



# Micah

## Transcript

### Introduction

00:00-01:01

The book of the prophet Micah. Micah lived in a small town named Moresheth in the southern kingdom of Judah, about the same time as Isaiah. And both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel had split long ago, and both had been violating their covenant with the God of Israel. So Micah warned that God would bring the big bad empire of Assyria to take out the northern kingdom and come ravage Jerusalem. And he also warned that after them, Babylon would bring an even greater destruction.

Like all the prophets, Micah spoke on God's behalf to accuse Israel, or as he puts it in chapter 3, "I am filled with strength, with the spirit of God, with justice and power to declare how Israel has rebelled." And so most of this book explores Micah's accusations and his warnings of God's judgment on Israel. But Micah also had a message of hope that countered these warnings about the restoration God would bring on the other side of his judgment. And if you dive into the book with us, you'll see how this works.

### Chapters 1-2

01:02-01:59

So the first two sections of the book develop Micah's accusations and warnings against Israel and its leaders. So part one opens with a poetic description of God appearing over Israel, just like he did at Mount Sinai. There's fire and smoke and earthquake. But he hasn't come to make a covenant this time; he's come to bring his judgment on Israel for over 500 years of rebellion. Micah goes on to name all of these towns and cities in Israel that are the culprits of all of this rebellion. God's coming for them, but why, exactly?

So Micah picks a fight with Israel's leaders. He says that they have become wealthy through theft and greed. He alludes to the story of Ahab stealing a family vineyard from Naboth in 1 Kings chapter 21. But also it's because Israel's prophets are corrupt. They're quite happy to offer promises of God's protection to anyone who can afford to pay them. "No," Micah says, "God has withdrawn his protection from Israel."

## **Chapters 3-4a**

**02:00-03:26**

In the second section of accusations, Micah describes even more how Israel's leaders and prophets have together committed grave injustice. They run the land through bribery, they bend justice to favor the wealthy, and the poor are deprived of their land, their security, and their hope. And all of this is a violation of the laws of the Torah, which declare it illegal to sell land that belongs to families, even if they're poor.

And so we find out that God's judgment is going to take the form of an oppressive nation that comes to take out the northern kingdom and Jerusalem and its temple, which will be reduced to ruins. Now, these are very stiff warnings, and they're not the final word. Each of these warning sections is concluded with a striking promise of hope.

So first is a poem about how God is like a shepherd who's going to rescue and regather his flock, which is the remnant of his people. And he's going to bring them all back to good pasture and become their King once more. The second warning section is concluded by picking up this image of the ruined Jerusalem temple, and Micah says this won't be permanent. One day, God is going to exalt this temple. He's going to fill it with his presence and fill the city with the remnant of his people. And so God's purpose is to make Israel the meeting place of heaven and earth, so that all nations will stream to Jerusalem where God becomes the King of all the nations, bringing peace to the earth.

## **Chapters 4b-5**

**03:27-04:13**

Now these two concluding poems of hope, they are very powerful. And the next section of the book actually develops them further in a beautifully designed series of poems that are entirely about the future hope of Israel and the nations.

So we learn that after the Assyrian attack, Israel will be conquered and exiled to Babylon. But from there, God will restore his people and bring them back to their land. And then we learn, in the new Jerusalem, a new messianic king from the line of David will come. He'll be born in Bethlehem and then rule in Jerusalem over the

restored people of God. Finally, in this messianic Kingdom of God, the faithful remnant of God's people will become that blessing among the nations, but at the same time, God will bring his final justice and remove evil from his world.

## Chapters 6-7

04:14-05:40

The final section of the book returns to this pattern of warning followed by hope that we saw in the first parts of the book. So Micah exposes again the unjust economic practices of Israel's leaders and how it's destroying the land and its people. And here, Micah offers his famous words that summarize what it means for Israel to follow their God. "He has told you, O human, what is good and what the Lord requires of you: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." This is exactly what Israel has not been doing, and so they will come to ruin.

However, the book ends with another powerful note of hope. Israel is personified as an individual who is sitting alone in shame and defeat. It's a clear image of Israel's destruction and exile. And this individual is watching for God's mercy, and he begs God to listen and forgive. But why? Why should God listen to and forgive this faithless and rebellious people? Well, the poet offers two reasons. First, he says, because of God's character. "Who is a God like you, who forgives sin and pardons rebellion?" He knows that God's mercy is more powerful than his anger or his judgment. And the second reason is because of God's promises. He says, "You will stay true to Jacob and show covenant love to Abraham, as you swore so long ago."

## Conclusion

05:40-06:38

Now these are the final words of the book. They're an allusion to God's covenant promises to Abraham and his family all the way back in the book of Genesis—that all nations would find God's blessing through Abraham's family. But to become a blessing to the nations, Israel must first be faithful to their God.

And so this explains this back and forth between judgment and hope in the book of Micah. If God's going to bless the nations through Israel, then he must confront and judge the evil among his people. But his judgment is what leads to hope. Because God's covenant love and promise are more powerful than human evil, and his ultimate purpose is not to destroy, it's to save and redeem. Or as the concluding lines of the book put it, "God delights in covenant love, so he will again show compassion. He will trample our evil; he will toss our sins into the depths of the sea." And that's what the book of Micah is all about.