people are bitter. Bitter people need hope. They need to hope for something better. So the people in Maroth hope for something good. They hope for help and peace. But there is no help from Jerusalem's people. Jerusalem is the city whose name means 'peace'. The \*Assyrians will march right up to the great gate of Jerusalem. God will use the \*Assyrians to carry out his judgement. By means of them, he will punish the people in \*Judah and Israel. These evil things have come from the \*LORD. Severe punishment has come from him.

**v13** You people in Lachish, get the chariots ready (the vehicles that horses pull in war). Prepare to run away. You taught the people in the 'Daughter of Zion' (Jerusalem) to \*sin against God. They had the same \*sin as you had. In fact, it came from you. \*Israel's people had that same \*sin too.

#### Verse 13

Lachish was an important town. It was the strongest place in the region. It was about 4 miles from Micah's home. There was an army there. The army's job was to defend the western hills. The men in the army used chariots and they used fast horses. A chariot was a very strong vehicle. They used a team of horses to pull it. Chariots were fast and powerful in a battle. Even brave soldiers were afraid of the chariots. The two words 'horses' and 'Lachish' sound similar in the \*Hebrew language. Lachish might mean a team of horses. The people in Lachish would have trusted in their strong army. They would have trusted in their chariots.

The people thought that they were in no danger from the \*Assyrians. But they were wrong. In Micah's message, God is telling the people to leave this strong town. They must leave as quickly as possible. This command probably made the people very afraid.

The \*Assyrians would soon defeat the people in Lachish. Lachish's people had caused Jerusalem's people to stop trusting in God. Lachish's people did not trust God to defend them. They trusted their chariots. That was because of the \*sin called pride. Pride causes us to think that God's rules for our life do not matter. We believe that we can do as we choose. We think that we do not need God. We think that we can live very well without him. The people in Lachish had the same \*sin as the people in \*Israel had. This \*sin was that they trusted their chariots instead of God. And Lachish's people taught Jerusalem's people to \*sin. So the people in Jerusalem and Judah had that same \*sin too. (The 'Daughter of Zion' is another name for Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.)

In our modern world, we too can be guilty of pride. Now we might trust machinery, computers and modern science. We might trust all those things when we should be trusting God.

**v14** So you must give gifts to Moresheth Gath. In that way you will say goodbye to people there. The house (people) in Achzib will cheat the kings of \*Israel.

#### Verse 14

In this message, the \*Assyrians have defeated the people in Lachish. So the king must now pay money as gifts to the \*Assyrians. Achzib is now under the \*Assyrians' control. Therefore, Judah's rulers cannot receive taxes from the people in Achzib. Achzib means 'cheat'. It was a wealthy town. There were many places where people could have jobs there. Now they will not be wealthy any longer. They will have nothing. That is the result of God's judgement on the nation.

**v15** People in Mareshah, I will bring a person that will act against you. That person will take the things that you own. The glory (greatness) of \*Israel will come to Adullam.

#### Verse 15

'People in Mareshah'. The \*Hebrew words here sound like 'someone who takes possession'. It means the person that wins a battle. The result will be that only a few people will live. It was like that earlier at the cave of Adullam. This statement about Adullam refers to David. He ran away from Saul. David hid in the cave of Adullam. David was very weak at that time. Those who ran away with him were also weak. They were not important people (1 Samuel 22:1-2; 2 Samuel 23:13). However, the people in Mareshah were important people. They were men that had a high rank. They ran away from the \*Assyrians and they hid from the \*Assyrians.

However, all those references to the cave of Adullam mean the same thing. David's companions were men in trouble. They were in debt. They were unhappy people. Those who ran from Mareshah were important people. But those two situations were alike, because there was little hope for improvement. In both events, it

seemed that the end had come. There is a promise about a better future for Judah and \*Israel. But it comes later in this book (Micah 2:12-13).

**v16** So cut off your hair. Make yourself bald like a large bird that has no feathers on its head. Start to be sad. You may want to know why you will be sad. This is the reason. Your enemies will take your precious children from you. They will send the children to a foreign country. And the children will not return.

Verse 16

God gives more orders. These orders are for the people in Jerusalem. The children, like their parents, are important people. Parents love their children. The \*Assyrians will take the children away to a foreign country. It will be a time when the parents are sad. God tells them to cut off their hair. He tells them to make themselves bald. So then they will be like a large bird that has no feathers on its head. The people had a custom. When they were ashamed and sad, they would shave all the hair from their heads. Then everyone would see how sad they were. Soon, Judah's people and Jerusalem's people would suffer terribly. And then they would follow this custom.

All good parents desire good things for their children. Unfortunately, many people do not love God. They do not obey his orders. Therefore their children suffer. In the previous verses, we see that God is the judge of towns, cities and nations. \*Sin is a very serious matter to God. Because of his holy nature, he must be angry against it.

'Trouble has come down from the \*LORD' (verse 12). 'I will bring a person that will act against you' (verse 15). The punishment comes from God. The events in these verses are the result of God's direct action. These are serious matters for us today. We need to be aware of our own \*sin. We should confess our \*sin to God. He cares about us. He does not want us to suffer his punishment. And he will forgive us if we humbly invite him into our lives.

God did not want to punish the people in Samaria and Judah. He wanted them to serve him again. And he wanted them to obey his laws. But they refused to obey him. And so in the end, they suffered the punishment that Micah described.

## Chapter 2

### 2:1-11 Evil leaders and false \*prophets will suffer

**v1** Trouble will come to people that plot evil things. Those people make their evil plans while they lie on their beds. Then morning comes and they have the opportunity to do these things. So they do the bad things that they plotted. **v2** They want fields, so they take them. They want houses, so they take them. They cheat a man and they take his house. They cheat a man and they take his land from him.

Verses 1-2

These people plot evil things. God is against them. They will suffer a terrible punishment. Micah now gives real examples of these people's \*sins. He has referred to their \*sins already in chapter 1 (Micah 1:5, 13). But Micah sees that it is necessary also to name particular \*sins. Otherwise it is not clear what they are. These \*sins begin as wrong ideas in the mind. Then the people carry out their plans. People's wrong behaviour is against what God wants. Wrong actions affect our relationship with God. They affect our relationships with each other.

Thieves usually come at night, when it is dark. These rich people made their evil plans at night. In the morning, they did the bad things that they had planned. They had all the power over the poorer people. The rich people owned most of the land. They could do whatever they wanted. Nobody could stop them. They made plans against ordinary people. These ordinary people owned fields and houses. Maybe they had just one field and one house. It was all that they could pass on to their children. The evil people wanted fields. So they took them. They wanted houses. So they took them. That was not a good, honest occupation. Rich people were cheating the poor people. The rich people became richer. The poor people had nothing. But both God and Micah knew the rich people's plans.

'You must not be jealous of your neighbour's house or land' (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). This is the 10th Commandment (law that God gave). God gave the 10 Commandments (his laws) to Moses on the

mountain called \*Sinai. Jealous attitudes like this are wrong. Such attitudes are a main cause of the wrong character that is inside us. People say, 'I want it and I intend to get it.' These words clearly express the nature of this evil behaviour.

**v3** That is why the \*LORD says these things. I am planning trouble against this family. This trouble will be like a trap round your necks. And you will not be able to save yourselves. A time is coming when bad things will happen to you. You will not still be proud.

#### Verse 3

God is planning trouble for the 'family'. That means all the people in \*Israel. Some people \*sin. But the whole family suffers. The leaders especially are guilty. The army from Assyria will bring trouble. The enemy will put the people's necks in a trap. They will squeeze the people's necks in a lock. They cannot remove their necks from it. They cannot save themselves. They will not be proud people any longer. Micah's strong words will not help them. Only God can deal with them so that they will not be proud. These rich people have brought trouble to the poor people. So God will send the \*Assyrians to do the same thing to the rich people. God will deal with these proud, rich people.

**v4** Then people will sing songs about you. People will sing this sad song. 'He has ruined us completely! He took away our land. He gave it to other people. Yes, he took my land away from me. The \*LORD has divided our fields. He has divided them among our enemies.'

#### Verse 4

The strong, rich people in \*Israel were thieves. They had taken the fields from the poor people. Now, people that are stronger than the rich people will take those rich people's fields. The poor people had lost everything. God owns all land everywhere (Psalm 24:1). God gave land to each family in \*Israel (Joshua chapters 12 to 22). God intended that they should enjoy the land. There, the people could produce the food that they needed. But God still owned the land.

God gave that land to the people in \*Israel. It was a part of his \*covenant with them. But he gave certain rules about how to use the land. (Look at Leviticus chapter 23.) God could take the land from the people. He would do that if they did not obey his rules. He would give the land to their enemies (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:49-68).

The rulers will soon lose all their land. They do not recognise what God is doing. He is doing to them what they did to the poor people. Micah writes a sad song. He suggests that the \*Assyrians might sing it. There is an example of a similar thing in Psalm 137:1-6. There, \*Israel's enemies would ask its people to sing a song from Zion (Jerusalem). This would be their reply. 'We cannot sing the \*LORD's songs while we are in a foreign country!' The \*Assyrians would consider Micah's idea to be funny. They would see it as a joke. This is the song that Micah wrote.

'He has ruined us completely! He took away our land. He gave it to other people. Yes, he took my land away from me. The \*LORD has divided our fields. He has divided them among our enemies.'

The rulers had taken land from the poor people. But the rulers did not realise that really the land belonged to the \*LORD.

**v5** And so you will never again own property. You will not be able to share the land with the \*LORD's people.

#### Verse 5

When Micah uses these words, he is talking about a future time. It is a time when God's people will come back to their country. Several centuries before, God had told Moses to measure the country. Moses had divided its land among the 12 tribes (families) (Numbers 26:55-56; Joshua 19:51). Some time in the future, God will do good things for his people, the nation called \*Israel. God will again divide the land among \*Israel's families. But these present rulers that Micah mentions will have no part of it. They will not be part of God's family. God will not allow them to live on that land. They will not be God's people any longer. That will be a very severe punishment.

Micah spoke those hard words to the leaders. He was very bold. It was a dangerous thing to do.

**v6** The false \*prophets say, 'Do not preach (speak a message) to us. Do not say those bad things about

us. Nothing bad will happen to us.’ **v7** And the people from Jacob’s family say, ‘The \*LORD is not angry. He will not do such things.’

But the \*LORD replies, ‘My words are pleasant only for the person who does the right thing.’

#### Verse 6

God sent his \*prophets to warn the people about their \*sins. But these rich people did not want to listen to God’s message. Instead, they appointed their own \*prophets (called the ‘false \*prophets’) to advise them. But these false \*prophets did not really speak God’s message. Instead they said whatever the rich people wanted them to say. And the false \*prophets told the real \*prophets not to declare God’s message. The false \*prophets said that nothing bad would happen. They pretended that God was not really angry.

When people do bad things, they often try to find an excuse for their behaviour. They do not tell the truth. Micah, Hosea and Isaiah warn the rich people about their wicked deeds. So the rich people do not approve of these \*prophets. But real \*prophets must speak against lies.

But the rich people did not want the \*prophets to talk about those bad activities. The rich people were traders and employers. Trade is about property, money and markets. The traders thought that the \*prophets did not understand these things. The traders wanted their \*prophets to speak about religion. The \*prophet’s job should be to talk about religion, prayer and similar things. \*Prophets understood such things. But they should not talk about people’s behaviour. Trade was not the responsibility of a \*prophet. That is what the rich people said.

The rich people said that nothing bad would happen to them. They were confident about that. They were very proud people.

#### Verse 7

In Micah’s book, ‘Jacob’ refers to all \*Israel. (Look at Micah 3:1.) The people were probably thinking about a verse from Exodus. ‘The \*LORD is kind and gentle. He does not get angry quickly. He does not become impatient with us. He is full of great love’ (Exodus 34:6). But that is only part of the truth. The whole truth is this. God will do what he promised to the nation called \*Israel. But he does good things only to those who do right things. It is true that God loves us. And he is kind to us. But the \*prophets warn these people because they are not loyal to their \*Lord. (See also Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.)

These rich people have cheated the poor people for a long time. The \*prophet warns the rich people. It is not the first time that a \*prophet has done this. If the rich people are sensible, they will listen to the \*prophet’s words. They will stop their bad practices. They will not act unfairly towards the poor people any longer.

**v8** But you attack my people like enemies. You steal the clothes straight off their backs. People think that they are safe. But you take things from them. It is as if you steal from soldiers. And they have just returned home from battle. **v9** You have taken pleasant houses from the women among my people. I would have done good things for their children for always, but you have stopped me.

#### Verses 8-9

The rulers are thieves. They are as cruel as enemies. God accuses the rulers. Micah mentions 3 things of which the rulers are guilty:

· They steal the fine clothing from people’s backs. Fine clothing gives people a sense of importance. It makes them feel happy. Micah gives an example. The people feel like soldiers. They have fought for their country. They have won the battle. They have returned to their homes. But then the rulers take their clothes from them. That behaviour is wicked.

· The rulers force the nation’s women to leave their own pleasant houses. The ‘good things’ in verse 9 refer to a feeling that one is well and happy. They refer to the wealth that God gave to \*Israel’s people. He had given good things to the women. He had given fine clothing to them. He had given expensive precious stones to them. He had given to them good food. And he had given them plenty to drink. Look at Ezekiel 16:9-14. Those verses show how rich \*Israel was at that time. God had given every good thing to them to enjoy.

· God gave his blessings (good things) to the children too. He intended the children to be well and happy. He intended that they should enjoy plenty of good things. He intended that they should live happily. God had given all those good things to the children. But the rulers had robbed them. The rulers had taken

the children's happiness from them. And they had ruined the future for the children.

This is a terribly evil situation. The rulers are attacking the way in which families live. The result is this. Husbands are losing their jobs. Wives have to leave their lovely houses. Children lose their safe and happy homes. God was doing good things for the parents' children, but the rulers stopped him. The children had lost God's good things. They would not be able to pass God's good things on to their children and grandchildren.

**v10** This is not the place where you can rest. So get up and leave. You have ruined this place. You have made it \*spiritually unclean (unholy). It is not fit that you belong to the \*LORD's people. You will die. It will be a terrible death.

Verse 10

'Place where you can rest' seems to refer to peace and safety. Ordinary people were happy and they were content with their situation. Then the evil rulers took away the place where they rested. God would now remove the rulers. He would take the rulers from the place where they rested. The rulers were \*spiritually unclean (unholy). They had made the country \*spiritually unclean. And they had made the people \*spiritually unclean. The rulers were not good enough to be there. God would remove them.

**v11** If these people do not want to listen to me, a man will come. That man will tell lies. They will believe him. They will believe a false \*prophet. He will say, 'There will be times in the future when the situation is good. There will be plenty of wine and alcohol.'

Verse 11

This is Micah's message. If he \*prophesies any more, he will be wasting time. The evil rulers, traders and employers listen to the false \*prophets. But they do not ask whether those \*prophets are real \*prophets or false ones. The employers do not ask who gave those \*prophets authority to be \*prophets. The employers only want to listen to \*prophets who promise future happiness.

\*Prophets should speak God's message. But these people have refused to listen to Micah's message. They do not want to know what God has said. They do not want to hear what they need to hear. These people want to hear things that please them. They want to hear about things that they really enjoy. The people want a God like this. They want God to give to them anything that they ask for. This includes things like wine and alcohol. So, this message from a false \*prophet would please these people. They have said to Micah, 'Do not talk to us about God. And do not tell us about what he wants.'

## **2:12-13 God preserves a \*remnant in Zion (Jerusalem)**

Together, verses 12 and 13 both tell us about an event. However, they do not just refer to one event. That same passage actually refers to two events. The first event is when Judah's people return from Babylon. Later there will be another event. God will gather together all people that believe in Jesus the King. That will be when Jesus returns. The \*prophets did not see when these events would happen. There would be a long period between the two events. The \*prophets did not know that. But they could clearly see that the \*Messiah would come. That gave hope to the people. It helped them stop their \*sin.

**v12** Yes, people from Jacob's family, I will bring you all together. I will certainly bring together the whole \*remnant of \*Israel. I will put those people together like sheep in the pen. They will be like sheep in their own field. And the sound of many people will be in that place.

Verse 12

Micah has spoken hard things to \*Israel's people. The army from Assyria will soon come to kill them. That army will even destroy the land. God has told the people to get up. He has told them to go far away. They must leave their \*spiritually unclean (unholy) country. This seems to be the end. There seems to be no hope.

However, this first section of this book ends with a promise. \*Israel's God is a king. He is also like a \*shepherd. In this special description, it is as if his people are his sheep. They are like his flock (group of sheep). There are other references to God as a \*shepherd. Some references are in the \*Old Testament (Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34:1-31). There are also some references in the \*New Testament (John 10:1-30).

There will always be some people that love God. But there will not be many people like that. The Bible calls

these few people the \*remnant. God will gather these together. His people will be like sheep that are afraid. They will be in a strange, foreign country. He will be like a \*shepherd to them. He will gather his sheep (people). He will bring them to a safe place. There will be a large crowd of people. They will be noisy. They will be happy. They will all come home. This is a promise. They can be sure that it will happen.

The phrase 'you all' here is difficult to understand. God will cause the people in \*Israel to scatter to other countries. He will then gather together the few people that remain. 'You all' refers to the \*remnant. These are the few people that have kept their belief in God. And God will rescue the whole \*remnant.

**v13** Then God will break open the way. He will go up ahead of those people. The people will break through the gate and they will go out. They will leave that city. They will leave with their king. He will march in front of them. Their king is the \*LORD. He will lead them.

Verse 13

The \*Assyrians will rule God's people. God's people will be in a foreign country. They will need a strong leader to rescue them. Only the \*LORD can do that. Their escape happens in three parts:

- 1) The people try to escape from the city where they are. But they cannot get through its gate. It is as if there is a wall in front of the gate. God is like \*Israel's \*Shepherd. And he is their King. He goes forward. He breaks through the gate.
- 2) The crowds break out. They pass through the opening in the gate.
- 3) Their King takes the position that is his right. It is at their head.

\*Israel's kings from the Earth failed. Their King from heaven will succeed.

## Section 2

### **3:1-5:15 Micah accuses false leaders. He promises that a good, fair King will come**

#### Chapter 3

#### **3:1-12 The false leaders of old Jerusalem will fail and that city will fall**

\*Israel's rulers are also judges. They are responsible for the law. They must use it in the right way. The rulers must not use the law for their own benefit. They must protect weak people and poor people. The law included everything that people did daily, in every detail.

In these 12 verses, Micah tells about 3 terrible events. These will happen to Jerusalem. For each event, there are 4 verses. Micah speaks about how people should be fair. Micah first speaks to the judges (verse 1). He then speaks to the false \*prophets (verse 5). After those two groups, he talks to evil \*priests (verse 11).

Micah then describes a time in the future when the situation will be better. One day, the people from \*Israel will come back to their country. This will affect the whole world (Micah 4:1-8).

**v1** Then I said, 'Listen, leaders of Jacob's people and rulers of the nation called \*Israel. You ought to be fair! You should know how to distinguish right actions from wrong actions!'

Verse 1

The rulers of \*Israel had not brought the people together. (They were like \*shepherds that had not gathered their sheep together.) The rulers had caused the people to scatter in many directions. They had destroyed the way in which families lived. There was no peace in their neighbourhoods. So Micah speaks an urgent message to the leaders of Jacob's people. Here 'Jacob's people' and '\*Israel' include Judah and its capital Jerusalem (Micah 3:12).

There was a law for every situation. The words 'be fair' here refer to the law. That means the law that God gave to Moses (Exodus 21:1-23:19). It also referred to decisions that the \*priests made (Deuteronomy 17:8-11). And it was about fair decisions (1 Kings 3:28; 7:7). Earlier, there was a case when two mothers

argued about a baby. This baby had just been born. The king himself settled that argument (1 Kings 3:28). Many people have responsibilities that have a relationship to the law. Judges have a lot of responsibility in their job. They should be very serious about their responsibilities.

All rulers and judges should know how to be fair. They should know the words that the law contains. But 'know' here does not only mean knowledge in the mind. When someone has done something wrong to another person, the judge should have sympathy for this other person. He must make things right. He must punish a person if that person is guilty. He must make a fair decision. The person that suffered will then feel content.

**v2** But you hate what is good. And you love what is evil. You do not care about my people. Instead, you behave like butchers. It is as if you tear off the skin. You tear the meat from the bones. **v3** You eat the meat. You take the skin and you break the bones. You chop the bones up like meat to put in the pot.

#### Verses 2-3

Good leaders have delight in God's law (Psalm 1:2; 19:7-11). But the leaders at the time when Micah lived were different. They hated God's law. Micah understood the problem. These leaders did not any longer behave as God's special people. They had forgotten God's \*covenant with them. They needed new desires towards God. And these desires would come only from a new birth (John 3:3-8). This is the only solution to moral failures. Leaders have benefits. They should use them to help poor people and weak people.

But the leaders and judges used their positions wrongly. They lived in luxury. They robbed poor people in order to become rich. The people were very poor. They were very hungry. They died at an early age. God wanted the leaders to look after the poor people, like \*shepherds who look after sheep. Instead, the leaders decided to act like butchers, who kill sheep. So these leaders used their power to make poor people suffer. The leaders did not care what happened to the poor people. The leaders only wanted to make themselves more wealthy.

**v4** Then the rulers will cry out to the \*LORD. But he will not listen. He will even turn his face the other way. The rulers have done evil things for a long time. That is the reason for the way in which God is dealing with them.

#### Verse 4

These rulers have hated good things and they have loved evil things. This has happened for a long time. They are now asking God for help in their troubles. Probably they have often met to pray to God. But that has not helped them. They are in great trouble. They know God's promises. They know this one for example: 'He will hear those that cry to him. He will rescue them from their troubles' (Psalm 107: 6, 13, 19, 28). The message in these verses is for all people. All people have done wrong things. God promises to forgive people. But he forgives them only when they are sorry for their wrong actions. People must repent (turn away from their evil behaviour). And they must trust God. So this promise in the Psalms will not become true for these evil rulers. This is because they have not stopped their evil deeds. They have not sincerely repented.

The poor people have asked the judges (the rulers) for help. And God was speaking to these rulers by means of the poor people's cries. But the rulers did not understand that. So the rulers did not listen to the poor people's cries. Now God will deal with the rulers in the same way. He will not listen to them. He will act like someone who hides his face from them. There is a verse in Proverbs about this. 'A man shuts his ears to the cry from the poor people. He too will then cry out to God. But God will not answer him' (Proverbs 21:13).

We might ask why God would not answer these rulers' prayers. It was because they had done evil things. The rulers had behaved badly. This had continued for a long time. It was their habit to do evil things. The rulers knew God's demands. They understood the law. They understood the reasons for the law. The rulers knew about legal decisions. They knew the difference between right and wrong decisions.

These rulers had done evil things for such a long time that it had become a normal habit for them. In the Book of Hebrews, the writer describes their situation well (Hebrews 10:26-31). Their evil behaviour controlled their lives. They knew what God wanted them to do. But they refused to change their behaviour.

**v5** Here is God's message to the \*prophets. They lie to my people. If people give food to them, those

\*prophets promise peace. They say, 'All is well.' If people do not give food to them, they even prepare war against the people.

Micah has dealt with the greedy rulers. Now he deals with the greedy \*prophets. The systems of religion and politics join with each other. Both systems protect the criminals. And the criminals do wrong things to the people, who then suffer.

Verse 5 Micah speaks God's message. The \*prophets are false. They lie to the people. The things that they teach are wrong. In the Book of Deuteronomy, its writer warns about that (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). False \*prophets hope to please kings. Kings will give a rich reward to them. These \*prophets hope to please political and legal leaders. These \*prophets hope that leaders in business will praise them. This is what the leaders say. 'Tell us what we want to hear. Then we will pay you well. Speak a message that comforts us. Then we will feed you well.' God has given to these \*prophets the gifts that they need. But they have no courage. And they have no moral strength.

In the \*Hebrew text, Micah says that the \*prophets 'bite with their teeth'. They eat the food that people give to them. But they are even more greedy. It is as if the \*prophets bite like snakes. A snake will kill and eat a man. And these \*prophets are as terrible as snakes! These evil \*prophets would do anything in order to get money from people. So, these evil \*prophets speak in order to get money. Micah makes that plain. They also speak to get food for their mouths. The political rulers pay the false \*prophets. They pay them for a message that the rulers wish to hear. They pay money for lies. There is no truth in the nation any longer. There is no fair practice in business either.

Therefore, the rulers pay money to the \*prophets. In that way, the rulers are feeding them. Then the \*prophets speak this message. 'Life is wonderful. There is peace for everyone.' But if the rulers do not pay money to the \*prophets, the rulers do not feed them. So the \*prophets then change their message. They even prepare war against people. They promise war instead of peace.

Sometimes God sends a message about war. It is the right message for that time. But then the false \*prophets speak to the people about peace. Or sometimes the right message is about peace. But then the false \*prophets speak about war. However, Micah's message is the truth.

These false \*prophets cause the people to behave in wicked ways. But these \*prophets do not speak any message about punishment.

**v6** You will live in the dark. You will be far from the sun, so that you cannot see it. You will have no message from me (that is, from God). The sun will set for the \*prophets. The day will become dark for them.

Verse 6

\*Prophets have dreams. The dreams often come at night. God speaks to \*prophets in this way. It is God's gift to them. But God now takes away that gift from these \*prophets. So they do not receive money for it any longer. It is like Samson earlier. He tried to free himself from his enemies, who were called the Philistines. But he could not do it. Samson had lost the strength that God had given to him before. But he did not know that the \*LORD had left him (Judges 16:20).

Darkness can mean that people lose knowledge (Psalm 82:5). The \*prophets are receiving messages. But the messages do not come from God. God does not allow those messages. It is as if the sun has set on the false \*prophets. Their days will be like night.

**v7** The \*prophets will be ashamed. The experts will be confused. They will all cover their faces. They will get no message from God. He will not answer them.

Verse 7

Some people try to know the future. They try to discover things that God has hidden from us. But God does not allow that. There are some things that God does not allow us to know about. Some people try to discover things by magic. It is a very wrong practice (Deuteronomy 18:10-13). There are accounts about several such practices in the \*Old Testament. People practise them even today. One such practice is to try to contact dead people. Another one is to try to get advice by means of the stars. God does not allow people to use such methods. Such behaviour is very dangerous. Any answers that people receive come from evil spirits. Other nations served false gods. Those nations followed their own ways to do things. And the \*prophets in

\*Israel were imitating them. But God opposed their practices.

There is no answer for the \*prophets from God. He has declared the \*prophets guilty. They will be ashamed. Everyone will see their shame. The \*prophets will be \*spiritually unclean (unholy). And everyone will see it (Lamentations 4:13-15). The \*prophets will be like people with skin disease. Like those people, they will try to hide from other people. Like them, they will cover their mouths. (Look at Leviticus 13:45.) It is as if their mouths have caused the \*prophets' shame. They have used their mouths to say wrong things. Therefore they will not want people to see their mouths. So they will hide their faces.

**v8** But God has filled me with his Spirit's power. He has filled me with power, goodness and strength. He has given to me the courage to speak about \*fairness. I can tell the people in Jacob's family about their crimes. I can tell the people in \*Israel about their \*sins.

#### Verse 8

This verse starts with the word 'but'. In this way, the writer emphasises that there is a big difference between Micah and the false \*prophets. Micah is a real \*prophet. He works by the power of God's Spirit. He is full of \*fairness and power. The false \*prophets work by their own wicked thoughts. Micah speaks about \*sin and punishment. He does not speak about peace. He wants to see people introduce \*fairness into his country. That is his great desire. It might happen. It would be good evidence that God has filled him with the Spirit.

Micah speaks about the \*sins that the people in \*Israel have done. It is the only way that people will understand. They will understand that God is warning them. Micah warns about God's punishments. But Micah is in great danger. People do not want to hear his message. It is often like that with a real \*prophet.

God has shown his truth to Micah. Micah's greatest desire is to speak that truth. Also, he wants to obey it completely. When Micah speaks about \*fairness, he speaks with great power.

**v9** So listen to my message, you leaders of Jacob's house (family). Listen, you rulers of \*Israel's house (family). You hate \*fairness. You always do the opposite. **v10** You make cruelty and murder into a habit in Jerusalem. In order to build Zion (Jerusalem), you murder people. In order to build Jerusalem, you cheat people!

#### Verses 9-10

Micah calls together the wicked leaders and rulers. 'Leaders' means all types of leaders in \*Israel. Isaiah gives examples of what kinds of people these might be (Isaiah 3:2-3). They include strong men and soldiers, judges, \*prophets and skilled workmen. Micah accuses these leaders. The law is right, but they hate it. They hate \*fairness. From their wicked hearts come wicked actions. They consider all good things as if those things were bad. Isaiah refers to this matter too (Isaiah 5:20). \*Israel should be a nation that obeys God's law. Instead just a few wicked men rule the people. They even say that good behaviour is wicked.

But God is good. He is kind. He shows his love. He appeals to these wicked people and he asks them to listen.

The 10 commandments were 10 laws that God gave to Moses. He gave them on the mountain called \*Sinai. The commandments gave 4 rights to everyone:

- the right to live. (You must not murder.)
- the right to a protected (safe) home. (You must not have sex with a person that is not your husband or wife.)
- the right to property. (You must not steal.)
- the right to a reputation (the fact that people will consider you as a good and honest person). (You must not say false things about people.)

\*Israel's leaders should have given those rights to the people. But they did not care about the people. They only cared about their own wealth and importance. They built great buildings in Jerusalem. They said that they were making Jerusalem stronger. But in fact they were making God's people weaker.

The leaders did not care about the rights that God had given to the people. So the leaders stole land to build their great buildings. They killed people who opposed them. They cheated and they lied.

**v11** The leaders act as judges in order to get a reward. The \*priests teach for a price. The \*prophets tell

the future for money. And then those leaders expect the \*LORD to help them. They say, 'The \*LORD lives here with us. So nothing bad will happen to us.'

#### Verse 11

God himself was the real king (ruler) of \*Israel. He chose to teach his words (his law) by means of the leaders. These were in three groups.

- 1) The rulers. They were the judges. They used the law in practice. It was their responsibility to give fair decisions in the courts.
- 2) The \*priests. They taught the law (Deuteronomy 17:8-10).
- 3) The \*prophets. They brought messages from God.

Together these groups were responsible for the people's safety and security. But all the leaders loved money. That was their main problem. Paul mentions this problem in his letter to Timothy. 'When people love money, that love causes all kinds of evil things' (1 Timothy 6:10). The judges made decisions in the courts. They demanded money from anyone who came to them. The person would pay. Then the judge would give a favourable decision. The \*priests taught, but only for money. The \*prophets told about the future. And they would demand money for that service.

It seemed that everything was well in Jerusalem. Its people had wonderful buildings. They were rich. Trade was good. The \*Temple (God's house) was in the centre of everything. It was on the mountain called Zion, which was also called the holy hill. That is why the people often gave to Jerusalem the name Zion. The \*Temple was the most holy place. The leaders prayed there. They sang \*psalms. The leaders made sacrifices. (They burnt animals that they had killed.) They offered those animals to God. The leaders tried to control God. They performed \*religious duties. So they thought that God would help them.

However, they did crimes against the people. They praised God when they were in the \*Temple. But they did evil things in their daily actions elsewhere. They lived in two different ways. They could not see the difference between those two ways. 'The heart is more wicked than anything. It is very evil. Nobody can understand it' (Jeremiah 17:9). They could not understand these things.

So all is not right. The rulers do all those evil things. Then they expect God to help them. They say, 'God is our help, so nothing bad will happen to us.' They live in an evil way. But they still believe that God will help them. They believe that he will protect their nation. They have forgotten that God made rules. And his protection depends on right behaviour. (Look at Deuteronomy chapter 28.)

In this message, Micah warns God's people in every age. On Sundays we go to church. We praise God and we sing songs. Most days we are at work or we are at home. But it makes no difference where we are. Our behaviour should always be the same. We should live the same way on Monday as we do on Sunday.

There is a right way to trust God. We trust him because of his kindness and \*forgiveness. We trust him for strength. We trust him to guide us. (Look at Psalm 71:5-6.) But Micah is speaking about something different. These people said that they were trusting God. But they were not obeying God. They said that they had security. But God would not protect them. They said that God was with them. But in fact, they were wicked and God was opposing them. Because of their wicked deeds, God would destroy Jerusalem.

**v12** People will plough Zion (Jerusalem) like a field. Jerusalem will become a heap of rubbish. Weeds and bushes will cover the mountain where the \*Temple now stands. You rulers will be responsible for this. It will happen because of you.

#### Verse 12

God's punishment will therefore be as serious as the crime. 'Because of you' refers to the rulers (the judges). They were proud of their buildings. But they had made the buildings unholy. Soon, the hill with its \*Temple would not still belong to the \*LORD. That would make it \*spiritually unclean and unholy. It would become a heap of rubbish. Wild animals would occupy it. \*Israel's Holy God would leave his holy \*Temple. Jesus said the same thing about the \*Temple in Jerusalem. He accused the \*religious leaders. They had not used the \*Temple in the right way. They had used it for their own honour and profit (Matthew chapter 23). Jesus spoke about a time when enemies would ruin the \*Temple (Matthew chapter 24).

But we need to take notice of this message today. We must not use Christian things in the wrong way.

Certain people remembered what Micah had said. This was nearly a hundred years later. This is what

happened. \*Religious leaders planned to kill Jeremiah. Then some other leaders spoke to the people. All the people listened. These leaders reminded the people about Micah's message (Jeremiah 26:16-18). The result was that these leaders saved Jeremiah's life.

Hezekiah, the king of Judah, did not kill Micah. Neither did anyone else. King Hezekiah listened to what the \*prophet said. The king began to respect the \*LORD very greatly. The king asked for God's help. God heard his prayer. God had said that he would make something evil happen to that country. But it did not happen at that time. God saved Jerusalem because of King Hezekiah's prayer. But after Hezekiah's death, the rulers, the judges and the other important people became even more evil. In the end, enemies destroyed Jerusalem, as the \*prophets had warned.

## Chapter 4

### 4:1-8 New Jerusalem will have a high position over the nations

There is a big change now in Micah's \*prophecy. He has just dealt with the old Jerusalem. Because of evil leaders, its people would suffer. And its enemies would destroy it. Micah now describes the new Jerusalem that someone will build in the future.

The end of chapter 3 and the start of chapter 4 are very different. In the last verse of chapter 3, the writer describes very sad, terrible things. In the first verses of chapter 4, there is a wonderful happiness. The old Jerusalem suffered bad things because of wicked leaders. But there will be a new Jerusalem. The \*Messiah will be there. He will overcome all his enemies. He will rule over them. However, only a few people will remain. The \*Messiah will save them. They will love God and they will obey him.

**v1** This is what will happen in the last days. This is what will happen to the mountain called Zion. It will become the mountain where the \*LORD's house is. It will become the highest among all mountains. It will be the chief mountain. It will be higher than the hills. And people from many nations will go there.

#### Verse 1

In the first sentence, Micah uses the phrase 'in the last days'. This phrase appears many times in the \*Old Testament. It does not refer to any particular future date. It means a long period. The situation may have stayed the same for many years. But then it will change. Everything will be different. It may mean 'in the days that will come'. Centuries before, Moses had spoken to \*Israel's people. He had warned them that they must continue to obey God. Otherwise, terrible things would happen. God would force them out of their country. He would send them into other countries. 'There will come a day (a special time) when you will be in great trouble. All these things will have happened to you. Then you will start to \*worship the \*LORD your God again. This will be in later days (at a later time). You will then obey him' (Deuteronomy 4:30).

In the \*New Testament, the phrase 'the last days' means something new. It refers to all the results of the time when Jesus Christ came to the Earth the first time. The phrase here may refer to that period (Hebrews 1:1-2). Peter spoke to the people on the special day called Pentecost. (On that special day, God sent out his Holy Spirit onto people.) Peter repeated these words that the \*prophet Joel had written. 'In the last days (last period), God will send out his Spirit onto all people' (Acts 2:17). At the end of time, there will be a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation chapters 21-22).

So Micah was looking forward into that future time. Only future events could show that his message was accurate. These events might happen over a long period. 'Days' might mean years or even centuries. The rest of this section (Micah 4:1-5:15) may describe 'the last days'. Micah's \*prophecy would include the few people that returned from Babylon (Micah 4:9, 10). It would include the \*Messiah's birth (Micah 5:2). It would include his rule. This would never end. It would be a time when there is peace. This too would never end (Micah 4:1-4; 5:3).

As Micah looked forward into the future, he saw several events. In ancient times, people used to build \*temples on mountains. In \*Israel, the people built God's \*Temple on the mountain called Zion. They said that this mountain was higher than all other mountains. But it was not actually the highest mountain. In the \*Psalms, however, this is how the writer referred to it. The writer described it as the highest mountain because of its importance. This was the mountain where people \*worshipped the real God. And God chose to rule from this mountain (Psalm 11:4; 68:16-17).

After enemies destroyed Jerusalem, the place would be like a field. It would then be fit only for rubbish and wild animals. But Micah saw into the future. He saw a great change. He looked beyond the stones and rubbish that would be on the mountain called Zion.

People used to walk by the River Euphrates in Babylon. They went to \*worship the false god called Bel. The people in Babylon were very proud about their religion. They even said that Babylon's hill was the entrance into heaven. But Micah saw beyond that. He believed that the situation would change. (Look also at Jeremiah 51:44.) Micah saw that the people from many nations will go to the mountain called Zion (the Jerusalem from heaven) (Psalm 87). The \*LORD's house will be there. People will come to \*worship there. The \*LORD, \*Israel's God, will be the God of the other nations too. All false gods will lose their power over the people. There is a big difference between Jerusalem and Babylon. In Babylon, there will be confusion. In the new Jerusalem, there will be peace.

**v2** People from many nations will come. This will be their message. 'Come! We shall climb the \*LORD's mountain. We shall go to the house (\*temple) of Jacob's God. God will teach us the right way to live. Then we will live in the way that pleases him.' The true messages that God teaches will go out from Zion (Jerusalem). The \*LORD's message will begin on the mountain called Zion in Jerusalem. It will go out to the entire world.

#### Verse 2

At one time, only \*Israelites went to Jerusalem. They went there to \*worship God. In the future, there will be a magnificent country. It will be the Jerusalem from heaven. The \*Messiah will be the ruler. There will be a great movement of the world's nations. Many powerful nations will go to Jerusalem. They will \*worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24). There will be good \*priests there. They will teach people God's ways to live. People will want to know God's law. They will want to \*worship God. They will want to do what God says. They will want to know his way to live. And because their \*worship is sincere, they will also do good deeds. The benefits in verses 3 and 4 will follow. All other gods and \*temples will disappear.

**v3** He will be the judge between many people. He will settle arguments between distant and powerful nations. They will hammer their swords into ploughs. They will use their spears (like long thin swords) as tools to cut plants. Nations will not fight each other any longer. They will never train for war again.

#### Verse 3

There is a very great difference between the old Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem. Often in the old Jerusalem, the rulers and \*priests were evil. They did not teach people the right way to live. God's message did not reach into society. Just a few people were loyal. But there is hope. In the end, God's message will reach the nations. And so the people will hear his message about the right way to live. This will bring great changes in society.

God's law will become the law for the nations. People will live by his laws. God will be active among the nations. He will be the judge in quarrels between many people. He will settle the arguments of strong nations. This will happen all over the world. Leaders will ask God for wisdom and instruction. He will be their authority. There will be no evil judges any longer. God will be the most important person at the courts. The judges in the courts will study the Bible, the book that tells about God's law. They will check it when they are making their decisions. God will therefore be the judge. He will make the decisions.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, will have authority over the nations. He will be their king. This will affect the governments of strong nations. These distant nations will not need to fight each other. They will not need arms for war any longer. The people will destroy the arms that they had intended for war. 'Swords' and 'spears' (like long thin swords) refers also to all military arms. The people will use hammers to make their swords into ploughs. They will make their spears into tools to cut plants. Nations will not want to fight each other any longer. They will have no need to train for war. The nations will use rare materials for good, proper purposes. They will use them to give life rather than death.

**v4** Each person will sit under his own grapevine (plant that yields fruit to make wine). And he will sit under his own fig (sweet fruit) tree. Each person will live in peace. Nobody will make the people afraid. This is a serious promise by the \*LORD who has all power.

#### Verse 4

People will not love money any longer. They will not desire the goods that belong to other people. (Look at Micah 2:2.) They will not need to fight in wars to obtain them. They will not need arms for war any longer. They will have no enemies. So they will not be afraid that an enemy might kill them. The earth will produce enough food and fruit. There will be enough fruit trees for each person. Each person will sit under his own fruit trees. The word 'sit' gives the impression that there is peace. People will be content with what they have. They will not want more than they need. That is one main thing that Micah writes about (Micah 2:2; 3:1-3, 11; 7:3). Each person will sit in peace under his own fruit trees.

Nobody will make the people afraid. It will be like that in the new Jerusalem. People will come to see the new city. That city will be a model for other cities. People will come from all over the earth. They will get to know the new way that people live there. There will be new towns and cities all over the earth. They will be like the new Jerusalem.

There will be no fear any longer. There is fear that comes because of God's punishment. But that fear will disappear. The nations will trust each other. Then they can destroy the arms that they had used for war. People will lose their great desire for other people's possessions. All this can happen only when God is the king over all.

What a wonderful world that will be! We might ask how we could be certain about this. Perhaps it is only the dream of a confident \*prophet. Micah is confident. But there is only one reason why he is confident. The \*LORD who has all power (God) has said those things. He has said that they will happen. The \*LORD who commands armies (God) has spoken it with his (the \*LORD's) mouth. That is the reason why Micah is so confident. Micah uses a special name for God here. It is like a name that people would use in war. He calls God 'the \*LORD who has all power'. It can also be 'the \*LORD who commands armies'. The powerful God is speaking. God gave the promise. And it is God who is important. Micah emphasises that fact, rather than the promise itself.

**v5** All the nations may walk (live) in the name of their gods. But we will walk (live) in the name of the \*LORD, our God. We will walk (live) with him always, for all time.

#### Verse 5

We now look again at the situation when Micah was alive. Only a few people remain loyal to God. They are waiting for God to perform his promises. In the meantime, they will 'walk in the name of the \*LORD'. The Bible often uses the word 'walk'. Often, as here, it means to 'be firm'. It means to 'have a sense of purpose'. It means to 'go on and not stop'. In other words, those people get stronger as they walk. The loyal people promise to be true to the \*covenant. God gave that \*covenant to Moses on the mountain called Sinai. Those people will be loyal always, for all time. The promise comforts them when they are sad. It keeps them from wrong deeds when the devil tests them. It gives strength to them for the future.

Other people get their strength from their religions. All the nations are now living 'in the name of their gods'. (They are living by their belief in their gods.) Micah states his belief. 'But we will walk (live) in the name of the \*LORD, our God.' We will continue this walk (this way to live) always, for all time. This means that we recognise the \*LORD as our God. He is the only God. We do not give attention to other gods. We do not obey them. God has promised a new Jerusalem. To mix all the gods (religions) is not the answer. The nations must serve the one real God and they must obey him. When that happens, the promise will become true. The one real God is the God and Father of our \*Lord Jesus Christ. That state of affairs will be permanent. It will continue always, for all time.

**v6** This is what the \*LORD declares. 'At that time, I will gather my people. I will gather those that are weak. I will gather those that other people have bruised. I will bring together those that enemies have caused to scatter. I hurt Jerusalem's people and I punished them. But I will bring them back to me. **v7** I will change those that are unable to walk. I will change them into a loyal nation. I forced these people to leave. But I will make them into a strong nation.' The \*LORD will rule over them from the mountain called Zion. His rule will last always.

#### Verses 6-7

'At that time' refers to 'the last days'. It is the same as in verse 1. It is a day in the very distant future. 'The \*LORD declares' means that God has said it. It is therefore true. God is the \*Shepherd and he is the King. He will gather the people who are unable to walk. He has hurt his people and he has punished them. But he

will bring them together again. He remembers the people that he caused to scatter into Babylon. He will bring them back again.

In this verse, Micah describes the \*remnant. They are the people that God has caused to scatter into Babylon. They are those that God has hurt. They are those that he has punished. It was as if God threw them away. Micah refers to a scene where there is terror. The people have no hope and they are weak. The \*LORD has brought trouble to his people. But the same \*LORD is responsible for them. He will gather his people together again. He will be like a \*shepherd who gathers his sheep.

These weak people are those that will become the \*remnant. God will make them into a strong nation. This description may be a reference to Jacob. He struggled with God. God struck his leg. When God left him, Jacob had a permanent injury (Genesis 32:22-32). But then Jacob became like a new man. His attitudes had changed. God was able to teach him. He became humble. God could then use him.

It will be similar with Jacob's \*descendants. God is allowing his people to become weak. But he will make them into a strong nation. It will be difficult for them to walk, as it was difficult for Jacob. They will always have this disadvantage. But the result will be that they will trust in the \*LORD. They will live in the ways that he wants them to live. This will be so different from what Jerusalem's leaders were like then (Micah 3:11). God gave to Jacob a new name, \*Israel. That happened after Jacob's experience when he struggled with God. And one day, Micah's \*Israel will become a new nation. Its people will not trust in their own strength. They will be humble. God will then be able to teach them. He will be able to use them. \*Israel will become 'the \*Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16).

The \*LORD will bring his people back to Jerusalem (verse 7). He will then make them into a better people. He will make them into a \*remnant. And they will become a strong nation that is loyal to the \*LORD. They will declare that the \*LORD is their God. They will promise to obey him always, for all time. The \*LORD will rule over them always, for all time. The people in \*Israel will not \*worship the other nations' gods. They will \*worship only the one real God (Romans chapter 11). Many other nations did not continue to exist after their wars and troubles (Amos 1:8). God did not preserve a \*remnant for those nations. But God's plan for \*Israel was different. God forced his people to leave their homes, because of their \*sin. But he will bring them back. He will make them pure (holy). They will become a strong nation (1 Peter 2:9). They will become a nation in whom God's Spirit lives. Christians will be a part of this strong nation (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The \*LORD will rule over that \*remnant. This was not true for Micah's Jerusalem. Its leaders opposed any rule. But at that time, God will rule by means of the \*Messiah (Micah 5:2-4; Acts 2:32-36). The \*Messiah will rule from the throne (the highest seat, the place that shows the ruler's authority). He will rule from the mountain called Zion. His rule will last from that day and for always (Isaiah 9:6-7).

**v8** I speak to you, Zion (Jerusalem). You are like a \*watchtower for the sheep and a strong building. You defend the sheep (my people). The kingdom (rule) will come to the 'Daughter of Jerusalem'. Your former government will come back to you. Its centre will be in Jerusalem. It will be the same as it was in the past.

#### Verse 8

God speaks another \*prophecy about Zion (Jerusalem). He calls the new capital a \*watchtower. This is a tall building. It is in a \*vineyard. Men watch from it to guard the \*vineyard. These men carry weapons (arms like the ones that people use for war). When \*shepherds are looking after their sheep, they watch. They watch to see if there are wild animals. They watch in case someone would steal their sheep. The sheep are like the nation's citizens. These are the people to whom Micah refers in verses 6 and 7. The former rulers stole from the people (chapter 3). But in the new age, God will protect the people. He will do this by means of the \*Messiah (Micah 5:1-6).

God speaks to Zion (Jerusalem) as if it were a strong building. The \*Hebrew word for this building also means 'a hill'. (The same \*Hebrew word appears in 2 Kings 5:24.) Zion is an old name for Jerusalem. It was a hill to the east of Jerusalem. There used to be strong men there. They possessed all the military arms that people needed for war. This old name (Zion) linked the hill with David. He was the strong king of \*Israel. From his \*descendants, the \*Messiah would come. God had often promised to David that the rule of David's \*descendant (the \*Messiah) would never end. We find that promise in many \*psalms. (See Psalms 46 and 48. Look also at Psalms 76; 84; 87 and 122). The old name for Jerusalem (Zion) made people remember David's previous greatness. That would encourage the \*remnant. The city would again have the power and

glory (greatness) that it had in the past.

The nation called \*Israel would belong to the 'Daughter of Jerusalem' (Micah 4:6-8). In the \*Hebrew language, the word for 'city' is a female word. Jerusalem is therefore called a 'daughter'. The small group of people in Jerusalem can look back. They can look back to the great period in the past. They can then look forward to the wonderful period in the future. They will again be under the rule of the king (who will then be the \*Messiah).

At the time when Micah was alive, the people were not able to see these things happen. But Jesus, the \*Messiah, has now come to this Earth. Now people from all the nations ask him to help them. They recognise him as their \*Saviour and \*Lord. They do not still \*worship any other gods. They get to know the power of God's Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1-4). But more is still to come.

Jesus, the \*Messiah, is the great \*Shepherd of the sheep. Nobody can steal the sheep out of his hand (his care) (John 10:28). He promises to be with his people always. He will be with them until time has ended (Matthew 28:20).

### **4:9-13 Zion's (Jerusalem's) people will suffer pains that will lead to the beginning of a new age**

The \*prophecy develops in two parts (verses 9-10; 11-13). Both parts start from the word 'Now'. 'Now' means the time when the present troubles are happening (verses 9, 11). The second part refers to a wonderful future. In it, Micah uses the phrase 'Daughter of Zion' (Jerusalem). That means the people in Jerusalem. In the \*Hebrew text, God tells the people that they must shake themselves about. They have to shake themselves because they are suffering so much pain (verse 10). This refers to a mother's pains when her child is born. Later, God tells the same people to 'get up'. And he tells them to 'break these people (the enemies)' (verse 13). For that, the \*Hebrew has a special description, like a picture. It means when people break wheat to separate the inner grains from the rest. After that, Micah describes what the future will be like.

**v9** Now you are crying very loudly. Perhaps you think that you have no king. Perhaps you think that you have lost your wise helper. You are suffering like a woman that is having a baby.

Verse 9

God says to the people in \*Israel, 'Now you are crying very loudly.' God trusted \*Israel. He trusted the \*remnant. He trusted those people to bring about his purposes in the world. But they have not obeyed God. In this verse, he blames the people that are in \*Israel. God blames them because they do not believe him. So now he is sending them into Babylon.

'You think that you have no king' This shows why they are crying. The \*Assyrians will defeat \*Israel in war. Afterwards, God will send \*Judah's people into Babylon. The people in the 'Daughter of Jerusalem' have every reason to be in pain. But these people must not forget their real King. They must not forget their Helper. It is the \*LORD himself. He has not left them. He is still alive. They will spend a long period of time in Babylon. But God will be with them during that time. In the end, the message is a message that brings hope. These troubles will end. Afterwards something better, something new will come.

God the Helper has a secret plan. The 'Daughter of Jerusalem' (its people) must not forget their King, who is also their Helper. 'Wise helper' in \*Hebrew also means 'Adviser', another name for God. The people's pains will be like the ones when a woman gives birth. There is a reason for these pains. God plans to free Zion's (Jerusalem's) people by means of the exile (verses 9-10). (The exile is when God will send them out of their country.) The \*Assyrians have attacked Jerusalem. But God has planned the defeat of the \*Assyrians (verses 11-13). Certainly God will punish his people. But the punishment will not damage them for always. That is not God's intention. He wants the punishment to help them. Punishment has a purpose. It will provide a way to bring the people back to God. Another \*prophet, Jeremiah, also refers to a woman's pains when she is having a baby. He does that to make his message clear (Jeremiah 4:31).

Jesus, too, used the same example (John 16:21). He was leaving this Earth to be with his Father. Because of that, his disciples (friends and helpers) would be sad for a while. So Jesus encouraged them. He promised to give the Helper (the Holy Spirit) to them as a gift. Then they would not be sad any longer (John 16:16-22). It is the same for us today. It may seem that people continue to suffer. It may seem that troubles never end. It may seem not to mean anything. But our King, Jesus, is with us. Our Helper, God's Holy Spirit,

brings strength and help to us. He supports us at the times when we need his help.

**v10** 'Daughter of Zion' (Jerusalem), feel the pain. It is as if you must give birth to your baby. Now you must go out of this city. You will camp in the open field. I mean that you will go to Babylon. But I will save you from that place. The \*LORD will go there and he will rescue you. There he will buy you back from your enemies.

#### Verse 10

Only the \*remnant will remain after enemies defeat Jerusalem's people. God orders them to feel the pain. The pain is like when a woman is having her baby. These pains show to the \*remnant that they must leave Jerusalem city. They must camp in the open field. They must go to Babylon. The word 'Babylon' also refers to the worst level of \*spiritual darkness. In other words, it will feel as if God has left his people. But in fact, God still has a plan for them. He will be present with his loyal \*remnant, even in Babylon. Micah repeats the word 'there'. He uses it twice. This shows that it is important. The \*LORD will save the \*remnant 'there'. 'There' he will save them from their enemies. These pains will last for a long time. But one day they will end. A new birth will mean the start of a new age, a new period in time. And that will happen only when the \*remnant returns to Jerusalem.

This \*prophecy became true. The \*remnant returned to Jerusalem in 538 \*BC (Ezra chapter 2). God's kingdom (rule) comes by means of tests. So \*Israel's people must suffer these tests. The \*remnant had left the safety that they had in the old city (2 Kings 25:2-7; Jeremiah 52:7). They had camped in the open field (Jeremiah 6:25; 14:18). The \*remnant had gone to Babylon. But then they returned home. Later, the \*remnant will become the new \*Israel.

**v11** Now many nations gather to oppose you. They have come to fight against you. Those nations say, 'Look, there is Zion (Jerusalem)! Let us attack it! Let us make it \*spiritually unclean (unholy).'

#### Verse 11

'Now' in verses 9 and 10 referred to the exile. The exile means the time when God will send the people out of their country. He will send them into Babylon. But 'now' in verse 11 refers to the present situation. It refers to the army from Assyria. These armies contain soldiers from many nations. The \*Assyrians have paid those soldiers to fight. That payment came from taxes. And the taxes came from the nations that the \*Assyrians have defeated. Those nations have paid these taxes to Assyria. Nations are attacking Jerusalem. \*Israel is a nation that the \*Assyrians have defeated. So its people themselves have helped to pay for this war.

Each army has its national flag. The armies surround Zion (Jerusalem). They look towards it with great pride. They talk about their enormous power. They are the present danger to Zion (Jerusalem).

The \*Assyrians want to make the city \*spiritually unclean (unholy). The armies want to break down its walls. These walls protect the holy city. This refers especially to the Most Holy Place in the \*Temple. The armies want to destroy the holy furniture. Then the Most Holy Place would become \*spiritually unclean (unholy). The people in Jerusalem city have declared that it is God's city. God has intended \*Israel to be like heaven on Earth. That is why the armies hate Jerusalem.

Some nations hate God. They will always oppose another nation that obeys his commands. They will try to destroy such a nation. Such events have happened often in history.

**v12** But those nations do not know the \*LORD's thoughts. They do not understand his plan. The \*LORD has brought those people here. They are here for a special purpose. They will be like grain that people have cut. And people put the grain on the floor. **v13** 'Daughter of Zion' (Jerusalem), get up. Break these people. I will let you be like a bull (a strong animal). The bull's horns (sharp points on its head) will be of iron. I will give to you feet that I have covered with hard metal. You will break many nations into small pieces. You will give their wealth to the \*LORD, who is the \*Lord of all the Earth.

#### Verses 12-13

However, these armies do not understand what God is doing. They do not realise that God is using them. He is causing their defeat. They gather against Jerusalem. But it is the \*LORD who gathers them. They plan to destroy the \*Temple. But the \*LORD will destroy them. They are part of God's plan for \*Israel (Isaiah 10:5-12). God defeated the devil by means of the wooden cross where Jesus Christ died (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). The world did not understand what that event meant. It is the same today.

God is gathering these armies together. They are like bundles of wheat. Someone has gathered the bundles and they have put them on the floor. And the \*LORD has gathered those armies there. He will break them up like grains of wheat. People break up the wheat to separate the inner grains from the rest. In the Bible, this is a common way to describe punishment (Isaiah 21:10; Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 13:3).

So Micah speaks to the few people that remain (verse 13). God has gathered them in Jerusalem. \*Israel's enemies have laughed at God. God orders his people to get up. And he orders them to go out. (Look at Micah 2:13.) \*Israel's enemies are also God's enemies. So God orders the few people in Jerusalem to kill those enemies. In another picture or special description, a strong animal is pulling a big tool to cut with. This is like God's people. It is as if they will have horns (sharp points on an animal's head). And the horns will be of iron. That means that nobody can defeat them. They will have feet that someone has covered with a hard metal. These feet will break down the enemy's proud attitudes. God orders the people to break these many nations. They must break these nations into many pieces. God's enemies will be like grains of wheat. God will destroy their proud attitudes. He will kill the soldiers that oppose Jerusalem. He will cause the armies to scatter.

The \*Assyrians have obtained their wealth by false methods. But the few people in Jerusalem that remain will get all this wealth back again. They will use this wealth. The people will use it in the \*LORD's \*Temple. They will use it in the way that God chooses. God's secret plan began to become true in 701 \*BC. We find the report about it in 2 Kings chapter 19. The nations have taken wealth from God's people. The soldiers have gained from it. But all wealth belongs to the \*LORD. God will return it to his own people.

The \*LORD (God) is the king not only over Jerusalem. God is the \*Lord over all the Earth. His secret plan includes the fact that \*Israel will win against all the nations. God's plan has continued to become true as time goes on (Jeremiah 51:33; 1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

## Chapter 5

### 5:1-6 The \*Messiah's birth and his future greatness

The main subject of Micah's message now changes. He has spoken about the new Zion (new Jerusalem). He now speaks about kings that will come from King David's \*descendants. This section starts from the defeat that Jerusalem's king will suffer (verse 1). But then Micah goes on to describe how a very special king (the \*Messiah) will have success (verses 2-6).

**v1** Now, people in the strong city, gather your soldiers. The soldiers of the enemy are surrounding us. They are preparing for the attack. They will strike the Judge (ruler) of \*Israel. They will hit him with their \*rod. They will hit him on the cheek.

Verse 1

The word 'now' links this message with the previous one (Micah 4:9; 4:11). Soon Micah will describe future \*salvation by the \*Messiah. But here Micah describes an army which was attacking Jerusalem. The attack is like the time when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked Jerusalem. That happened in the year 701 \*BC. (Look at Micah 1:9; 1:12; 4:11.) 'Now, people in the strong city, gather your soldiers. The soldiers of the enemy are surrounding us. They are preparing for the attack.' The 'strong city' means Jerusalem. The walls that surrounded Jerusalem shut its people in. So the walls made the city strong.

But it seems that this verse does not describe that particular attack. Sennacherib did not overcome Jerusalem. But these armies will strike the king of Jerusalem. They will hit him with a \*rod. They will strike him on the cheek. It means that the king cannot defend himself. He cannot even defend his face. (Compare that with Isaiah 50:6.) This \*rod means something special. The person who holds it has rule and authority. That is what it means. But the king of Jerusalem here did not have a \*rod to defend himself. That meant that he had no rule or authority.

In Micah 4:9-5:1, we see the word 'now' four times. Each time, Micah describes some results that will happen for a certain reason. They will happen because people do not obey God. These results are:

- We have pains, like a woman's pains when she is having a baby (4:9).
- We are separate from God. And we are separate from his people (4:10).
- Everything seems to cause difficulty for us. It seems as if things are striking our bodies (4:11).

We feel that walls surround us. We cannot escape. We hate the way that we live. We even hate ourselves (5:1).

But there is hope that a new leader will come. When Micah describes this event, he is also looking towards a future time. He links King David's \*descendants to the future Ruler. That ruler is David's greater Son (\*descendant). He is the perfect ruler. He is Jesus Christ, the \*Messiah. When he was on the Earth the first time, God's enemies struck Jesus too. They insulted him (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30).

**v2** But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, are small. You are so small that one would not include you among Judah's families. But out of you will come a man who is for me. He will be the ruler over \*Israel. His origin was a long time ago in the distant past. It was in an ancient time.

Verse 2

The message now goes on from one period to another period. The word 'but' connects the two periods. When Micah referred to the first period (verse 1), he mainly described the situation in Jerusalem. The enemy's army would surround Jerusalem then. It would be a time when those enemies would defeat the city's people.

The message now goes on to mention the town called Bethlehem. \*Israel's people can have hope for future success. And the reason for their hope will come from Bethlehem. Bethlehem has the name 'Ephrathah', which means 'fruitful'. 'Ephrathah' was the name of a district in Judah. Bethlehem was in that district. (Look at Psalm 132:6.) The names 'Bethlehem', 'Ephrathah' and 'Judah' remind us about Jesse, David's father. Jesse was from Ephrathah. He was from Bethlehem in Judah (1 Samuel 17:12). King David's \*descendants have not obeyed God's laws. They are like a tree that someone has cut down. But from that tree's roots (from David's family), a branch (a new King) will grow up. And on that branch, fruit will grow (Isaiah 11:1). In other words, that new King will be successful.

In ancient times, Bethlehem was small. It was the smallest among the families (\*Hebrew 'thousands') in Judah. (Compare this with 1 Samuel 9:21.) It was not even in the long list that contained Judah's 115 towns (Joshua 15:20-63). It was very small. It was not important. But the most important person would come from it.

Centuries before, God had told Samuel to go to this small town called Bethlehem. God told him to look for a certain man. Even when that man was born, God had chosen him as the future king. But Samuel did not choose anyone from among Jesse's older sons. He chose David, the youngest son (1 Samuel 16:1-13). God usually works this way. He chooses the weak things in this world. Often he chooses not to honour wise and strong people (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). The \*Messiah that God had promised would come from this little town called Bethlehem. From the least important town would come the most important person.

Today people all over the world know the name Bethlehem. That is because Jesus, the \*Messiah, was born there. But earlier, people did not know Bethlehem very well, even at the time when Jesus was born. When King Herod heard about Jesus' birth, he was worried. All the people in Jerusalem were worried too. The king therefore asked the leaders where Christ (the \*Messiah) should be born. They replied that it would be in Bethlehem, in the area called Judea. That was what the \*prophet had written. The leaders then repeated part of this verse, Micah 5:2. (Look at Matthew 2:3-6.)

\*Israel's leaders ruled to get their own advantage (Micah 3:1-4). But the \*Messiah would come 'for me'. That means 'for God's advantage'. The \*Messiah's origin was in an ancient time. That means a very long time ago. The last words in this verse are 'in an ancient time'. These words connect the \*Messiah with Jesse and with David. They lived a long time before Micah lived.

The words 'ancient time' may also refer to a time even before Jesse. Writers in the \*Old Testament often use the word 'old' to refer to God. We see this idea especially in the Book of Habakkuk. '\*LORD, you are the God who lives for always' (Habakkuk 1:12). Jesus Christ existed before all time began (John 1:1-2; 8:58). The words 'in an ancient time' may therefore refer to this truth. Jesus Christ is the God who also was there in the beginning. He is the God who is here now. He is the God who always will be there. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for always (Hebrews 13:8).

**v3** Therefore he (God) will leave his people alone. That will last until the pains because of birth are over. Then the \*remnant of the \*Israelites will return to \*Israel's people.

### Verse 3

Micah says that God will leave his people. That situation will be the result of what has happened before (Micah 4:9, 11; 5:1). It will include the exile (when God will send the people out of their country). (See Micah 4:10.) This message will not be popular. It will be a very sad message for the people in Jerusalem.

This is the message. God will not continue to help Jerusalem's people. The people in the 'Daughter of Zion' (Jerusalem) will be alone (Micah 4:10). It will be a time when people suffer greatly. God's people will suffer God's punishment. Jeremiah referred to that (Jeremiah 4:27, 31). It will be a sad time for God too (Hosea 11:8). But, one day, the people will not suffer those things any longer (Lamentations 4:22).

People would suffer pains, but there would be a happy end.

The \*Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. Zion's (Jerusalem's) new age will start then. Until then, \*Israel's situation will not change. They will have no human king until then. (Look at Micah 4:9-10.)

But then God would begin to establish his kingdom (rule). He would establish it in the lives of his people. And in the end, the result would be that \*Israel's people would return to God. The \*Messiah would be king over the whole earth. And the nations would be at peace.

We now understand that these wonderful things did not happen immediately after the \*Messiah's birth. First, the \*Messiah had to suffer the punishment for people's \*sins (Isaiah chapter 53; Psalm 22). Since then, God has been patient. He is waiting for people to trust him (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Micah said that the \*Messiah would lead Zion's (Jerusalem's) new kingdom (government). At first, this had a \*spiritual meaning. The kingdom would consist of the people that believe in the \*Messiah. They are both \*Jews and those that are not \*Jews. Their relationship to the \*Messiah would be like a family relationship. And it would have a link to what had happened in time. It would also be a \*spiritual relationship. The \*Israelites had been prisoners in a foreign country. But they would not be prisoners any longer. They would return to be together with the other true members of \*Israel's people. 'Return' here means something \*spiritual. It means that they 'come back' to God. In other words, they start to obey him again. They leave behind their \*sin and its effects. They go to be together with the other true \*Israelites, the people that trust the \*Messiah.

But 'return' also has a physical meaning. God has provided a home for the \*Jews in \*Israel. And in the end, he will rule as king there.

Christ (the \*Messiah) started this process in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. There, 120 people that were his 'brothers' (people that believed in him) had gathered together because of him. Those were the few people that he had chosen. Christ then sent his Holy Spirit to them. From that time, those few people started to change the world (Luke 3:16; Acts chapter 2). Those few people were the first of the \*remnant that is the true \*Israelites.

Christ will complete this process in the future. Only God knows when Christ will return. But he will return with great power. He will return to rule as king from Jerusalem. And that is when the whole \*remnant returns to \*Israel's people and to \*Israel's God.

**v4** Then the Ruler of \*Israel will stand. He will stand in the \*LORD's power. Like a \*shepherd, he will feed his sheep. (In other words, the Ruler will take care of his people.) He will feed them in the strength of the \*LORD God. His people will have a good, safe home. The people on the whole Earth will then know how great the Ruler really is.

### Verse 4

The \*Messiah will rule (Revelation 20:4-6). He will rule with his 'brothers' (the people that believe in him). He will stand. That means that he will live for always (Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 14:24). He will stand in the \*LORD's strength. He will be like a \*shepherd. He will look after his sheep. David too was a \*shepherd. He looked after sheep. Then God took him away from the sheep. God made him a \*shepherd (ruler) over God's people.

The \*Messiah will not rule by means of human power. He will not rule by clever plans, like David's sons. They had not followed the \*LORD's ways to live. They had trusted in their military strength. (Look at Micah 5:10-15.)

But the \*Messiah will be like David. He will trust God and he will obey God's laws. The \*Messiah's greatness was like David's (2 Samuel 7:9). But David's greatness was only in one country, \*Israel. Christ's greatness will reach further. His government will reach all over the Earth (Micah 4:3-4; Matthew 28:18-20; John 17:2). Christ gives \*eternal life to his people. That new life will last for always. Nobody can steal God's people from

his hands (from his care). (See John 10:28.)

Jesus is the Good \*Shepherd. And he will be the great Ruler of \*Israel (Zechariah 14:9-11). The citizens that are under his rule will live in safety. They will defeat the devil (Matthew 12:22-29). Jesus will provide for their \*spiritual health (John chapter 10; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4).

**v5** And the Ruler will bring peace.

The army from Assyria will come into our country. They will march past our strong buildings. But we will choose seven \*shepherds (rulers) and even eight leaders. **v6** They will use their swords. They will rule over the \*Assyrians. They will rule Nimrod's country. They will do it with their swords in their hands. They will use their swords to rule over those people. Then the Ruler of \*Israel will save us from the \*Assyrians when they come into our country. He will save us when they march past our borders.

Verses 5-6

Micah's message is that the \*Messiah will rule the world. His rule will bring his peace. Here Micah uses the words 'our' and 'us'. It means that the \*Messiah will rule together with his loyal people. They are part of the kingdom (nation) that will win the battle. The \*Messiah will be their peace. This is the reason for their confidence. He will free them. The \*Messiah will defend his nation from attack by enemies. He will rule over his enemies.

Micah mentions future attacks against the \*Messiah. He says that the \*Assyrians will attack the \*Messiah's nation. The \*Assyrians did then attack \*Israel, but they lost the battle in 612 \*BC. That was six centuries before Christ's birth.

The loyal nation will be under the \*Messiah's rule. The \*Messiah will win. He will win with his people's help. His people will appoint seven \*shepherds (rulers). Seven is the perfect number in the Bible. Moreover, they will appoint even 8 leaders. 8 is one more than 7. So that means more than enough.

Also, the Ruler (the \*Messiah) will bring peace to \*Israel. He 'will save us'. This statement emphasises that success belongs to the \*Messiah. It does not belong to the leaders. The present leaders had spoken about peace (Micah 3:5). But it was a false peace. Jesus himself provides our peace (security). See Ephesians 2:14-17.

In verse 6, the word 'they' means the \*Messiah's \*shepherds (the rulers of \*Israel). The chief \*shepherd is the \*Messiah. The \*Messiah's \*shepherds will be true \*shepherds (good rulers). That is because they are under his rule. (Look at 1 Peter 5:1-4.) They will rule the country called Assyria. (See Isaiah 19:23-24 and Zechariah 10:11.) 'Assyria' here refers also to all the other enemies of God's kingdom (rule). This refers especially to the chief enemy, the devil who is called Satan (Ephesians 4:7-12; 6:10-18).

At an earlier time, Nimrod had been the man with the strongest power. People used the name Nimrod to refer to great strength. Nimrod was the grandson of Ham, who was Noah's son. He was a very powerful man. And he became famous. When he began to rule, he was in Babel. That was in the country called Shinar (Babylon). From that country, he went to Nineveh (Genesis 10:8-11).

So the names Babel (or Babylon) and Nineveh mean something special. These names are important to Micah. He has a good reason to refer to Nimrod here. 'Nimrod's country' is Babylon (Genesis 10:8-12). The people in Babylon were God's chief enemies. And they were his people's chief enemies. At the time when Micah lived, Assyria ruled over Babylon. But in 612 \*BC, an army from Babylon destroyed Assyria. Then Babylon was the most powerful nation among all the nations. But then, in 539 \*BC, another nation destroyed Babylon. In the \*New Testament, the 'sword' often refers to God's message, the Bible (Ephesians 6:17). We use this 'sword' by the Holy Spirit's power.

### **5:7-9 The \*remnant will rule the nations**

**v7** Then the few people that remain from Jacob will be among many people. They will be like \*dew from the \*LORD. And they will be like showers on the grass. The showers do not wait for anyone. Those people do not put their hope in men. They do not need anyone. **v8** The few people that remain from Jacob will be among the nations. Those few people will be among many people. The few people will be like a lion among the animals in the forest. They will be like a young lion among groups of sheep. The lion passes through the forest. He goes where he wants to go. He chooses an animal. Then he attacks it. Nobody can save it. He tears it to pieces. There is nobody to rescue it.

## Verses 7-8

The words 'will be' start another message about the 'last days' (last period). It is about the events after the \*Messiah's birth. It is about the \*remnant from Jacob's family (Micah 4:7). Micah uses the name 'Jacob' to mean all \*Israel (Micah 1:5). The weak \*remnant are the rest of the 'brothers' (those that believe in the \*Messiah). (See Micah 5:3.) They will become strong. \*Israel will become a strong nation. It will be in the middle of many strong nations. It will be stronger than those nations. But \*Israel's people will not win by their own strength. The \*Messiah is on their side. He rules by the \*LORD's strength (verse 4).

Micah refers to the \*remnant by the name 'Jacob'. Also the man called Jacob was weak in his body. (Look at Micah 4:6.) Then God gave to him a new name, Israel. Then Jacob (Israel) became strong. He became strong enough to achieve God's purposes. He completed many of the promises that God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:17-18). The nation called \*Israel came from him. God was loyal to his people. He did for them what he had promised. He achieved it by means of the \*remnant. Abraham has now become the father of many nations (Romans 4:16-17).

The \*remnant brings \*eternal life to those who believe in the \*Messiah. And it brings death to those who do not believe in him. Verses 7 and 8 are similar in one way. They show the effect that \*Israel will have on the nations. Verse 7 describes the \*remnant as \*dew and showers of rain. These are things that show God's \*eternal life and his help. They come from God in heaven. They do not wait for (expect) people to send food (or goodness) to the earth. 'Wait for' means to look towards the future. It means to expect good things to happen. It does not mean to delay. Dew and rain do not depend on people's actions. People are weak. People do not control the supply of water. It comes by means of God's action. God is good and kind. And he has all power.

In verse 8, there is a different description. Micah describes the effect that Zion's (Jerusalem's) people will have among the nations. Its people will be like a strong animal. They will break up the nations like grains of wheat (Micah 4:13). God's \*remnant among the nations will be like a lion. A lion lives among the wild animals in the forest. It is proud and fierce. The lion is like a leader among the other wild animals. The \*remnant is like a young lion. The young lion tries to find food among groups of sheep. He tears the sheep to pieces. And nobody can rescue them. This describes God's punishment. Nobody can escape from it (Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 50:22; Hosea 5:14).

This \*prophecy has a \*spiritual meaning. The things in it are happening now. And Jesus Christ's church (the people that belong to him) will see it happen completely. God is saving his people. They are like a sweet smell of \*eternal life. They are like a sweet smell because they will bring \*eternal life to people. But other people do not accept the \*eternal life that God's people bring. And so they are dying. So it is as if those other people taste a flavour (taste) of death (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). The church (people that belong to Jesus Christ) still has these two effects (\*eternal life and death) on people today. God's Holy Spirit gives power to his people. They will spread God's kingdom (rule) across the whole world.

But this \*prophecy also has a physical meaning. Jesus, God's \*Messiah, will return to this Earth. He will rule as King of \*Israel. And then all the nations will have to obey him. Before this happens, there will be a terrible time on the Earth. The most wicked people will rule by the devil's power. But Jesus will defeat them and their ruler, the devil (Revelation 19:11-16). Then Jesus' rule will begin. He will be a strong ruler (Psalm 2). He will rule with his people. And nobody will be able to oppose his rule (Zechariah 14:16-19).

**v9** You will lift your hand to strike your enemies. You will kill them all.

## Verse 9

God has given his promise in verses 7 and 8. Now Micah and the \*remnant give their answer to that message. 'You will lift your hand to strike your enemies. You will kill them all.' (Look at Isaiah 26:11.) All nations will be under the \*Messiah's rule. His rule will be over the entire world (Micah 5:4).

God's rule can cause both \*eternal life and death. He will give \*eternal life to those who obey his commands. But death will come to his enemies. Those who obey God's commands will win (Revelation 21:24-27).

## **5:10-15 God will protect his new \*spiritually clean nation**

In chapters 4 and 5, there is a message about hope. This message refers to a certain time in the future. Micah refers to the same time again here ('that day', verse 10). This is the time when the \*Messiah will win over the nations. He will bring together the \*remnant. He will regather them. They will

be under the \*shepherd from Bethlehem. Now here, after those promises, we read the words 'the \*LORD says'. (Compare Micah 4:6.) Those words refer to the certainty that these things will happen.

The message here means that God will protect \*Israel in two ways:

1) God will make \*Israel's people \*spiritually clean (verses 10-14). That will certainly happen. It will happen from the inside (verses 10-14). Yes, God will punish \*Israel's people because of their \*sins. But that is for their benefit.

2) God will punish the nations that refuse to obey him (verse 15). Because they refuse to obey, he will consider them guilty. Therefore he will punish them severely.

Each part of this message starts with these words. 'I will destroy' (verses 10-14). God will free the city from all evil things. He will destroy certain things. He will destroy them in order to make the nation \*spiritually clean. There are four types of evil thing. The people in \*Israel trust in:

1) Their own powers and strength.

2) Their military power. The people in \*Israel have trusted in that. But their certainty needs to be in God alone (verses 10-11).

3) Magic, which people used to try to discover the future (verse 12).

4) Idolatry, which means that the people trusted in false gods. And they made images of false gods (verses 13-14).

The people in \*Israel have confidence in those 4 kinds of things. But God will take away that feeling, so that they cannot be proud in those ways any longer. They were trusting in their own powers. But God will make them stop that.

**v10** The \*LORD declares what will happen in that day (at that future time). At that time I will take away your horses. I will destroy the carts that you use in war. **v11** I will destroy the cities in your country. I will pull down all your castles. **v12** You will not try to do magic any longer. Nobody will try to discover the future by that means. **v13** I will destroy your images that show false gods. I will pull down your high columns of stone. You use them to help you remember your false gods. But these things are merely objects that you have made with your hands. You will not bend your body in front of them any longer. **v14** I will destroy the poles that are called Asherah. I will destroy your false gods. I will even destroy your cities.

#### Verses 10-14

'Destroy' in the \*Hebrew language here has a special meaning. It means to remove something. And it means to make \*spiritually clean (holy) the place where it was. To destroy here means to remove by punishment. It means to remove what is unholy. In that way, God will save the nation and he will preserve it. The people in \*Israel put their confidence in their military carts and horses. They put their confidence in their strong cities and castles. God's \*covenant with \*Israel's people was that they should trust him. The nation should not trust in other helps (Psalm 20:7). There is a great danger here for us all. We still trust in cities and buildings. We trust in our own powers and strength. The result can be a belief that God is unnecessary. We think that we do not need him. That is the danger.

God's \*covenant with \*Israel's people did not allow certain practices. People used magic. They tried to find information about what would happen to them. They asked their gods about the future. But God's law said that the punishment for those acts was death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26). The people from the nations near \*Israel practised those things. Those people requested such help from their own false gods. But God did not allow his people to do that. Neither does he allow his church (the people that belong to him) to do that today (Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 21:8). God wants his people always to ask him for help. Our confidence and security should come only from our belief in God.

\*Israel's people did not need to trust other gods. But that is what the people in the nations near \*Israel did. And \*Israel's people imitated. They made their gods with their own hands. For that, they used gold, silver or other materials. They created images in wood. They made tall columns of stone. It was wrong to bend their bodies to those gods. It was wrong to pray to them. Religions use images in their ceremonies. And they sell similar images. In that way, they make large sums of money. So they build large businesses from that. Later, Paul noticed that it was happening in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-41). God does not allow such practices. The second commandment deals with this (Exodus 20:4). (A commandment means a law that God gave to

Moses on the mountain called \*Sinai.)

The tall columns of stone and the poles (or special trees) called Asherah were male and female gods. The people in the nations near \*Israel \*worshipped these two gods. These were called Baal and Asherah. And the people in \*Israel copied this evil religion. This religion included practices with sex. These happened between men and women. (They also happened between men and men. And they happened between women and women.) The people thought that these gods would give them large families and successful farms. But there was no moral goodness in the way that the people lived. A bad moral state will ruin a nation. For that reason the \*LORD said that he would destroy their cities.

All the evil things that the people near \*Israel did, the people in \*Israel did too.

**v15** Some people will not listen to me. The nations do not obey me. So I will show my anger. With great anger I will hurt them.

Verse 15

This verse is about the punishment that God will give to the foreign nations. The people in those nations have not obeyed God. Therefore he is angry with them. He will show to them his great anger. God is angry on behalf of his people, the nation called \*Israel. He will now punish \*Israel's enemies. All through time, God has protected his people. Other nations have not obeyed him. But God protects his people against those nations. A time will come when he will again use his power against those other nations. That will happen when Christ comes the second time (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Luke 18:7-8; 21:22; Revelation 6:10).

The \*Hebrew text here contains also the words for 'take vengeance'. To 'take vengeance' means that a person acts with anger against another person. He does it because that other person has hurt someone. Maybe that other person hurt the person that is now angry. Or maybe the other person hurt the angry person's relative or friend. 'Vengeance' in the Bible means something special. It is the method by which God defends his people. He wants to do good things to his people. So he punishes those people that do not obey him. He is angry with those that do not want to know him. Only God has the power really to take vengeance. Only he has the right to do it (Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30; Romans 12:19). God has the desire to help his people. And he has the power to do it. But sometimes God's people do not believe that. His people should not themselves take vengeance. To do it themselves means that they do not trust God.

## Section 3

### **6:1-7:20 Third series of \*prophecies. God will forgive the \*remnant of his people**

#### **Chapter 6**

#### **6:1-8 Micah accuses \*Israel's people because they have not obeyed the \*covenant**

The command 'Now listen' begins the third section of this book. God is speaking to \*Israel's people. The words 'what the \*LORD is saying' emphasise the importance of this message.

This message has the style of a court where people settle matters of law. It is as if God is bringing his people to court. He is accusing them. Micah is God's \*messenger. God asks Micah to speak on his (God's) behalf. God calls witnesses to the court. The witnesses are not human witnesses. Instead, the mountains and the hills act as witnesses (verse 1). Micah obeys God. He speaks on behalf of God (verse 2). In this speech by means of Micah, God asks many questions in the \*Hebrew language. He asks whether he has done any wrong thing to the people (verses 3-5). Then there is a discussion about what gift would satisfy the \*LORD (verses 6-7). It is the \*LORD who speaks last. He has told the people what he wants (verse 8). The purpose of this legal protest is not punishment. It is to bring God's people back to himself. He wants them to obey again the \*covenant that he made with them. This is a message that contains hope.

**v1** Now listen to what the \*LORD is saying. Stand up. \*Plead about your situation. \*Plead in front of the

mountains. Let the hills listen to your request. **v2** The \*LORD is arguing against his people. He is accusing them. Mountains, listen to the \*LORD's protest. Foundations (base) of the earth, hear the \*LORD. He will accuse his people. He will prove that the people in \*Israel are wrong.

### Verses 1-2

Here there is a change in the subject that Micah is writing about. Micah leaves the message about the future (which was in chapters 4-5). He returns to \*Israel's present troubles. Verses 1 and 2 are the preparation for the case in court. God tells Micah to stand up. It is God who is actually making this protest, not Micah. Micah is speaking on behalf of God. Micah calls the mountains to be God's witnesses. Verse 2 tells the reason why the \*LORD is accusing the people in \*Israel. This is the reason: \*Israel is not obeying God's \*covenant.

God calls for the witnesses, which are the mountains. He speaks about the mountains as if they were people. Mountains are like good witnesses. They are always present. It is as if they have watched events for a long time. He also calls the Earth as a witness. The earth has a strong foundation (base). It is solid. Nobody can scare the Earth! So the Earth is also like a good witness. Micah introduces God to the court. It is God who is accusing \*Israel's people. They must explain their situation in front of the mountains. The people must defend themselves while the mountains listen to them.

The mountains have always existed (after God created them). They were there as witnesses to God's original agreement. That agreement was his \*covenant with \*Israel's people. The mountains were present when God made the \*covenant. He gave it to Moses. Three times God then warned \*Israel's people. He used Moses to warn them. God warned that bad results would happen. They would happen if the people did not obey the \*covenant. Each time, God called heaven and the Earth as witnesses (Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:28). There is a similar message in the Psalms (Psalm 50:1-6). The \*prophet Ezekiel also spoke the same message (Ezekiel 36:1-8). Jesus too said that if the people did not praise God, the stones would do it (Luke 19:40).

God speaks by means of the things that he has created. The Earth and everything in it belong to him. The things that he has created are his witnesses. They always do what God orders them to do. It was different with the nations that surrounded \*Israel. Those nations made gods out of the things that God had created. They \*worshipped those things and they bent their bodies to give honour to them.

**v3** 'My people, have I done anything wrong to you? How have I made life too hard for you? Answer me.'

### Verse 3

In order to start his defence, the \*LORD asks two questions. First, he asks, 'Have I done anything wrong to you?' He tries to prove that he has not done anything wrong. The second question is 'How have I made life too hard for you?' The people in \*Israel think that they have a good explanation. They think that God's actions have not helped them. They have \*worshipped him. They have sacrificed (killed) animals to give honour to him. They have thought about what things would satisfy him. And they have done those things. But God has not accepted any efforts that they have made. So they think that they have a good reason to complain. But the truth is that \*Israel has done wrong things. So God has the right to complain.

God therefore asks the people in \*Israel to accuse him. They should say any wrong deed that he has done. But of course, God never does anything wrong. He has always been loyal to the \*covenant. But the people have not been loyal to God. He does not give a list of \*Israel's crimes and \*sins. Micah has already spoken about those. God does not record them here.

Instead, God refers to \*Israel as 'my people'. He repeats these words in verse 5. The words mean something more. They show God's great love for his people. He speaks as a father appeals to his child. God does not read out a long list of crimes. That is not his purpose. He does not say something like, 'You are always doing these things.' God makes an appeal that shows his love. He is very sad that his people do not obey him any longer.

In one letter that Paul wrote, he described God's love. 'Love does not keep a record of our wrong deeds' (1 Corinthians 13:5). God does not talk much about his people's record of wrong deeds. They have acted as his enemies rather than his friends. That is what makes God so sad. But he does not talk about that. Rather, he asks the question in the opposite way. The people have done many bad things to God. But he does not blame them. Rather he asks, 'Have I done anything wrong to you?'

The next question also shows that God loves the people. 'How have I made life too hard for you?' He may also be saying, 'You do not speak to me. You do not think about me. You have become tired of me.' Probably they do not answer him. So he shouts at them, 'Answer me!'

**v4** You were slaves in Egypt. But I rescued you. And I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam. I sent them in front of you to lead you.

#### Verse 4

God's people have not answered him. So again he accuses them. But God speaks with great love for his people. His speech is full of kindness and truth. God's purpose is to bring his people, the nation called \*Israel, back to himself. He wants them to remember his \*covenant with them. God wants his people to obey their part of the agreement. He speaks to them about two main subjects.

Firstly, God reminds his people about how he saved the \*Israelites before. This was in their early days as a nation. God brought his people out of Egypt. They had been slaves there and he freed them. God gave special leaders to his people. Moses was the chief leader. Aaron was the chief \*priest. Miriam was a female \*prophet and she was also a poet (Exodus 15:20-21).

However, at the time when Micah lived, things were different. The main problem then was that \*Israel had bad leaders. Its leaders were completely evil. The people could not respect them. Those leaders were terrible leaders. So God is asking the people to remember Moses, Aaron and Miriam. These three leaders did not just happen to be leaders. God says, 'I sent them.' He sent the leaders to go in front of the people. He sent them to lead the people. This is what God is saying by Micah's words. This is what God's message means. 'I did that at the time when Moses lived. And I can do it again now. You may be tired of your present leaders. They are not good leaders. But I can still send other men and women. They too will go in front of my people to lead them.'

God wants to remind his people about the history of the \*Israelites. He wants his people to remember the good events that have happened to them. There is value in the name of a place or person. It helps to bring back memories. In those good events God had rescued his people. He had saved them from their enemies. These memories will give a new purpose to the people. They will desire to obey God again. God had provided leaders. They were Moses, Aaron and Miriam. God used them. They went in front of the people. The people spent a long period in the desert. God helped them then. But later \*Israel did not have good leaders. (Look at Micah chapter 3.) That was not God's fault. He was still kind to them. He still gave his power to them. But the people in \*Israel did absolutely whatever they wanted to do.

**v5** My people, remember Balak the king of Moab. Remember what he planned to do to you. And remember what Balaam, Beor's son, answered him. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal. Remember those things. Then you will know that the \*LORD is right.

#### Verse 5

Secondly, God reminds them about his other wonderful deeds. These were acts that he did with great power. They happened when \*Israel was still a weak nation. God protected the people from evil political leaders. Balak, the king of Moab, was one such leader. And God protected the people from evil \*spiritual leaders such as Balaam, Beor's son. God now tells \*Israel's people to remember the time when Balak and Balaam lived. Balak, the king of Moab, fought against \*Israel's people then. He asked Balaam to \*curse \*Israel. But God would not listen to Balaam. God would not let Balaam \*curse \*Israel. The result was that God did good things for \*Israel. He rescued its people from Balak's power (Joshua 24:9-10).

Writers in the \*New Testament also mention that story about Balak and Balaam (2 Peter 2:14-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14). In the story, God spoke by means of a donkey (animal like a small horse). Then God was able to rescue the people. God is now asking that the same result might happen. He will speak by means of Micah, and then God can rescue the people. God's message to them here means this. 'At that time, the armies from Moab opposed you. Now the \*Assyrians are doing it. At that time you had a false \*prophet (Balaam). Now you have evil leaders. But I, God, remain the same. I can rescue you now. I hope that you will believe that.'

God is also reminding the people about a journey from Shittim (Numbers 22:1; Joshua 2:1; 3:1). They knew that many wonderful events had happened to them then. God had already rescued his people from Egypt. Then he helped them on the journey from Shittim to Gilgal. Shittim was on the east side of the river Jordan.

Gilgal was on the other side. It was in the new country that God had promised to \*Israel's people. They had to go through the river Jordan. But God made the river dry so that they could cross it. Then they arrived in Gilgal. So then they had entered their new country. The camp in Gilgal was their first camp in that country. In the book called Joshua, the writer tells about that period. But God's deeds do not happen only at certain times. He is always God. He acts in every age. He defeated \*Israel's enemies at that earlier time. And he will defeat their enemies now, at the time when Micah is alive.

So \*Israel's people entered their new country. This story is in Joshua chapter 3. They came to Jericho. People from many countries fought against them. With God's help, \*Israel's people defeated those other people. \*Israel won the battles. But that was not because of the military arms that its people used in the war. God won the battles on their behalf. God gave their new country to them. The people did not even have to work to get it. They did not plant the trees that gave fruit. But they ate the fruit from them (Joshua 24:11-13).

All those things remind \*Israel's people about how God has saved them in the past. What God is trying to tell them is this. He saved their families in the past. He saved their families from their troubles with Egypt and Moab. So he can do it again. He can save them from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. To remember helps them to understand. They will understand God's love for them. They can have a new relationship with him. They can see again how much he loves them. God can do the same for his servants in any age.

It is important to remember God's past deeds. The best example is in the \*New Testament. It is in the meal called the \*Lord's Supper (also called Communion). Jesus tells us to 'do this to remember me' (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26). We remember what was God's most important act among all his acts. This was his Son's death on the cross. Jesus died so that God would forgive our \*sins. We can have a real relationship with God if we invite him into our lives. The \*LORD's Supper is the time when we remember these things. First we remember, and then we share in this meal together.

**v6** The \*LORD is great and powerful. I must give great honour to him when I pray. It is not enough for me to burn an animal as a gift to him. If I offer young cows to him, my gift is too poor. **v7** But even a very wealthy man's gift does not give sufficient honour to God. The gift of a thousand sheep will not satisfy the \*LORD. Even 10 000 rivers of oil would not satisfy him.

A man's oldest son is more precious than anything else in that man's life. The man might try to offer his son to God. But this gift is not enough to pay for the man's \*sin. Even the death of that son is not sufficient payment.

#### Verses 6-7

God has reminded his people about his wonderful acts in the past. Micah speaks on behalf of God's people. He recognises that they do not obey God any longer. God's people need to understand this. They need to start obeying God again. They need to stop living as they do now. They need to start again in a new way.

These verses mention many gifts that a person might offer to God. Suppose that a wealthy person is praying to God. That person might be a king of \*Israel. He comes to God with a wrong attitude. That wealthy person should tell God that he is sorry. He should be sorry because of his \*sins. Instead, he wants to offer his wealth to God. He thinks that he will please God in that way. He thinks that God will love to hear about that person's good deeds. He thinks that he will pay God to remove his \*sins. He will pay a good price. That rich person has many animals. And he has rivers (a lot) of olive oil (oil from a fruit called an olive). He will offer them to God. The rich person thinks that such gifts will please God. And then all will be well.

That rich person hoped that God would accept those valuable gifts. The person would kill those animals and he would burn them. He would then offer them to God. Young cows that were a year old would be the best ones. Thousands of male sheep are a great quantity. Ten thousand rivers of olive oil (oil from the fruit called an olive) are a very large amount. You could not even measure it. Normally, people used that oil in small amounts only. This person intended even to kill his oldest child and he would burn the child. He would then offer the dead child to God. That is what people in the other nations did (Leviticus 18:21).

Such gifts may seem to be generous. This rich man is willing to offer all his wealth to God. This man is willing to offer even his precious child. But the man thinks that he can satisfy God by his (the man's) gifts. And this man's attitude shows that he has a wicked heart. His thoughts are about his own goodness. The man does not consider God's goodness. The man does not recognise that God is kind. The man does not understand that God loves him. This man is not aware that he must change his behaviour. He thinks that God must change. But the man himself refuses to change. He thinks that he can persuade God by all these

gifts. It would be as if he was paying a judge to help him. He thinks that God needs all this wealth. If he gives more, then that will satisfy God more. That is how he thinks. But that is an awful way to think about God.

That wrong way to think is like business. It is like a contract, an agreement that people make in business. It has rules and regulations. Yes, God has made a \*covenant with his people. But it is not about business and money. It is about one person's relationship to another person. It is about each person's relationship to God.

That wrong way was not what God wanted. This was the instruction that God gave to \*Israel. 'Listen, people in \*Israel. The \*LORD is our God. The \*LORD our God is one \*LORD. You must love the \*LORD your God. You must love him with all your heart. You must love him with all your soul (the inner part of a person which can contact God). You must love him with all your strength' (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

**v8** People, the \*LORD told you what goodness is. This is what the \*LORD wants you to do. Be fair to other people. Love kindness. Live humbly with your God.

#### Verse 8

God ordered \*Israel's people to agree to his \*covenant. So the people must do this. They must practise the deeds that are in the \*covenant. They must believe in God. The way that they live should express their belief in him. That is very important. People do not impress God when they obey the rules and traditions of religion. Even our gifts to God should only be in second place (1 Samuel 15:22). \*Israel's people were not behaving in the way that God wanted them to behave. They had no excuse because they had God's \*covenant. That showed people what was good.

Micah continues to speak to the people. In the \*Hebrew text, he uses the word 'man' to refer to them. But he means all the people. These people have tried to come to God in wicked ways. Previously Micah has accused the leaders. Now he accuses the people. They do not know how God wants people to live. But there is no excuse for that. God rescued \*Israel's people from Egypt. He saved them. He gave his \*covenant to them. And he told the \*priests to teach the people. Those instructions would pass from one age to the next age. The \*prophets also taught God's instructions. Micah repeats these here. He wants to give hope to \*Israel. The people in \*Israel need to obey God's \*covenant. Only then will the nation have peace and safety. The nation's safety depends on this. Its people must know 'what goodness is'. The \*prophets referred to this many times (Isaiah 1:17; 5:20; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 3:2). Here it can mean either 'what goodness is' or 'what is good'.

The \*prophets emphasised three examples of 'what goodness is' (Isaiah 5:7; Hosea 4:1; 6:6; 12:6; Amos 5:24). These three examples are:

- Do to your neighbour (to other people) what is fair and right. (Look at Micah chapter 3.)
- Love kindness.
- Walk humbly with your God.

This is how God's \*covenant requires people to live:

1) You must do to your neighbour (to other people) what is fair and right. \*Israel's leaders had taken things that belonged to the people. They had killed people. Their desire was to get as much as possible for themselves. And the rulers did not punish those that did these crimes (Micah 2:1-2; 3:1-3, 5-7, 9-11).

2) You must love kindness. Some people are weaker than you are. Some people are poorer than you are. You should be kind to them. You should help them. You should do that because you want to do it. You should be happy to do it.

3) You must walk (live) humbly with your God. The first two things here were what God tells men and women to do to each other. But this one is about our actions towards God. We should agree to what God wants. And we should do what God wants us to do. This does not mean that sincere \*religious activity is wrong. But it does mean that moral behaviour is more important than the rules and traditions of religion. Only when we walk humbly with our God can we practise the first two things. Jesus taught us how we should love God. And he taught us that we should do good things for our neighbours (for other people). See Mark 12:28-34.

God wants to be a friend to each person. He wants to contact each person in a personal way. He wants us to live for him. And he wants our love. God has shown to \*Israel's people what is evil. He has done that by

means of Micah's message. Now God shows to the people what is good. Previously the leaders had chosen to 'hate what is good' (Micah 3:2). They had been proud. So they were not humble. They were the opposite. The leaders had lived without God. They did not consider him important. God had no part in the way that they lived. A basic part of God's character is this. He always does what is right and fair. Also, he always loves kindness (Isaiah 30:18). God wants to express those qualities by means of his people. Those are the things that we should do. That is the good way to live.

### **6:9-16 The \*curses in the \*covenant will become true for Jerusalem's people**

God has shown to the people what goodness is. He has shown to them how he wants people to behave. But the people have refused to do what God wants. This sad message about judgement consists of these subjects:

- God is severely warning the people in Jerusalem city (verse 9)
- To use false measures is a crime (verses 10-11)
- To lie is a crime (verse 12)
- The people would suffer greatly (verse 13)
- The people would be hungry (verse 14)
- Other people will steal the crops (verse 15)
- God again accuses the people and he speaks about punishment (verse 16).

Micah begins with this sentence. 'The \*LORD shouts aloud to the city.' God's words are urgent. God orders the people to listen.

**v9** The \*LORD shouts aloud to the city. This is a serious affair. To respect your name (God's name) is wisdom. A wise person gives honour to the \*LORD's name. So give attention to the \*rod that punishes. Give attention to the person that holds that \*rod.

#### Verse 9

This message has two parts. First, Micah tells the people to listen to God. Micah says that the \*LORD is calling to the city's (Jerusalem's) people. Then Micah adds his own thought. He says, 'To respect your name (God's name) is wisdom.' He knows that 'to respect the \*LORD is the beginning of wisdom' (Psalm 111:10). Secondly, God speaks to the people by means of Micah. God tells the nation called Judah to listen. The people from Judah are gathering in the city. They come there to meet with God in the \*Temple. They also come to do business. In verses 10-12, Micah accuses them about evil behaviour in their businesses. God will punish them because of those matters. Their businesses will suffer economic loss.

God made rules (the \*covenant) with his people, \*Israel. The Book of Deuteronomy clearly states this. The \*covenant describes the relationship between God and his people. The people should always listen to (obey) God. This was the purpose of the \*covenant. The people should hear God's commands and then they should obey them. 'The \*LORD let you hear his voice from heaven. He did it so that he could give a strong message to you. He told you that you should not do wrong things any longer. On earth, he let you see his great fire. He spoke to you from it' (Deuteronomy 4:36).

God had spoken to his people. Then they understood his \*covenant. They understood that they benefited from it greatly. Micah looks back to an earlier time. Moses and \*Israel's people were in the desert. It was important for them to hear God's voice. The people understood that they needed to obey God. (Look at Deuteronomy 5:26.) They understood how important that was. When God spoke, there was only one choice. Either the people obeyed or they did not obey. When they obeyed, all would go well. Happy and pleasant things would happen to them. When the people did not obey, the results would be terrible. They would suffer many \*curses. There would be so many \*curses that the people could not even count them. (Look at Deuteronomy 28:1-68.)

The people in Jerusalem had not obeyed God. So it was certain that they would suffer the \*curses. That is what Micah would tell them in verse 13-15. When God gave them commands, they should respect him greatly. That was good wisdom. It was very important to their economy. Micah refers to a \*rod. One can hit people with this \*rod. That is a way to punish people. Isaiah uses the word '\*rod' in the same way. He calls the army from Assyria 'the \*rod of my anger' (Isaiah 10:5). So the '\*rod' is something that God uses. He uses

it to punish his people.

**v10-11** Some bad people still steal from other people. And those bad people hide their wealth. They still measure quantities in smaller baskets than they should use. That makes me angry. They still weigh things by false means. In their bags, people still have objects to measure weight wrongly. Yes, they are still cheating people in those ways. All those bad things are still happening. So I cannot consider these people as innocent.

Verses 10-11

This was a message to the people that did business in the city. It was a message about evil behaviour in business. Good business is not just about how to increase profits. That was how the people in business understood it. But when people obey God's commands, the result is a genuinely good business.

God accuses Jerusalem's people about their evil behaviour in business. They are using false means to measure quantities of goods. They are using false means to weigh goods. That is opposite to the way in which they should behave. They should act rightly. They should love kindness (verse 8). It was very important to measure things by the correct method. It was very important to weigh things correctly. The laws on these things were very strict in \*Israel. There were laws on correct lengths, weights and quantities (Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Ezekiel 45:10). The king and his officials had decided what were the correct standards (2 Samuel 14:26).

Merchants often used too small an object to measure a particular weight. In that way, they cheated the customer. The customer would then pay more for fewer goods. Those merchants were wicked. That was how God saw it. They were wicked because they did not measure weights and quantities in an honest way.

Wicked people still use wicked methods to weigh things and to measure quantities. They still cheat people. Micah is speaking on God's behalf. In the \*Hebrew text, he asks some questions. People use baskets to measure particular quantities. Micah asks whether those baskets are still the wrong size. People used to hide the wealth that they gained by these methods. Micah asks whether they still do that. In their bags, people carry special objects to measure particular weights. But those objects still have the wrong weights. Micah then asks whether God should consider such people as innocent. Those are important questions. In business, people should be fair and kind. But those people were guilty of wicked acts. Perhaps God might have chosen not to notice those things. But then the people would say, 'He approves of our wicked behaviour.' When people are wicked, God cannot fail to notice it. Neither can he just forget it. He is the God who is fair. And he wants people to be fair too.

**v12** Rich people in that city are still cruel. The people in that city still tell lies. Yes, those people tell their lies.

Verse 12

The rich people in the city are still cruel. These rich people include the royal family. They include military leaders. They include people that own land. The rich leaders in the city still tell lies. They have a lot of responsibility in the courts. But they use their power wrongly. They accuse people falsely. They make wrong judgements. They deal badly with the poor people. They change the laws. They use the laws to gain their own advantage. These matters are very serious. They are especially serious to Micah and the \*prophets. People were so wicked that it might affect the whole nation. It might affect how the whole nation lived. It might even affect the world.

At first, there may be only a few cruel people. But their cruelty causes trouble for everyone. At first, maybe just a few people are not honest and they tell lies. Then many other people will act in the same way. They have to act in this way merely to stay alive. Then people do not trust each other any longer. They cannot believe that anybody else is telling the truth.

Similar events are happening in our world today. Methods in business become more and more cruel. Employers do not trust their workers. Workers do not trust their employers. Many people lose their jobs. It happens at difficult times. It happens when they need money in order to look after their families. People become desperate. People do not trust each other. There are more arguments in court than there were before. Those arguments become more complex than before. Then people need more lawyers. They need to pay the lawyers. And perhaps they do not even care whether the lawyers are honest. Cruelty in business creates fear. And fear creates a situation where everyone tells lies. These messages from the \*prophets are

important today. The people in the world still need to hear them.

**v13** Therefore I will also punish you. I will make you sick. I will ruin you because of your \*sins. **v14** You will eat, but it will not satisfy you. So you will always be hungry. You will store things, but people will destroy those things. If you save anything, people with swords will take it from you. **v15** You will sow your seeds, but you will not gather a harvest. You will try to squeeze oil from the fruit that usually gives oil. But you will not get any oil for your own use. You will squeeze your fruit from which you make wine. But you will not get enough juice. You will not have wine to drink.

Verses 13-15

Micah begins to make it clear how the people's \*sins in \*Israel will affect everyone. The people are guilty of various crimes. God makes his decisions. The punishments will suit (match) the crimes. Other people will plough Jerusalem like a field. They will ruin it. It will become a heap of rubbish (Micah 3:12). That will happen because \*Israel's people have \*sinned so much. The punishment will last for a long time.

These punishments have a connection with each another. They have a connection with the evil behaviour in the city's businesses (Deuteronomy 28:16-19). First, God will make each person sick.

God now tells the people what the punishments will be. He gives a list of the different types of illnesses and other troubles.

- You will eat, but it will not satisfy you. Your stomach will still be empty.
- You will store up goods, but you will lose everything.
- You will have various kinds of illnesses.
- You will sow your seeds, but you will not harvest crops from them.

God could also say this to them. 'You will remember that I (God) told you about these terrible events. You have a record of them in Deuteronomy chapter 28. You have not obeyed the \*covenant. You have not obeyed its laws. I warned you about what would happen.' (Look at Leviticus 26:23-26; Deuteronomy 28:15, 18.)

The last trouble that God refers to is the bad harvest. The people will lose their crops too. That will also be a result of the \*curses in the \*covenant (Leviticus 26:16; Deuteronomy 28:40, 51).

God mentions three types of crops here. They were important to society, because people used them every day as food and drink. They were God's gifts (Hosea 2:8). Those crops were also important because people used them for \*religious purposes. They used them in the \*Temple. They used grain to produce bread and cakes. People used oil in food. They used it on their bodies. People burned oil to give light. They used it as medicine. Wine, which people made from a special fruit, was precious. People used it for special events. But they also used it as an ordinary drink. A \*curse on those things would bring bad results. It would badly affect the markets. The economy would suffer. Finally that \*curse would destroy the economy. God had warned \*Israel's people about all these punishments. These would happen when the people did not obey God's \*covenant.

**v16** You have obeyed Omri's laws. Ahab's family has done wicked things. And you have done the same. Therefore I will ruin you. Now I will kill you and I will destroy your property. Then the people from every nation will laugh at you. They will insult you. The other nations will bring you shame. You will have to suffer that.

Verse 16

The important people in Jerusalem wanted to make profit. That was their main aim in everything that they did. In order to make profit, they had been cruel to people. The result was that everyone had become afraid. People did not speak the truth any longer. Nobody would believe anything that other people said. The people had chosen to \*worship other gods. They had followed the laws that Omri and Ahab (earlier wicked kings of \*Israel) had followed. That meant that the people did not \*worship the real God any longer. They had stopped \*worshipping him completely. Instead they had chosen to \*worship Baal. Baal was a false god whom the other nations \*worshipped.

Again God accuses the people in Jerusalem city. He says that he will punish them. Micah mentions two kings of \*Israel (the northern nation) by name. In Micah's messages this is the only verse where he does

that. Those kings lived more than a century before Micah. God accuses Jerusalem's people. He says that they have done the same \*sins as Omri. Omri was a wicked king (1 Kings 16:25). His son Ahab was even more wicked. Ahab cheated people. He stole their property (1 Kings chapter 21). Ahab married Jezebel. She \*worshipped Baal. Ahab copied his wife and he too \*worshipped Baal. When people were \*worshipping false gods like that, the people did terrible things. For example, they performed wrong practices in connection with sex. Their wicked practices had many forms. People even killed their children. Then they offered them to another false god called Moloch. That happened in \*Israel (the northern nation) for many years. Omri and Ahab had not been kings of \*Judah (the southern nation). So they did not even rule Jerusalem. But the people in Jerusalem were imitating the wicked behaviour of the people from \*Israel.

The leaders in business, law and politics have copied those practices. Therefore God will ruin them. They will become very fearful and anxious. The other nations will cause terror to \*Israel's people. All the nations will laugh at them (Deuteronomy 28:37). \*Israel should have become like a light to the other nations. That was God's original intention. Now the other nations will hate \*Israel. The \*prophet Jeremiah spoke about these things (Lamentations 2:15-16).

The word 'therefore' means that God can make no other choice. The wages for \*sin is death. That is true for all people who \*sin. But there is good news. God gives a gift to his people. It is free. That gift is \*eternal life which will never end, by Christ Jesus our \*Lord (Romans 6:23).

God will punish Jerusalem's people. Jerusalem is called 'the city where there is peace'. Its name means that. God ordered the people to pray that Jerusalem would have peace (Psalm 122:6-7). But they looked elsewhere for peace and safety. The people thought that other gods would help them. They imagined that wealth would give them security. They spent their wealth on themselves. We can find peace only in Jesus, who is called the Prince of Peace. That is the truth.

## Chapter 7

In this chapter, Micah continues to describe the situation in Jerusalem. But in his vision (dream), Micah seems to see even further into the future. He writes about a time when people become even more evil. In fact, it seems that nobody good remains. Everyone is a thief and a murderer. And God is ready to punish them all.

This \*prophecy might refer to the time when the army from Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. People had become very wicked then. They could not avoid God's punishment for their evil deeds.

But the \*prophecy may refer to an even later time. Jesus said that people would become very evil in the future. And he referred to this chapter when he explained this (Matthew 10:35-39; Luke 12:53).

The Bible describes a terrible time which will happen before Jesus' return. Jesus spoke about that time in Mark chapter 13. And in Mark 13:12, Jesus seemed to refer to Micah 7:5-6. But that terrible time will not last for a long time. God will act (Revelation 19:11-21). He will punish wicked people and their ruler (that is, the devil). And then God will rule as king.

Micah saw also what would happen after the time of punishment. He saw that God would rule his people in the end. Then people would rebuild Jerusalem. But it would not be like the old Jerusalem. The government would be fair. The nations would give honour to God. And the people would be grateful because God is so kind.

Micah has warned us about many things. But in the end, his book is not a sad book. It finishes with a song about success.

### 7:1-7 Jerusalem's social structures will break apart

v1 I am very sad. I am like those that gather late fruit. I am like people that pick grapes (fruit that people use to make wine). They are looking for grapes after the main harvest. But no grapes remain to eat. There are no early figs (sweet fruit), which I love.

Verse 1

Micah had spoken to the people that 'lie on their beds'. They 'make their evil plans' there (Micah 2:1). He had spoken about the awful things that would happen. Now these terrible things will soon happen. That upsets Micah. He starts to weep. He is very unhappy. Sad, strong feelings are in Micah's heart. He feels strongly for the people. Micah says that God looks for good honest officials in Jerusalem. But he cannot find

any good officials. (We read more about that in Micah 7:2-4.) It is like a person who is looking for fruit. But that person cannot find any good fruit.

Here Micah speaks God's thoughts. He writes a story about God. In the story, God is like a poor person. He enters a \*vineyard. It is just after the main time when people harvest fruit. God hopes to gather a little fruit to eat, after the main harvest. But he cannot find any fruit, although he could usually expect to find some. Usually there always remained a few grapes (fruit that people use to make wine). And there were also a few figs (sweet fruit). The farmer left them on the sides of the field. There was a law about that, in order to provide for poor people. It allowed them to gather the fruit. But the law did not allow farmers to go back to the field a second time. They should not remove the small groups of fruit that remained. They had to leave just a little for poor people (Leviticus 19:9-10).

**v2** There are no loyal people on the Earth any longer. Nobody is honest. Every person is waiting to kill someone. It is as if each man hunts his brother with a net. **v3** They do evil things with both hands. They are clever at it. The ruler demands gifts. Powerful people declare what they want, with absolute authority. So they make plans together. Judges accept money to cheat in court. Important leaders do not make fair decisions. They do whatever they want to do. **v4** Even the best leader is cruel. The most honest leader is terrible. It would be better to walk into a hedge with \*thorns than to meet those men. Your \*prophets said that this day would come. Now it is here. Guards have warned people. Everyone is confused. The day when God visits you has come. It is the time when God punishes you.

#### Verses 2-4

The \*vineyard in verse 1 refers to the nation called \*Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:8-16). The fruit refers to good men and women. These are the ones that obey God's \*covenant. They obey God's moral laws. But there are no loyal people any longer. People hide from each other. They try to make each other fall into a trap. It is as if each man hunts his brother with a net (Psalm 10:8-9). It seems that everyone is completely bad.

Perhaps there used to be some good people in the city. But the wicked people have affected them. The city's people in general have become wicked. By God's standards, all the people are bad. And all people today are bad. Paul speaks about that in the letter that he wrote to the Christians at Rome (Romans 3:9-26). We see this in Romans 3:23 especially. God is completely good and holy. Not one person is like him. Nobody is anywhere near as good as he is. All people have \*sinned. Nobody reaches his standards. Nobody is good enough to reach them.

Micah now names the crimes that people do. He speaks about the wicked judges. They change their decisions in the courts. They take money for that. The law is very strict about such payments. Such payments are called 'bribes' (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 10:17; 16:19; 27:25).

The leaders do not merely ask the people for money. They force them to pay. The important leaders do not make good and fair decisions. They do whatever they want to do. 'Both hands' (the judges and the king) are experts in how to do evil things. They choose not to punish this evil behaviour. The great man speaks aloud the evil desire that is in his heart. These rulers make their evil plans together. They spend time in each other's company. And together, they plot cruelty, murder and other wicked acts.

A bush with \*thorns causes pain and injury. And even the best official is like a bush with \*thorns. The judges do not act fairly. They do not give fair decisions. The judges are separate from the people. It is as if sharp \*thorns keep them apart. A poor person might try to get help from a judge. But the judge will not care about that person's request. Micah said that God had looked for a little fruit in the orchard (land where people grow fruit). But God had found nothing. Even the best ruler is like a hedge that has \*thorns. You try to get past him. But the \*thorns will hurt you. Even the best ruler among them is wicked. He is like a sharp point (\*thorn) that grows on a bush. A \*thorn hurts people. And that ruler only causes trouble. He does not help the people.

Some people suffer from similar problems in today's society. The purpose of the law should be to reward good people and to punish bad people. But sometimes it is not like that. The legal system can seem like an enemy. It may not help people. Instead, it may hurt them. A bush with \*thorns hurts people. The legal system can seem to have a similar effect. Also, it may only benefit wealthy people. And it may make ordinary people suffer.

God has accused \*Israel. He has given his judgement about them. Now he will soon send punishment to them. The officials in a city used to appoint guards who would stand on the city's walls. Their job was to

warn about possible danger (Isaiah 21:6). To warn people, they made a loud sound with special instruments. The \*prophets in \*Israel had a similar job. God gave that task to Micah (Micah 2:6; 3:8). Amos had a similar task (Amos 5:18-20). But the nation took no notice of its \*prophets. Micah says, 'Your \*prophets said that this day would come.' Now God will visit the people. This means that God will punish them. God will use the nation's enemies to carry out the punishment. He will cause confusion and terror in \*Israel.

This visit from God will have terrible effects on the people. They will be afraid. They will be confused. God will ask important questions. And the people will not know what to say. (See Micah 6:3).

**v5** Do not trust your neighbour. Do not trust a friend. Do not even speak freely with your wife. Be careful about your words. **v6** Sons refuse to respect their own fathers. Daughters oppose their own mothers. A woman hates her husband's mother. Your family is now your enemy.

#### Verses 5-6

There will be failure in the nation's social relationships. It will happen soon. Isaiah describes these events well (Isaiah 3:4-5). Micah gives a list of the different relationships in society. They are between neighbours and friends. They are between husbands, wives and children. You can expect arguments with neighbours and friends. You can expect to have troubles there. But sometimes it happens in the family. Then it is difficult to know what to do. You do not know where to go for help.

Soon the \*Assyrians will attack Jerusalem. There will be awful terror. There will be little food. Life will become extremely difficult. Each person will make his or her own plans. Relationships between people will break down. A husband will make plans to try to protect himself. But even his wife will not know his plans. He will hide them from her. If she discovered the plans, she would use the information for her own advantage. She would use it to save herself. That is what the husband would be afraid of. The important thing for each person would be to stay alive. Nobody would care about anyone else.

Those events will greatly affect the relationships in marriages and families. These relationships are between husbands and wives. They are between sons and fathers. They are relationships between daughters and mothers. They are between daughters and their husbands' mothers. Each person will become an enemy against the other person. Each person will have only one thought in mind. That is to stay alive.

These things will happen between members of families. Each person will care chiefly about how to save his or her life. When Jesus came, it brought the same difficulties (Matthew 10:35-39; Luke 12:53). Jesus' statement was true about any person who became his companion and friend. A member of that person's own family might actually become his or her enemy.

Micah was describing the troubles in a nation because of a terrible war. But we can see similar troubles even in countries where there is no war. In modern society, law and government have failed in many ways. The things that Micah taught are also true today. Sons hate their fathers. Daughters have quarrels with their mothers. Daughters quarrel with their husbands' mothers. A husband may not be successful in his marriage. He may be unkind to his wife. Then his wife may blame his mother for those things. She may say that his mother trained him badly in his childhood. She blames his mother for his behaviour. Many failures in marriage are the result of such arguments. They can happen thousands of times in a nation. The results are terrible.

The nation's \*sin caused troubles in people's families. That was true at the time when Micah was alive. And it is the same today. There are problems in marriage. Husbands and wives do not remain loyal to each other. The result is often divorce. Each person may then have another marriage. This affects the children that are born in the marriages. The children do not feel safe. Sometimes this affects their behaviour. Divorce causes social problems. And it causes economic problems.

Micah writes about an earlier time. Religion caused little difference in the way that people lived at that time. Micah told the people what God expected from them. Micah told them to be fair. He told them to be kind. Micah told the people to be humble (Micah 6:8). God wants Christians to behave in the same way today. Society is similar today to how it was in that earlier time. Rulers and people alike deal badly with other people. People do not forgive each other for their faults. People are proud. They are selfish. Their wrong moral behaviour has a huge effect on the nation's social relationships and economic business. But if we are Christians, we should live humbly. And we should trust God all the time. We need to live by God's rules. Then our lives can start to benefit our homes, our society and even our world.

Governments look for answers to those problems. They have many political solutions. Micah speaks to us

about the true answer. 'People, the \*LORD told you what goodness is. This is what the \*LORD wants you to do. Be fair to other people. Love kindness. Live humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8). God has given to us his rules about good behaviour. He has told us how to live. Most people seem to have made a wrong choice. They have decided that they do not need God. They think that they do not need to obey his rules. They think that they can do better than God. Everywhere we see the results of their philosophy. There is confusion and fear in every village, town and city.

**v7** But in my case, I watch because I hope for the \*LORD. I will wait for God to save me. My God will hear me.

Verse 7

Micah changes his mood here. Before, he was bringing bad news. Now he speaks his own thoughts. Micah says 'But in my case'. He forgets about the bad news now. He is confident. Previously, Micah spoke about punishment (verse 4). Now he trusts in God's \*salvation. God will save both Micah and the \*remnant. There are three ways in which he trusts God.

1) Micah looks for help from the \*LORD. He continues to wait for help from God. It is his normal practice. He will watch with hope.

2) Then Micah waits for God's \*salvation. He knows that the \*LORD will save him. God will also save the \*remnant. These people still trust God. They trust in God's \*covenant (verse 20). God made that \*covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7; 17:19). The army from Assyria would soon defeat the people in \*Israel. God would scatter the people to the nations round them. But one day, God's people would return as a nation. God gave that promise to the \*Israelites by means of Moses (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). Micah will wait for God confidently.

3) Micah says, 'My God will hear me.' He knows that. It is God who gives strength to Micah. And it is God who helps him. But God will not answer the guilty leaders of the city (Micah 3:4).

Micah does not give up hope. He is not miserable. He knows that God will do what he (God) has promised to do. So Micah is waiting for the \*LORD to act. The writers of the \*Psalms often speak about that (Psalm 38:15; 130:5). Micah is confident. He knows that God will save him. God will save his people too. They need to wait patiently for God to act. They will also pray that he will make his promises come true.

## **7:8-20 The Song about Success**

Micah ends the book in a special way. He uses words in the form of a song. The song starts with a declaration that shows confidence (verse 8). It has three main parts:

1. The people in Jerusalem confess their \*sin. They declare their belief in the \*LORD. They declare it to their enemies (verses 8-10). In the \*Hebrew in these verses, it is as if Jerusalem (with its people) is a lady. And it is as if the enemy, too, is female. (This is because the \*Hebrew names for them are female. Look at the notes on this verse.)

2. Micah gives a promise to Jerusalem's people. Jerusalem will become like a field that has sheep in it. Its people will be like the sheep and the \*LORD will be their \*shepherd. The world will suffer God's punishment. \*Israel's people will help the other nations. They will show to the other nations how to have a right relationship with God. The other nations are now God's enemies. But in the future, they will be able to become his friends (verses 11-13).

3. The third section consists of prayer. These events will give to \*Israel new confidence in God (verses 14-17).

The book ends with a declaration of thanks to God. The people praise God because of his immense power. He can remove (forgive) all their \*sins. It is as if he would throw those \*sins into the sea. He can make all his promises become true. He will act again as he acted with Abraham. He also dealt like that with the nation's other heroes (verses 18-20).

**v8** Do not laugh at me, my enemy. Although I have fallen, I will rise. Although I sit in darkness, the \*LORD will be my light. **v9** I \*sinned against the \*LORD. So he was angry with me. But he will argue on my behalf in court. He will do the things that are right for me. Then he will bring me out into the light. And I will see that he is right. **v10** But my enemies will see this. They will be ashamed. They had said to me, 'The \*LORD, your God is of no use to you!' At that time, I will laugh at them. Even now, people will

walk over them as if they are mud in the streets.

#### Verses 8-10

The words 'I' and 'me' here refer to the people in Jerusalem. In the \*Hebrew language, those words are female. That is because the name 'Jerusalem' is female in that language. Therefore it is as if Jerusalem, with her people, is a lady ('I' and 'me'). The word for Nineveh (the city which was the capital of Assyria) is also female. But Micah does not mention the enemy's name. It may mean Micah's personal enemies. It may mean a nation. It may mean people from Nineveh in Assyria (verse 12). So it means the enemies that opposed Jerusalem.

Now Jerusalem is in darkness. Its people's enemies surround the city. The enemies are waiting to attack. It is as if Jerusalem's people are in prison (Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:9). That is how it seems to them. The \*LORD has promised always to be with \*Israel's people. (Look at verses 7 and 20.) The \*LORD will be the people's light. (In other words, he will show the truth to his people.) He will free them from their prison. The people in Jerusalem tell their enemies not to be glad. One day, things will be different.

The people in Jerusalem have \*sinned. That is the reason for their present state. The \*LORD is angry with them. They confess their \*sin. They know that God is always right. He will always act in the right way. So it is right that God should punish Jerusalem's people. Micah agrees with that. He is willing to suffer the punishment. It will last only for a certain time. He is sure about that. Then the people in Jerusalem will have suffered the punishment for their \*sin (Isaiah 40:2).

It is as if God will defend Jerusalem's people in court. He will be their lawyer. Once, he was the lawyer that accused them (Micah 6:1). But the situation will change. 'He will do the things that are right for me' (verse 9). God will bring \*Israel's people out into the light. (In other words, he will show the truth to his people.) They will see (know) that he is completely right. Many years ago, God made a \*covenant with \*Israel's people. God is making real the promises of the \*covenant. People will understand how God does things. And they will understand how he wants them to live.

The enemies of Jerusalem's people insulted them. The enemies said, 'You are in trouble. Your God is of no use to you! He cannot help you now' (Psalm 42:3; Joel 2:17; Isaiah 36:19). The armies from Assyria later surrounded Jerusalem. Their chief officer spoke to the people. He tried to make them oppose their leaders. He tried to persuade them not to listen to their leaders. The story about that is in Isaiah 36:1-37:38. Jesus later suffered in the same way. It was when he was hanging on the cross. People insulted him then (Matthew 27:42-43).

Then the people's enemies will see that God is right. The enemies will be greatly ashamed. 'At that time I will laugh at them.' 'People will walk over them.' It will be as if people are walking over mud. The mud is in the streets. It means that people will defeat the enemy completely. It is right for God to punish Jerusalem's people. But it is also right for him to punish their enemies. The punishment that the enemies receive will be very much greater.

Whoever the enemy here may be, the chief enemy is 'your enemy the devil' (1 Peter 5:8). We can say a similar thing to him as Micah says. 'Although I have fallen, I will rise. Although I sit in darkness, the \*LORD will be my light' (verse 8). Micah does not say that he will never fail. He knows that he will fail. But God will always rescue him. Micah sees what really happens to people. He sees it as it is. He knows that good things will not always happen. There will be difficult periods. There will be darkness (trouble). But God himself will be like a light to Micah. God will show Micah what to do.

We can win over the darkness (that is, over the power of God's enemy). The important thing is that we agree with God's truth. Like Micah, we must say, 'I \*sinned against the \*LORD.' We must not make excuses. We must not blame God. Micah has no doubt about \*sin's results. He understands that \*sin is against God. He knows that God will defeat \*sin and the devil in the end. Micah says, 'But my enemies will see this. They will be ashamed. At that time, I will laugh at them' (verse 10).

**v11** The time to rebuild your walls will come. The time to extend your borders is coming. **v12** At that time, people will come back to your country. They will come to you from Assyria. And they will come from Egypt's cities. They will come even from Egypt and from the River Euphrates. They will come from Babylonia and they will come from everywhere else. They will come from sea to sea. And they will come from mountain to mountain. **v13** However, the Earth will become like a desert because of its inhabitants. It will be the result of what these people have done.

### Verses 11-13

Micah has spoken about his belief in God. He now speaks a message about hope. This part of the song has two sections. First, the other nations will enter inside the walls of Jerusalem (verses 11-12). Secondly, God will punish the people that are still elsewhere on the Earth. That will be the result of their \*sins (verse 13).

'The time' (or 'that time') appears three times in verses 11 and 12. It refers to a time in the future. It also refers to the future state of the world. It is a time when the people in Zion (Jerusalem) will rebuild their walls. The 'walls' here do not mean walls that protect the city. They are not the same as the walls of a castle. They will include walls of \*vineyards. They will include walls that people build for sheep. Those walls protect the sheep to keep them safe. Jerusalem will be like such a place where sheep will be safe. The other nations will be like the sheep. There will be enough space there for all the sheep (the nations) to enter (verse 12). They will find safety there. The sheep (the nations) will be under the King's (God's) protection. He will also be their \*shepherd.

Then, people will come from all over the earth. The nations that live round \*Israel have always been its people's enemies. People will come even from those countries. They will come from Assyria, which is in the north-east. They will come from Egypt, which is in the south-west. (Look at Psalm 87; Hebrews 12:22.) Verse 12 refers to geography. It refers to countries and it also refers to nature. People will come from sea to sea. And they will come from mountain to mountain. They will come from all over the world. In the \*Hebrew text, the word 'come' refers to one person only. It gives the idea that each person has a choice. Each person must choose whether or not to come. Micah does not refer to all the people from all the nations. He refers to separate persons that come from all nations.

People will come from between Egypt and the River Euphrates. Here Micah reminds us about what the \*LORD had promised to \*Israel's people earlier. The \*LORD had declared definitely what the boundaries of their country would be (Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; Deuteronomy 11:24). In verse 12, Micah also reminds us about an earlier time. It was a time when similar things happened. It was among the best periods that \*Israel's people lived in. It was when Solomon was the king (1 Kings 4:21, 25).

Micah has spoken before about a special time in the future (Micah 4:1). And in this song, he returns to that subject again. Many \*prophets wrote about the time when God would rule the Earth. And people from all nations would \*worship God in Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:1-14; Zechariah 14:16; Revelation 21:24-26). Verse 12 may also refer to the new Jerusalem that will come down from heaven one day. (Look at Hebrews 12:22-24; John 17:2; Acts 3:25; 2 Corinthians 6:2.)

The people that God has chosen will include not only \*Jews. It will also include people that are not \*Jews. God sent the \*Jews into the other nations. But the \*Jews will return. The people that are not \*Jews will also be there. They will find their \*salvation inside Zion (Jerusalem). All people that look for God will find him there.

But the rest of the Earth will become like a desert. Very little food will grow on the land there. It is because many people have done many wicked things. This will be the time when, at last, God punishes them (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 20:11-15).

**v14** So rule your people with your \*rod. Rule the crowd of people that belongs to you. These people live alone in the woods. They live up on the mountain called Carmel. They live in pleasant fields. Let them eat in Bashan and Gilead. Let it be as it was many years ago. **v15** God says, 'I did many wonderful deeds when I took you out of Egypt. I will let you see more deeds like those.' **v16** The nations will see those wonderful things. They will be ashamed. They will see that their power is nothing. It is nothing when one compares it with mine. They will be greatly surprised. They will put their hands over their mouths. Their ears will become deaf. **v17** They will lick the dust (use their tongues to take up dust) like snakes. They will be like animals that crawl on the ground. They will come out of the places where they have hidden. And they will tremble as they come out. They will shake because they will be afraid of the

\*LORD God. They will be afraid because of you.

#### Verse 14-17

Because of those things that he has just described, Micah prays to the \*LORD. He asks the \*LORD to look after his people. Those people include \*Jews. And they include people that are not \*Jews (Acts 15:16-18; Ephesians 1:3-4). The \*rod is the \*shepherd's \*rod. It also means a king's authority. A \*shepherd usually used a \*rod to keep his sheep together. He used it to stop them running away. The \*rod means punishment (Proverbs 13:24). But the \*rod can also give safe protection to people. The \*shepherd also used it when he went to find food for his sheep. God is called the Good \*Shepherd (Psalm 23; 100:3). The sheep mean his own people. They belong to him. They are his possessions. God is the \*Shepherd of \*Israel's people and he is also their King.

In verse 14, God's people live alone in the woods. All round them are green fields. That place is like a garden in a forest. Many years ago the \*Israelites had entered the country that God had promised to them. Bashan and Gilead were the first places that God gave to them (Numbers 21:33). Wonderful things happened during that period. Those towns were east from the river called Jordan. The fields there were green. The people produced plenty of food there. Bashan was famous for its large trees (Isaiah 2:13). It had healthy animals. The people fed them well (Deuteronomy 32:14). Gilead was famous for its good and pleasant fields (Numbers 32:1, 26). It was on the middle of the mountain called Carmel. Carmel is like a garden. The name Carmel is the \*Hebrew word for garden. That time was a good time in which to live.

Micah's prayer to God is an urgent one. He prays that God will bring back those original benefits. The other nations would live on land that was a desert. But \*Israel would live in safety. The people would have plenty of food and good things. They would live apart from their enemies. It would be like that good period a long time ago. It would be similar to when they lived in Bashan and Gilead. It would also be like the holy city. That was the wonderful city that John saw. He saw it come down from heaven (Revelation 21:10-22:5). However, the people would need a strong leader.

For the \*Jews, the names Bashan and Gilead have a special meaning. Those names refer to the land that belonged to the \*Jews earlier (Micah 2:2; Numbers 26:55-56). They produced crops on that land. It provided them with enough food. Today God gives to his people something new, which satisfies them even more than food. That new thing is \*eternal life in Christ. It lasts always. Jesus is called the good and great \*shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). He said that he had other sheep (other people) too. He will bring his sheep (his people) from all over the world. There will be one great crowd of them. \*Jews will be there. And people that are not \*Jews will be there (John 10:16). Jesus will gather them as his possessions.

God promises to answer Micah's prayer. In verse 15, God first looks back to an earlier time. He reminds Micah about past events. God has done many wonderful things a long time ago. There was the time when the \*Israelites were in Egypt. The people who lived in Egypt dealt badly with them there. Then God rescued the \*Israelites from Egypt. He made a way for them through the Red Sea. He kept them safe in the desert. Then the \*Israelites crossed the river called Jordan. They won battles against many other nations, although those nations were much stronger than the \*Israelites. In verse 16, God then looks forward into the future. He promises that those kinds of events will happen again many times. The people will see similar wonderful deeds. Even more extraordinary things will happen in a future time.

The next two verses (16-17) link very much with verse 10. Micah thinks about the promises that God has made. God will do extraordinary things. Not only the people in Assyria will see those things. All nations will see what God has done. They will be ashamed. The nations (except \*Israel) will realise that their own gods are false gods. They will learn not to trust in human power. They will understand how foolish that is. They will lay their hands on their mouths. This means that they will be quiet. Also, they will not be able to hear. They will see God perform those extraordinary things. Before, they were laughing at \*Israel. But in the future they will stop that, as we have read in verse 10. Before, they were proud of themselves. But now they will not be proud any longer. They will not listen to stupid arguments. They will respect the \*LORD very greatly.

The other nations will give up their power. Their kings will lose their battles. They will 'lick the dust' (take up dust with their tongues). 'Lick the dust' means something special in the Bible. For example, maybe a king has lost a battle. He will crawl to the king that has defeated him. He will lie down in front of that other king (Psalm 44:25). He will lie down because he will be afraid of that other king. It will be the same for all the nations except \*Israel. Those nations will come to the \*LORD in great fear. They will crawl out of the places where they have hidden like snakes (Genesis 3:14, 15). In other words, they will come out of their strong castles. The nations will

tremble in front of the \*LORD. They will realise that they have no power. 'Lick the dust' describes their actions. The nations will want to \*worship the \*LORD.

Those people live in places that are like castles. They feel safe there. They think that someone is protecting them from danger. There, people try to hide from God. Those places also mean human pride (when people are proud about their own goodness). Those places mean human security. But God will cause those false places to fail. And people will see that God has caused these problems. Then they will be afraid. People will be afraid 'because of you (God)'. Their fear will make them ask the \*LORD for help.

Also another \*prophet, Isaiah, said that those things would happen (Isaiah 45:14-25). Moses said the same. Wonderful things happened when the \*Israelites left Egypt. Moses and the other \*Israelites sang a song about those things then. It is called Moses' song (Exodus 15:1-18).

Wonderful things happened also when the \*Lord Jesus came to the Earth. He died and he rose again from death. When he did that, he defeated the devil completely. One day, the nations will learn to respect him very greatly. The nations will see that Jesus Christ is the King. He is the King over all other kings. He is the \*Lord over all other \*lords. There is a song about Jesus' success too. It is called the Lamb's (Jesus') song. In heaven, people will sing both Moses' song and the Lamb's (Jesus') song (Revelation 15:3-4). ('Lamb' means a young sheep, and here 'the Lamb' is a special name for Jesus.)

**v18** There is no other God like you! You take away people's shame. Only a few people remain from those that you have chosen. You forgive their \*sin. You are kind and you enjoy that. You are glad to have pity. You will not stay angry for always.

#### Verse 18

Micah's book now ends. In this verse, he describes our wonderful God. The people sing a final song to praise God. God gives the words of this song to them. The song starts with the words 'There is no other God like you.' Micah has told them that the \*LORD is like a light in the darkness (verses 8-10). The \*LORD is like a \*shepherd to his people (verses 11-14). He is God over the nations (verses 15-17). Micah can therefore say to him, 'There is no other God like you.' He is the God who has forgiven his guilty people.

In the \*Hebrew text, the first sentence has the form of a question. The question is, 'Who is a God like you?' Micah's own name actually means 'Who is like Yahweh (God)?' His parents gave him that name. So here Micah is referring to his own name. The name 'Yahweh' describes God's wonderful character. It describes his goodness. God pities his people. He is kind to them. That is a way to describe how God forgives his people. These people are the \*remnant that God has rescued.

The verse continues, 'You take away people's shame.' Also, we read 'You forgive their \*sin.' \*Israel's people had acted against God's \*covenant. The people had done many wrong things. Their \*sin was very great (Micah 1:5, 13; 3:8; 6:7). But the \*LORD's love is also great. He does not stay angry for always. He is kind and he has pity. He enjoys that. Only God could help the people. Only God could forgive their \*sin. (Look at 1 Timothy 1:15-17.) Without God's \*forgiveness, Micah's message would not mean anything. (Look at Psalm 130:3-4.)

The book ends with a wonderful message about hope. God will not stay angry for always. He likes to be kind. He likes to have pity. There is hope for those that ask God to forgive their \*sin. God cannot lie.

There will always be a few people that will be God's possession. They will be there even until the end of time (Romans chapters 9 to 11).

**v19** He will come back and he will comfort us again. He will completely overcome the power of \*sin. When he forgives his people, their \*sin will be like dust under his feet. Yes, our \*sin will be like something that he has thrown into the deep sea.

#### Verse 19

It is as if God will put his foot down hard on all his people's \*sins. It is as if he will throw their \*sins into the deep sea. Then he will not see their \*sins any longer. He will not remember their \*sins any longer (Jeremiah 31:34). He will do that because he loves his children. He has pity on them. He is kind to them. Those \*sins will not cause trouble to his people any longer. God has forgiven them completely. Perhaps Micah was thinking about the time when God led the \*Israelites out of Egypt. Then, God threw the army from Egypt into the sea. So God overcame their enemies (Exodus 15:4-5). And then \*Israel's people started a new journey into the future. So, as a nation, they started to live in a new way.

Some time after this event, God met with Moses in a special way. There are different explanations of God's name ('the \*LORD'). God gave a new explanation to Moses. This was it:

'The \*LORD is a kind God. He does not become angry quickly. He is full of great love. You can trust the \*LORD. He is kind to thousands of people. He forgives people for the wrong things that they do. But the \*LORD does not forget to punish guilty people. Their children, their grandchildren and their grandchildren's children will suffer because of what the parents have done' (Exodus 34:6-7).

God wants to show his love to his people. He forgives \*sin. He can forgive all wrong deeds. But people must not be proud. They must confess their \*sins to God. The \*New Testament teaches that Jesus' death is the only remedy for \*sin. So if we want God to forgive us, we must invite Jesus into our lives.

<p><b>v20</b> You will do the things that you promised to Jacob. You will show the kindness that you promised to Abraham. You promised this to our *ancestors. That was a long time ago.</p>
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## Verse 20

God's qualities prove that he will be true to his \*covenant. He made a promise to \*Israel's people a long time ago. That is the reason for \*Israel's hope. God will carry out his promise to Jacob. This is the 10th time that Micah has mentioned Jacob. But it is the first time that he has mentioned Abraham. Another way to say the verse is this. 'You will be true to Jacob. You will show kindness to Abraham. You made a holy agreement with us. You made it with our fathers a long time ago.' 'Fathers' here means male relatives that lived in the past. The nation called \*Israel came from Jacob, who was also called \*Israel. Abraham was Jacob's grandfather.

God carried out his promise to Abraham. God carried out his promise to Moses. God led \*Israel's people out of Egypt. God carried out his promise to Joshua. God led the people into Canaan. That was the country that he had promised to them. God also carried out his promise during the time when Micah lived. God rescued \*Israel's people from the \*Assyrians.

When Abraham's life had almost ended, God gave a promise to him. God promised to do good things for the whole world. He would do that by means of Abraham's family. Therefore it was very important that Abraham's son Isaac should marry the right wife. So Abraham sent his servant on a journey. Abraham told him to find a suitable wife for Isaac. Abraham's family would then continue to grow.

Abraham's servant found Rebekah. The servant knew then that God's promises would not fail. He bowed his head (bent his head down lower) and he \*worshipped the \*LORD. He thanked God that he (God) had not disappointed the servant's master, Abraham. The servant knew that God still loved Abraham greatly (Genesis 24:26-27). God had carried out his promise to Abraham. God had helped the servant to choose the right wife for Isaac. Later, people would see how important that choice was.

Those things were what God promised to \*Israel's \*ancestors (or 'fathers') a long time ago. Those promises were good enough for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's great love is the same for us today. He has dealt with our \*sins. He did that by means of his Son's (Jesus Christ's) death. So it is even better for us today than it was for Micah's nation then.

God's great love and kindness have continued through all time. He raised Christ from death. Very many people have believed in Jesus. They believe because of his death on the cross. They come from all the nations on the Earth. In a \*spiritual way, those people become Abraham's 'children' (\*descendants). (Look at Romans 4:17; Galatians 3:6-29.) That is because those people belong to God. All this is possible because of Jesus Christ. He took the punishment for his people's \*sins. All people that believe in Jesus have great value to God. They can trust this wonderful God in every situation. So those people today are like \*Israel's \*remnant in the \*Old Testament.

Micah writes about an earlier time. Religion caused little difference in the way that people lived at that time. Micah told the people what God expected from them. Micah told them to be fair. He told them to be kind. Micah told the people to be humble (Micah 6:8). God wants Christians to behave in the same way today. Society is similar today to how it was in that earlier time. Rulers and people alike deal badly with other people. People do not forgive each other for their faults. People are proud. They are selfish. But we as Christians must live humbly. We must trust in God always. We need to live by God's rules. Then our lives will have a good effect on our homes, our society and our world.

# Word List

**ancestors** ~ members of a family in previous centuries.

**Assyrians** ~ these people came from the country called Assyria.

**BC** ~ 600 BC means the year that was 600 years before Jesus came to the Earth, and so on.

**bless** ~ to say and to do good things for a person.

**covenant** ~ a serious agreement between two or more people; a serious agreement between God and a person (or a nation).

**curse** ~ to declare strongly that an evil thing will happen to someone; the words that a person says when he or she curses someone; an evil thing that someone declares will happen to someone else.

**descendant** ~ a child, grandchild, and so on; a person in your family who lives after you are dead.

**dew** ~ drops of water on the ground in the early morning.

**Egyptian** ~ a word that describes someone from Egypt or anything from Egypt.

**eternal life** ~ a special and new life that a person starts when they accept Jesus. This new life is to be with Jesus for always.

**fairness** ~ when a person behaves fairly towards someone else.

**forgiveness** ~ when you show pity towards a person that has done something wrong to you; when you do not accuse that person any longer and you do not continue to remember those bad things; when God frees us from punishment for wrong things.

**Hebrew** ~ the language that \*Jewish people speak.

**Israel** ~ the name that God gave to Jacob; all the people that are \*descendants from Abraham's, Isaac's and Jacob's family; the group of people that God chose; the northern part of the country that God gave to his people; the people in that northern part, who had their own king; the nation that consists of \*Jews and people that speak \*Hebrew.

**Israel's people** ~ the \*Israelites.

**Israelite** ~ a \*Jew; a person from the nation called \*Israel.

**Jew** ~ a \*descendant from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a person who belongs to the nation called \*Israel; a person who follows the same religion as the people in the nation called \*Israel.

**Jewish** ~ this word describes a \*Jew; or it describes anything that belongs to a \*Jew.

**Judah** ~ after the nation called \*Israel split, Judah was the name of the south part.

**Lord** ~ someone with authority; or, a name for God in the Bible; it means that he is above all other things; a name that we use for Jesus; we use that name when we obey him.

**LORD** ~ the special name for God that he himself told the \*Jews to call him in the \*Old Testament. The \*Hebrew word is Yahweh. Do not confuse 'LORD' with 'Lord'. 'Lord' can mean that you respect any person. But 'LORD' only means the real God. 'LORD' and 'Lord' translate two completely different \*Hebrew words.

**messenger** ~ a person who brings messages.

**Messiah** ~ God's special servant; the man that the \*Jews expected to come to the Earth; the only person that can put people into a right relationship with God; the man that will come again to rule all the people in the world. 'Messiah' is a name for Jesus Christ. It means the person that God appointed to rule. God sent him to save us from God's anger. (God's anger is because of the bad things that we do.)

**New Testament** ~ the last part of the Bible, which the writers wrote after Jesus lived on the Earth. It is about Christ's deeds and the things that he taught. It is also about the church, the people that have believed in him.

**Old Testament** ~ the first part of the Bible, which the writers wrote before Jesus lived on the Earth; the holy things that the writers wrote before Christ's birth.

**plead** ~ here, to accuse a person of a crime; to state what evidence you have against that person.

**priest** ~ a man who gave gifts and burned animals as gifts to God for the \*Jews; a man whom God chose to serve him and to do special work for him.

**prophecy** ~ messages and stories that God has given to a person; messages that tell about things before

they happen; the messages that a \*prophet speaks or the messages that he writes.

**prophecy** ~ to tell about things before they happen; to speak with God's (or a false god's) help; to speak on God's (or a false god's) behalf.

**prophet** ~ a person who is able to tell other people what God wants; a person who speaks on behalf of God; someone who tells about things that will happen in the future. But a false prophet is someone who merely pretends to speak God's words.

**prostitute** ~ a person who sells his or her body to other persons for pleasure and sex.

**psalms, Psalms** ~ songs about God that tell how good and great he is; songs that tell what God has done; a book that contains such songs, in the Bible.

**religious** ~ pure, holy and sincere; when someone follows a religion; when someone loves God.

**remnant** ~ the few people that remain from the nation called \*Israel.

**rod** ~ a thin stick; a stick that someone uses to give punishment; an object that is like a stick and it shows authority.

**salvation** ~ when God removes us from \*sin's results and its power; when God rescues a person from evil things and their results; \*forgiveness by God when we follow Jesus and we are sorry for our wrong behaviour.

**Saviour** ~ the person who rescues people from evil things.

**shepherd** ~ a person who looks after sheep.

**sin** ~ when people do wrong things against God; when we do not obey God's commands; the evil nature that is in us, which we were born with.

**spiritual, spiritually** ~ holy; these words describe the inner part of a person, that can contact God; these words describe holy things.

**Temple, temple** ~ the special building where \*Jews went to praise God; the holy place in heaven where God is; OR a special building where people went to praise false gods.

**thorns** ~ sharp points that grow on a plant or bush.

**vineyard** ~ a place where grapes (a special fruit) grow. (People use the fruit to make wine.)

**watchtower** ~ a tall building where a guard watches for danger.

**worship** ~ a way to act when we are with God; to give thanks to God and Jesus; to bend oneself down in front of God (or a false god); to show honour to God; to say that we love God very much. We usually worship together with other people, with prayers and many happy songs.

## Book List

George Adam Smith ~ Book of the Twelve Prophets ~ The Expositor's Bible

Stephen Winward ~ A Guide to the Prophets ~ Hodder and Stoughton

David W. Baker, T. Desmond Alexander, Bruce K. Waltke ~ Obadiah, Jonah, Micah ~ Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

David Prior ~ The Message of Joel, Micah and Habakkuk ~ The Bible Speaks Today

H. L. Ellison ~ Men Spoke from God ~ Studies in The Hebrew Prophets ~ The Paternoster Press

New Bible Commentary ~ 21st Century Edition ~ Inter-Varsity Press

G. Campbell Morgan ~ The Men and their Messages ~ Pickering and Inglis Limited

## Bibles

A.V., N.K.J.V., N.I.V., C.E.V., G.W. (God's Word)

Holy Bible Easy-to-Read Version ~ World Bible Translation Centre, Texas

The Message ~ Eugene H. Peterson ~ NavPress

This publication is written in EasyEnglish Level B (2800 words).

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