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Micah

Samaria and Israel to Be Punished

1 The word of the Lord came to Micah. This was during the time of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. These men were kings of Judah. Micah was from Moresheth. Micah saw [these visions] about Samaria and Jerusalem.

- 2** Listen, all of you people!
 Earth and everyone on it,* listen!
 My Master, the Lord will come
 from his holy temple.*
 My Master will come as a witness*
 against you.
- 3** See, the Lord is coming out of his place.
 He is coming down to walk on
 the high places* of the earth.
- 4** The mountains will melt under him
 like wax before a fire.
 The valleys will split open
 and flow like water down a steep hill.
- 5** Why? Because of Jacob's* sin.
 Because of the sins of the nation*
 of Israel.

Samaria, the Cause of Sin

What caused Jacob to sin?
 It was Samaria!
 Where is the high place* in Judah?
 It is Jerusalem!

everyone on it Literally, "its fullness."

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

witness A person that tells in court what he has seen or heard.

high place(s) Here this might simply mean "hills" or it might be the places for worshiping God or false gods. These places were often on the hills and mountains.

Jacob Israel was Jacob's other name. (See Gen. 32:28.) Jacob is often used to mean Israel, the nation that descended from him.

nation Literally, "house." This might mean the royal family of that country.

- 6** So I will change Samaria into
 a pile of rocks in the field,
 a place ready for planting grapes.
 I will push Samaria's stones down
 into the valley, leaving nothing
 but the foundations!
- 7** All her idols*
 will be broken into pieces.
 Her prostitute's wages (*idols*)
 will be burned in fire.
 I will destroy all her statues
 [of false gods].
 Why? Because Samaria got her riches
 by being unfaithful to me.*
 So those things will be taken by people
 that are not faithful to me.*

Micah's Great Sadness

- 8** I will be very sad about what will happen.
 I will go without shoes and clothes.
 I will cry like a dog.*
 I will mourn like a bird.*
- 9** Samaria's* wound can't be healed.
 Her disease (*sin*) has spread to Judah.
 It has reached the city gate of my people.
 It has spread all the way to Jerusalem.
- 10** Don't tell it in Gath.*
 Don't cry in Acco.*
 Roll yourself in the dust at Beth Ophrah.*

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

her riches ... me Literally, "her wages were a prostitute's wages."

will be ... me Literally, "will return to prostitute's wages."

dog Literally, "jackal," a kind of wild dog.

bird Literally, "ostrich," a large bird.

Samaria The capital of the northern ten-family group kingdom of Israel. Here it is often used to mean the northern kingdom itself.

Gath This is a word play. This name means, "tell."

Acco This name means, "cry."

Beth Ophrah This name means, "House of Dust."

- 11 You people living in Shaphir,*
pass on your way, naked and ashamed.
People living in Zaanān* will not come out.
The people in Beth Ezel* will cry,
and take its support from you.
- 12 People living in Maroth* become weak
waiting for good [news to come].
Why? Because trouble has come down
from the Lord to the city gate
of Jerusalem.
- 13 Lady of Lachish,* hitch (tie) a fast horse
to the wagon.*
Zion's sins started in Lachish.
Why? Because you follow in
Israel's sins.*
- 14 So you must give goodbye gifts
to Moresheth* in Gath.
The houses in Aczib* will trick
the kings of Israel.
- 15 You people living in Mareshah,*
I will bring a person against you.
That person will take the things you own.
The Glory of Israel (God)
will come into Adullam.*
- 16 So cut off your hair,
make yourself bald.*
Why? Because [you will cry for]
the children you love.
Make yourself bald like an eagle*
[and show your sadness].
Why? Because your children
will be taken away from you.

Shaphir This name means, "beautiful."

Zaanān This name means, "come out."

Beth Ezel This name means, "House of Support."

Maroth This name means, "bitter," "angry," or "sad."

Lachish This Hebrew word is like the word meaning, "horse."

wagon Or, "chariot," a small wagon used in war.

Israel's sins That is, building places of worship other than the temple in Jerusalem. Archaeologists have discovered this "temple" and the memorial stones at Tel Lachish.

Moresheth Micah's hometown.

Aczib This name means, "lie," or "trick."

Mareshah The name means, "a person that takes things."

Adullam A cave in which David hid when he ran away from Saul (see 1 Sam. 22:1).

cut ... bald This showed a person made a special agreement with God, or that a person was very sad.

eagle Or, "vulture."

2

The Evil Plans of People

- Trouble will come to people
that make plans to sin.
Those people lie on their beds
making their evil plans
Then when the morning light comes,
they do the bad things they planned.
Why? Simply because they have the
power
to do what they want.
- 2 They want fields,
so they take them.
They want houses,
so they take them.
They cheat a man
and take his house.
They cheat a man
and take his land from him.

The Lord's Plans to Punish the People

- 3 That is why the Lord says these things.
"Look, I am planning trouble
against this family.
You will not be able to save yourselves.*
You will stop being proud.
Why? Because bad times are coming.
- 4 Then people will sing songs about you.
People will sing this sad song:
'We are ruined!
The Lord took away our land.
And gave it to other people.
Yes, he took my land away from me.
The Lord has divided our fields
[among our enemies].
- 5 So we will not be able
to measure the land
and divide it among the Lord's
people.'"

Micah Is Asked Not to Preach

- 6 People say, "Don't preach to us.
Don't say those bad things about us.
Nothing bad will happen to us."
- 7 But people of Jacob,*
I must say these things.

save yourselves Literally, "take your necks off it."

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

The Lord is losing his patience
because of the bad things you did.
If you people lived right,
then I could say nice words to you.

- 8 But to my people,
they are like an enemy.
You steal the clothes right off the backs
of people walking by.
Those people think they are safe.
But you take things from them
like they are prisoners of war.*
9 You have taken nice houses
away from the women of my people.
You have taken my wealth
away from their small children forever.
10 Get up and leave!
This will not be your place of rest.
Why? Because you ruined this place!
You made it unclean,
So it will be destroyed!
It will be a terrible destruction!

- 11 These people don't want to listen to
me.
But if a man came telling lies
then they would accept him.
They would accept a false prophet
if he comes and says,
"There will be good times in the
future,
with plenty of wine and beer."

The Lord Will Bring His People Together

- 12 Yes, people of Jacob,*
I will bring all of you together.
I will bring together all the survivors*
of Israel.
I will put them together
like sheep in the sheep pen,
like a flock in its pasture.
Then the place will be filled
with the noise of many people.
13 Then the "Crasher" will push through
and walk to the front of his people
They will break through the gates.
and leave that city.

Those people ... war. Or, "Those people think they are safe,
returning from war."

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

survivors People that escape some accident or war.

They will leave
with their King marching before them.
with the Lord at the front of his people.

The Leaders of Israel Are Guilty of Evil

- 3 Then I said,
"Hear now, leaders of Jacob,*
and officers of the nation* of Israel.
You should know what justice is!
2 But you hate good and love evil!
You tear the skin off the people.
You tear the flesh off their bones!
3 You are destroying my people!*
You take their skin off them,
and break their bones.
You chop their bones up like meat
to put in the pot!
4 So, you might pray to the Lord,
but he will not answer you.
No, the Lord will hide his face from you.
Why? Because you do evil things!"

False Prophets

⁵Some false prophets are telling lies to the
Lord's people. The Lord says this about those
prophets:

"These prophets are led by their
stomachs!
The prophets promise peace for
people who give them food.
But they promise war against
people who won't give them food.

- 6 That is why it is like night for you.
That is why you don't have visions.*
You can't see what will happen
in the future,
so it is like darkness to you.
The sun has gone down on the prophets.
They can't see what will happen
in the future,
so it is like darkness to them.

nation Literally, "house." This might mean the royal family of
that country.

You are destroying my people Literally, "They eat the flesh of
my people."

vision(s) Like a dream. God used visions to teach prophets what
they should say to the people.

- 7 The seers* are ashamed.
The fortune tellers* are embarrassed.
They won't say anything
because God will not speak to them!

Micah Is an Honest Prophet of God

- 8 But the Lord's Spirit has filled me
with power, goodness, and strength.
Why? So I can tell Jacob* about his crimes,
and so I can tell Israel* about his sins!"

The Leaders of Israel Are to Blame

- 9 Leaders of Jacob and rulers of Israel,
listen to me!
You hate the right way of living!
If something is straight,
then you make it crooked!
10 You build Zion* by murdering people.*
You build Jerusalem by cheating people!
11 The judges in Jerusalem accept bribes
to help them decide who wins in court.
The priests in Jerusalem must be paid
before they will teach the people.
People must pay the prophets
before they will look into the future.
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."
12 [Leaders,] because of you,
Zion* will be destroyed.
It will become a plowed field.
Jerusalem will become a pile of rocks.
Temple Mount will be an empty hill*
overgrown with bushes.

seers Another name for prophets.

fortune tellers People that try to use magic to learn what will happen in the future.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

Israel Another name for Jacob. Here it means the people of Israel.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

murdering people Literally, "bloodshed."

empty hill Or, "high place," a term usually used for local shrines (places for worship) where people often worshiped idols.

The Law Will Come from Jerusalem

- 4 In the last days,
the mountain of the Lord's temple*
will be on the highest of all mountains.
It will be raised higher than the hills.
There will be a steady stream of people
going there.
2 People from many nations will go there.
They will say,
"Come, let's go up to the Lord's mountain.
Let's go to the temple of the God of Jacob.
Then God will teach us his way of living.
And we will follow him."
The teachings from God
—the Lord's message—
will begin in Jerusalem on Mount Zion*
and go out [to all the world].
3 Then God will be a judge
for the people of many nations.
God will end the arguments
for many* people in faraway countries.
Those people will stop using their weapons
for fighting.
They will make plows from their swords.
And they will use their spears
as tools for cutting plants.
People will stop fighting other people.
People will never again train for war.
4 Each person will sit under his
own grapevine and fig tree.
No person will make [them] afraid!
Why? Because the Lord All-Powerful
said it would happen like that!
5 All the people [from other nations]
follow their own gods.
But we will follow the Lord our God
forever and ever!*

temple A special building for worshiping God. God commanded the Jews to worship him at the temple in Jerusalem.

many Or, "powerful."

All the people ... ever Or, "All the nations will walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God, forever and ever!"

The Kingdom to Be Brought Back

- 6 The Lord says,
 “Jerusalem was hurt and crippled.
Jerusalem was thrown away.
Jerusalem was hurt and punished.
 But I will bring her back to me.”
- 7 The people of that ‘crippled’ city
 will become the survivors.*
 The people of that city
 were forced to leave.
 But I will make them into a strong nation.”
 The Lord will be their king.
 He will rule from Mount Zion* forever.
- 8 And you, Tower of Flocks,*
 your time will come.
 Ophel, hill of Zion,
 you will again be the seat of government.
 Yes, the kingdom will be in Jerusalem
 like it was in the past.”

Why Must the Israelites Go to Babylon?

- 9 Now, why are you crying so loud?
 Is your king gone?
 Have you lost your leader?
 You are suffering like a woman
 that is giving birth.
- 10 Daughter of Zion,* feel the pain.
 Give birth to your “baby.”
 You must go out of this city (*Jerusalem*).
 You will live in the field.
 I mean, you will go to Babylon.
 But you will be saved from that place.
 The Lord will go there and rescue you.
 He will take you away from
 your enemies.

The Lord Will Destroy the Other Nations

- 11 Many nations have come
 to fight against you.
 They say,
 “Look, there is Zion!*
 Let’s attack her!”

- 12 Those people have their plans,
 But they don’t know what the Lord
 is planning.
 The Lord brought those people here
for a special purpose.
 Those people will be crushed
 like grain on a threshing floor.*

Israel Will Defeat Its Enemies

- 13 “Daughter of Zion,*
 get up and crush those people!
I will make you very strong.
 It will be like you have horns of iron,
 and hooves* of bronze.
 You will beat many people into small
 pieces.
 You will give their wealth to the Lord.
 You will give their treasure
 to the Lord of all the earth.”

5

Now, strong city,* gather your soldiers.
 They are surrounding us for the attack!
 They will hit the Judge of Israel
 on the cheek with their stick.

The Messiah to be Born in Bethlehem

- 2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 are the smallest town in Judah.
 Your family is almost too small to count.
 But the “Ruler of Israel”
 will come from you for me.
 His beginnings* are from ancient times,
 from long, long ago.
- 3 So the Lord* will give up his people
 until the woman gives birth to her child,
the promised king.
 Then the rest of his brothers
 will come back to the people of Israel.
- 4 Then the Ruler of Israel will stand
 in the power of the Lord and
 in the wonderful name
 of the Lord his God
 and feed the flock.

survivors People that escape some accident or war.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
 Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Tower of Flocks Or, “Migdal Eder.” This probably means a
 part of Jerusalem. The leaders would be like shepherds in a
 tower watching their sheep.

Daughter of Zion Another name for Jerusalem.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to
 remove the hulls from the grain.

hooves The hard part of a horse’s foot.

strong city Literally, “Daughter of troops.”

beginnings Or “family origins.”

the Lord Or, “the Ruler of Israel.”

- They will live [in peace]
because at that time, his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.*
- 5 There will be peace.
Yes, the Assyrian army
will come into our country
and trample our large buildings.
But the Ruler of Israel* will choose
seven shepherds and eight leaders.*
- 6 They will use their swords
and rule the Assyrians.
They will rule the land of Nimrod*
with swords in hand.
They will use their swords
to rule those people.
But then [the Ruler of Israel]
will save us from the Assyrians
who will come into our land
and trample our territory.
- 7 But the survivors* from Jacob
scattered among the nations
will be like dew from the Lord
that doesn't depend on any man.
They will be like rain on the grass
that doesn't wait for anyone.
- 8 But the survivors* from Jacob in the
nations
scattered among those people
will be like a lion
among the animals in the forest.
They will be like a young lion
among flocks of sheep.
If the lion passes through,
he goes where he wants to go.
If he attacks an animal,
then no one can save that animal.
[The survivors will be like that.]
- 9 You will lift your hand against your
enemies,
and you will destroy them.

They ... the earth Or, "They will settle here because at that time his kingdom will extend to the ends of the earth.

the Ruler of Israel Or, "We."

seven shepherds and eight leaders Or, "seven shepherds, no eight leaders."

land of Nimrod Another name for Assyria.

survivors People that escape some accident or war.

People Will Depend on God

- 10 The Lord says,
"At that time,
I will take away your horses,
and I will destroy your chariots.*"
- 11 I will destroy the cities in your country.
I will pull down all your fortresses.*
- 12 You will no longer try to do magic.
You will not have any more people that
try to tell the future.
- 13 I will destroy your statues [of false gods].
I will pull down your stones for
remembering those false gods.
You will not worship the things
that your hands have made.
- 14 I will destroy the Asherah poles.*
And I will destroy your false gods.*
- 15 Some people will not listen to me.
But I will show my anger.
And I will get even with those people."

The Lord's Complaint

- 6 Now hear what the Lord says:
Tell your side of the story
to the mountains.
Let the hills* hear your story.
- 2 The Lord has a complaint
against his people.
Mountains, listen to the Lord's complaint.
Foundations of the earth, hear the Lord.
He will prove that Israel is wrong!
- 3 [The Lord says],
"My people, tell me what I did!
Did I do something wrong against you?
Did I make life too hard for you?"
- 4 [I will tell you the things I did!]
I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to you.
I brought you from the land of Egypt.
I freed you from slavery.

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

fortress(es) A building or city with tall, strong walls for protection.

Asherah poles Poles that helped people remember the Canaanite goddess, Asherah. At this time, the people thought she was the wife of Baal.

false gods Or, "cities."

Let the hills This is like a case in court. The mountains and hills are like the judge and jury.

- 5 My people, remember the [evil] plans
of Balak king of Moab.
Remember what Balaam son of Beor
said to Balak.
Remember the things that happened
from Acacia to Gilgal*.
Remember those things and
you will know the Lord is right!”

What Does God Want from Us?

- 6 What must I bring when I come
to meet with the Lord?
What must I do when I bow down
to God above?
Should I come to the Lord
with burnt offerings and a year-old
calf?
7 Will the Lord be pleased
with 1,000 rams or 10,000 rivers of oil?
Should I give my first child
as payment for my crimes?
Should I give the child
that came from my body
as payment for my sins?
8 Man, the Lord told you what goodness
is.
This is what the Lord wants from you:
Be fair to other people.
Love kindness and loyalty.
Live humbly with your God.
[Don't try to impress him with gifts.]

What Were the Israelites Doing?

- 9 The voice of the Lord shouts to the city.
A wise person honors the Lord's name.*
So pay attention to the punishing rod,
and to the One who holds that rod!*
- 10 Do the bad people still hide treasures
that they have stolen?
Do bad people still cheat people
with baskets that are too small?*
- [Yes! All of those things are still happening!]

- 11 Should I pardon the bad people who still
use weights and scales to cheat people?
Should I pardon the people who still
have bags with weights that give the
wrong measure?
[No!]
12 Rich people in that city are still cruel!
The people in that city still tell lies.
Yes, those people tell their lies!
13 So I have started to punish you.
I will destroy you because of your sins.
14 You will eat,
but you will not become full.
You will still be hungry and empty.*
You will try to bring people in to safety.
But people with swords
will kill the people you rescued!
15 You will plant your seeds,
but you will not gather food.
You will try to squeeze oil from your olives,
but you will not get any oil.
You will crush your grapes,
but you will not get enough juice
to have wine to drink.
16 Why? Because you obey the laws of Omri.*
You do all the [bad] things
that Ahab's family does.
You follow their teachings.
So I will let you be destroyed.
People will whistle in amazement
when they see your destroyed city.
Then you will bear the shame
that the other nations bring to you.*

Micah Is Upset at the Evil People Do

- 7 I am upset because I am
like fruit that has been gathered,
like grapes that have already been picked.
There are no grapes left to eat.
There are none of the early figs
that I love.
2 I mean, all of the faithful people are gone.
There are no good people left
in this country.

Acacia to Gilgal This story is found in Num. 22–25.

the Lord's name Literally, “your name.”

So pay attention ... rod The Hebrew is not clear here.

baskets ... too small Literally, “short ephahs.” An ephah is
about 1/2 bushel.

You ... empty The Hebrew is not clear here.

Omri A king of Israel that led his nation to worship false gods.
See 1 Kings 16:21–26.

Then ... you Or, “My people's shame will be taken away.”

- Every person is waiting to kill someone.
 Every person is trying to trap his brother.
 3 People are good at doing bad things
 with both hands.
 Officials ask for bribes.
 Judges take money
 to change their decisions in court.
 “Important leaders” don’t make
 good and fair decisions.
 They do whatever they want to do.
 4 Even the best of them is like a thorn bush.
 Even the best of them is more crooked
 than a tangled thorn bush.

The Day of Punishment Is Coming

- Your prophets said this day would come.
 And the day of your watchmen*
 has come.
 Now you will be punished!
 Now you will be confused!
 5 Don’t trust your neighbor!
 Don’t trust a friend!
 Don’t even speak freely with your wife!
 6 A person’s enemies will be
 the people in his own house.
 A son will not honor his father.
 A daughter will turn against her mother.
 A daughter-in-law will turn against
 her mother-in-law.

The Lord Is the Savior

- 7 So I will look to the Lord for help!
 I will wait for God to save me.
 My God will hear me.
 8 I have fallen.
 But enemy, don’t laugh at me!
 I will get up again.
 I sit in darkness now.
 But the Lord will be a light for me.

The Lord Forgives

- 9 I sinned against the Lord.
 So he was angry at me.
 But he will argue my case for me in court.
 He will do the things that are right for me.

watchmen Another name for prophets. This shows that the prophets were like guards that stood on a city’s wall and watched for trouble coming from far away.

- Then he will bring me out into the light.
 And I will see that he is right.
 10 My enemy said to me,
 “Where is the Lord your God?”
 But my enemy will see this,
 and she will be ashamed.
 At that time, I will laugh at her.*
 People will walk over her,
 like mud in the streets.

The Jews to Return

- 11 The time will come when your walls
 will be built again.
 At that time, the country will grow.
 12 Your people will come back to your land.
 They will come back from Assyria
 and from the cities of Egypt.
 Your people will come from Egypt
 and from the other side of
 the Euphrates River.
 They will come from the sea in the west
 and from the mountains in the east.
 13 The land was ruined by the people
 that lived there and by what they did.
 14 So rule your people with your rod.
 Rule the flock of people
 that belongs to you.
 That flock lives alone in the woods,
 and up on Mount Carmel.
 That flock lives in Bashan and Gilead
 like they did in time past.

Israel Will Defeat Its Enemies

- 15 I did many miracles
 when I took you out of Egypt.
 I will let you see more miracles like that.
 16 The nations will see those miracles,
 and they will be ashamed.
 They will see that their “power”
 is nothing compared to mine.
 They will be amazed
 and put their hands over their mouths!
 They will cover their ears
 and refuse to listen.

laugh at her Literally, “my eyes will gawk (stare, look) at her.”

- 17 They will crawl in the dust like a snake.
 They will shake with fear.
 They will be like insects crawling
 from their holes in the ground
 and coming to the Lord our God.
 God, they will fear and respect you!

Praise for the Lord

- 18 There is no God like you.
 You take away people's guilt.

- God forgives his people that survived.
 He won't stay angry forever.
 Why? Because He enjoys being kind.
 19 He will come back and comfort us again.
 He will crush our guilt
 and throw all of our sins
 into the deep sea.
 20 [God,] please be true to Jacob,*
 Be kind and loyal to Abraham,*
 like you promised our ancestors*
 a long time ago.

Jacob Another name for Israel. See Gen. 32:22–28.

Abraham The father of the Israelites. Here Abraham is used to mean all the people of Israel.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.