



Micah

Get Started

Pastor Chuck Smith often told the story about the Christian farmer whose cow gave birth to twins. He told his wife they should dedicate one of the cows to the Lord.

Some months later his wife noticed he was looking very sad. His wife asked why he was so sullen, to which he replied, "I have bad news. **"The Lord's cow died."**

It's in our nature to sacrifice that which costs us less or little. In the key passage of Micah, 6:6-8, God will address the question of what He requires. It is nothing less than your life as a living sacrifice.

Get Studying

The book opens with some background information:

Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Micah's name means, "Who is like the LORD?" He is said to be from Moresheth, which is a town located twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem.

The time during which Micah ministered is identified with the reigns of three kings of Judah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This would make Micah a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah who lived and ministered in the eighth century BC.

The opening chapters of the book pronounce God's judgement on both Israel and Judah. He was God's final prophet to the northern kingdom before it fell, and he was the only prophet sent to the capitals of both kingdoms - Samaria and Jerusalem.

There are three distinct messages in the book, each introduced by the word "Hear." Chapters one and two are a message; so are chapters three, four and five; so are chapters six and seven.

Micah's first message is about the subtle power of influence. In chapter one you see that the people in the rural areas were not as isolated as they thought. They were doing the same things that the people in the cities were doing. They were **imitating** the sins of the cities.

Micah compares Israel to a "harlot" in verse seven because the worship of pagan idols on the high places involved paying to have sex with prostitutes. God's people were like an unfaithful wife who had become a prostitute.

Micah 1:8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches,

Micah 1:9 For her wounds *are* incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of My people - to Jerusalem.

God's judgement on the northern kingdom could no longer be avoided.

I'm sure that the people of Judah would agree Israel deserved judgement. But then a shocking statement comes at the end of verse nine. **The same judgement was coming against Judah in the south because Judah had succumbed to the influence of Israel and was imitating her sins.**

Perhaps the people of Judah in the south might still repent... Apparently Micah went around naked, wailing like a jackal and mourning like an ostrich. Let's just say he was serious about repentance! And let's be happy we are not Old Testament prophets!!

Chapter two opens with an indictment of some of their sins:

Micah 2:1 Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Micah 2:2 They covet fields and take *them* by violence, also houses, and seize *them*. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

The chapter ends with a word of encouragement for the far future of both Israel and Judah:

Micah 2:12 "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of *so many* people.

Micah 2:13 The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the LORD at their head."

Each of Micah's three messages includes a word of hope for the far future of the Jews in the Millennial Kingdom.

In chapter three, Micah says "Hear now, O heads of Jacob." This is message number two, and it includes chapters three, four, and five.

If you read through it, you will see two recurring themes: The *course* of Israel's future, and the *care* of Israel's King.

Both of these themes are presented in chapter five, verses three and four:

Micah 5:3 Therefore He shall give them up, until the time *that* she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel.

Micah 5:4 And He shall stand and feed *His flock* in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth;

You see the *course* of Israel's future in verse three. Actually, from our vantage point, you see Israel's *past*, *present*, **and future**:

1. Israel's *past* and *present* is summarized by the statement, "Therefore He shall give them up." This describes the scattering of Israel among the nations of the world from just after the death of Jesus Christ until recently.
2. Israel's *future* is summarized by the remainder of verse three. There will be a time of "labor" and "giving birth." These are images Jesus used to describe the future Great Tribulation period. "Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel." Then God will regather and restore Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

Israel's King is depicted as a Shepherd Who *cares* for His sheep: "And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord."

In contrast, Israel's leaders were wicked:

Micah 3:1 And I said: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: is *it* not for you to know justice?"

Micah 3:2 You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones;

Micah 3:3 Who also eat the flesh of My people, flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop *them* in pieces like *meat* for the pot, like flesh in the caldron."

Israel's leaders were corrupt and the nation would be scattered. But God would not fail in His promises to them.

Micah 4:1 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.

The "latter days" – *the future* – is in view. It is the kingdom on earth, the Millennial Kingdom.

The phrase "on the top of the mountains" is a subtle reference to the care of the coming Shepherd. It could be translated "table-land." A table-land is what we might call a mesa; it is a superior grazing land in the mountains that shepherds seek out and prepare for their flocks. The "Lord's house," the future Millennial Temple, will be built on a magnificent table-land which will exist in Jerusalem only after Jesus returns and the land has undergone remarkable geographic changes due to His setting foot on the planet and the subsequent earth-quakings.

As the second message closes, the Jews of Micah's day were brought back to the present and to their immediate future:

Micah 5:10 "And it shall be in that day," says the LORD, "That I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots.

Micah 5:11 I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds.

Micah 5:12 I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers.

Micah 5:13 Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands;

Micah 5:14 I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities.

These verses describe a time of conquest and judgement by which God would purge them of their pride and idolatry.

He did this in the north when the ten tribes fell to the Assyrian's. He did this in the south when Judah was taken captive for seventy years by Babylon.

The third, and final, message is in chapters six and seven. It's an appeal from God to His beloved nation:

Micah 6:1 Hear now what the LORD says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

Micah 6:2 Hear, O you mountains, the LORD'S complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a complaint against His people, and He will [plead] with Israel.

Micah 6:3 "O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me.

Micah 6:4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Micah 6:5 O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the LORD.”

God’s people were accusing Him of “wearying” them. The word is sometimes translated *burdened* or *wronged*. One Bible translates the word “wearyed” as *molested*. They were accusing God of having somehow wronged them, probably by allowing foreigners to molest them rather than protecting them.

God rehearses two incidents from their history which show that His intentions are always to protect them from foreign nations:

1. He redeemed them from slavery in Egypt.
2. When Balak hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, God prevented him from doing so. He blessed Israel instead.

As the book closes, on behalf of his people, Micah pleads with God:

Micah 7:14 Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell solitarily *in* a woodland, in the midst of Carmel; let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in days of old.

Micah 7:15 “As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders.”

Micah 7:16 The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put *their* hand over *their* mouth; their ears shall be deaf.

Micah 7:17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of You.

These verses are looking forward to the return of the King. He will establish His chosen nation, Israel. All the other nations will “lick the dust” and “crawl;” in other words, they will bow down before God – *whether they want to bow or not.*

Micah breaks forth into praise:

Micah 7:18 Who *is* a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights *in* mercy.

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:20 You will give truth to Jacob *and* mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.

God “pardons” and “subdues” iniquity and “pass[es] over” transgression. He “casts all our sins into the depths of the sea.” He does it because “He delights in mercy” and is a God of “compassion.”

Have you experienced this? Rejoice in it.

Get Spiritual

Micah 6:8 is easily the most recognizable verse in the entire book. It is preceded by an important question.

Micah 6:6 With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?

Micah 6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* calls verse eight the greatest statement in the entire Old Testament.

There seem to be two clear parts to this statement – a *revelation* and a *requirement*:

1. The *revelation* is found in the words “He has shown you, O man...” There is something God shows you; something God reveals to you.
2. The *requirement* is found in the remainder of the verse. It tells you what you are supposed to do.

God *shows* you something, then tells you what you are *supposed* to do.

What does God show you? **He shows you what He is like.**

Today we have the clearest picture of what God is like in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Remember the *What Would Jesus Do?* campaign? It only worked because what Jesus did has been revealed to us on the pages of the New Testament.

Jesus shows you what God is like; you are then supposed to show others what God is like by doing justly, loving mercy, and (literally) humbling yourself to walk with God.

I find it hard to expand on those concepts so let me present this quote:

"Do justice" first of all, everywhere, and always; then, yet further, toward your fellow-men, "show mercy;" do acts of kindness and favor where no merit creates a claim of justice; and finally, as toward God, walk with him humbly, in constant communion and fellowship. Recognize his surrounding, all-pervading presence, and adjust thy spirit and thy life to a due sense of that presence. In the last clause the Hebrew is specially expressive: "Bow low to walk with God," as if only so could sinning mortals hope to come near to the Holy One.

God wants changed lives. God doesn't want ritual, external sacrifices.

He doesn't want your dead cow; and He doesn't necessarily want the one who lived.

He wants you to become a living sacrifice.