***“Studying the Southern Kingdom Prophets”—Introduction to Micah and Micah 1, Sins Against God***

**Micah was a prophet to Judah, and a younger contemporary of Isaiah (739-690 B.C.), Hosea (753-710 B.C.) and Amos,--during the reign of the Southern Kingdom Kings of Jotham (750-731 B.C.), Ahaz (731-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), and Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea—Northern Kingdom Kings (fell in 722 B.C.) . He prophesied from 40-60 years. He was from the town of Moresheth of Gath, 20 miles SW of Jerusalem, near Lachish.—close to the Philistine border. He prophesied in the latter half of the 8th century B.C. HIS NAME MEANT, “WHO IS LIKE YHWH?”—from the root of the word, “Michael,” “Who is like God?” (In 7:18, Micah does a “play” on his own name, “Who is God like You?”) Sometimes the book of Micah is called: a miniature Book of Isaiah; he was probably a friend of Isaiah’s. (FYI: ISAIAH PREFIXES HIS SECOND CHAPTER WITH THREE VERSES FROM MICAH’S PROPHECY, therefore Micah 4:1-5 matches Isaiah 2:2-4!)And, here’s an interesting side note: the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Joel and Obadiah were ignored by the people; Jeremiah was imprisoned, but Micah’s warnings are heeded, repentance followed and eminent disaster was avoided for over a century! Jonah’s warnings had the same result to Nineveh…..repentance. He was 700 years before Jesus! Remember that in 734 B.C. the Assyrians took all of the North, Israel, captive. In 721 B.C., Shalmanezer of Assyrians overthrew the northern capital, Samaria, and overthrew it, taking their remaining people of the north. Eight years later, Sennacherib, Shalmanezer’s successor, attacked the Southern Kingdom, and you will remember the 185,000 Assyrians which were killed by “The Angel of the Lord” at the outskirts of Jerusalem. The Southern Kingdom survived another 150 years. Micah, like other prophets, presents his treaty in a law/courtroom form; in 1:2, 3:1, and 6:1, Micah begins with oracles “to hear.” One-third of the book targets the sins of the people, one-third looks at God’s punishment which is to come, and another one-third promises hope for the faithful after the judgment.**

**Micah is known for the verse in Micah 5:2, ‘But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet, out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old From everlasting.” At the time of his prophecies, Assyria was a threat to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms and before the Northern Kingdom was taken. Micah is sounding a warning to both Kingdoms!**



**IS THERE A ‘HIDDEN HERO’ IN MICAH? Isaiah is the ‘shining star’ of this period of history….mentioned by Hezekiah, and three other kings. Micah is not. However, he gets his reward and “just do,” Jeremiah 26:4-6, 18-19, 120 years later, points us to the fact that because of Micah’s preaching, the people repented and Jeremiah was spared! Micah’s words were remembered and used by God to help Jeremiah! Micah 6:8 is called, “The Old Testament Sermon on the Mount.”**

**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.”**

1. **Who is Micah?** A man or Mt. Ephraim, but we do know that he had a strong sense of his own calling as a prophet, and he is not the Micah, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, in the reign of Ahab. He was a rural prophet, like Amos, and is pungent and personal, touching and tender.
	1. **Herod’s advisors refer to him in Matthew 2:1-6.**
	2. **Jesus quotes Micah 7:6 in Matthew 10:35-36.**
	3. **See Judges 17:1.**
	4. **Discuss his “calling.” See Micah 3:8.**
	5. **What other Micah’s are there in the Bible?**
		1. **Son of Merib-baal, or Mephibosheth, in I Chronicles 8:34-35.**
		2. **A descendant of Joel the Reubenite, I Chronicles 5:5.**
		3. **From the Kohathite family, a priest in I Chronicles 23:20.**
		4. **A Moarasthite in I Kings 22:8.**
		5. **See Judges 17:1, 2 Chronicles 13:2, and Jeremiah 36:11.**
2. **Why are Samaria and Jerusalem mentioned?** Samaria is the capital of the Northern Kingdom and Jerusalem is the capital of the Southern Kingdom. **Micah lived after the Jewish civil war (Reheboam, son of Solomon, was king during this Civil War).**
3. **Discuss Isaiah’s relationship with Micah. Compare Isaiah 2:2-4 with Micah 4:1-3. Isaiah 2:22-4, “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 all nations shall flow to it.3Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” And Micah 4:1-5, “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, “We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.”2In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. 3And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. 4When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, 5then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. “**
	1. **Compare Micah 3:12 to Jeremiah 26:18, Micah 5:2 parallels with Matthew 2:6, and Micah 7:6 is equal to Mathew 10:35.**
4. **What is the theme of Micah?** Beware what happened in the Northern Kingdom and their sins, because the same thing can happen to the Southern Kingdom. **WARNING!**
	1. **See also Jeremiah 6:10, “To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Indeed their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.”**
	2. **Review Ecclesiastes 4:13, “**Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.
5. **Describe the times in which he lived. Use Judges 18:1, 19:1-29, and 21:25.**
6. **Where is Moresheth? See Micah 1:14. The small country village of Moresheth (also called *Moresheth Gath* in Micah 1:14) was about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem on the border lands between Judah and the Philistines. This means that the prophet Micah was like the prophet Amos, a man from the country sent to the city to bring the word of the Lord. Near the Philistine border.**
7. **What is the date of Micah’s writing? In the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah: This means that Micah ministered as a prophet sometime between the years 739 b.c. (the start of the reign of Jotham) and 686 b.c. (the end of the reign of Hezekiah). Since Hezekiah was a noted reformer, we can surmise that the sin Micah confronted mainly concerns the time before the important reforms of Hezekiah**
	1. **Review 2 Kings 18-20.**

**2-5, “Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *Is it* not Samaria? And what *are* the high places of Judah? *Are they* not Jerusalem?”**

1. **“Hear” is recorded three times in Micah, 1:2, 3:1-5, and 6:1-7:20. Discuss.**
2. **In verse 3, what are the “high places?”**
	1. **What was the sin of the House of Israel? Transgression of Jacob?**
	2. **What did Jeroboam do to bring idolatry to Israel? Review I Kings 12:28.**
3. **Compare with I Peter 4:17.** For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). Jeroboam brings the “golden calf,” pagan worship to Northern Kingdom in Samaria…
4. **Compare verse 4 to Psalm 18:7-10.**
	1. **Examine the fall of great cities of the world, from ancient times until now.**
		1. **Is it prophetical that many great empires endure for about 200 years?**
5. **“High places” are also referenced in 2 Kings 12:3, 14:4 and Ezekiel 6:6.**
	1. **Also see 2 Kings 18:4 where Hezekiah tore down the “high places.”**

**6-7, “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, places for planting a vineyard; I will pour down her stones into the valley, and I will uncover her foundations. All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire; all her idols I will lay desolate, for she gathered *it* from the pay of a harlot, and they shall return to the pay of a harlot.”**

1. **Discuss the judgment on Samaria historically.** I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field: Micah prophesies the coming judgment on Samaria, the capital city of Israel. This was fulfilled in 722 b.c. when Samaria fell to the Assyrians and was completely destroyed.
2. **Examine 2 Kings 17:1-18 in parallel with verse 6.** Micah is here focusing on the Northern Kingdom; in hopes of changing the hearts and minds of the Southern Kingdom…..this is a warning! THE LOCAL DISTURBANCE, ASSYRIAN INVASION, GIVES RISE TO THE PROPHECY OF THE GREATER INVASION IN THE LAST DAYS! **The prophet actually sees two events: the near future and the far future!**
	1. **Review the parallel of the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:14 and 19:17.**
3. **What is the “vineyard” in verse 6? See I Kings 16:24.**
4. **Verse 7 denounces the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom. Examine Amos 2:7-8, Deuteronomy 23:18, Hosea 9:1 and Isaiah 23:17.**
	1. **Compare with New Testament John 8:36.**

**8-9, “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, for her wounds *are* incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of my people; to Jerusalem.”**

1. **What does the use of “jackals and ostriches” imply?**
2. **Verse 8 denotes Micah’s distress. Talk about the use of the phrase, “stripped and naked.”**
	1. **See 2 Samuel 15:30. Is this “mournful” description simply saying that “Micah was going barefoot?”**
	2. **View “wailing like jackals and ostriches.” Use Job 30:29 and Jeremiah 50:39.**
	3. **Discuss Verse 9, “her wounds are incurable.” Man’s heart is incurably wicked.**
		1. **See Jeremiah 17:9.**
		2. **Review Enosh, Seth’s son, who was the first to indulge in idolatry in Genesis 4:26.** Bad translation…..should say: desisted from praying. **THE ORIGINS OF IDOLATRY ARE THE DAYS OF ENOSH.**
		3. **Apply Luke 18:27 to this text.**  Our only **incurable** wounds are the ones we refuse to bring to God. With Him, all things are possible (Luke 18:27), but when we refuse to bring our sin to Him, then our **wounds are incurable**.

**THE REST OF THIS BOOK WILL NOW FOCUS ON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM. MICAH WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MESSAGE BECAUSE HE IS SPECIFIC! IN FACT, SIX OUT OF SIXTEEN VERSES IN THIS CHAPTER LIST SPECIFIC CITIES THAT WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE COMING DISASTER, EVEN HIS HOME TOWN!**

**10-16, “Tell *it* not in Gath, weep not at all; in Beth Aphrah roll yourself in the dust. Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir; the inhabitant of Zaanan does not go out. Beth Ezel mourns; its place to stand is taken away from you. For the inhabitant of Maroth pined for good, but disaster came down from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem. O inhabitant of Lachish, harness the chariot to the swift steeds (she *was* the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion), for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth Gath; the houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel. I will yet bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, because of your precious children; enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they shall go from you into captivity.”**

1. **The following set of cities (verses 10-15) display Micah’s use of “puns/omens” for detail and specificity. Comment.** Following to the end of the chapter, Micah uses puns and plays on words to talk about the judgment coming upon the cities of Judah. These towns are clustered in the ***Shephelah*** - the lowlands between the coastal region and the mountains of Judah. Though Micah uses puns, this isn’t about clever word games - it goes back to the ancient idea that a name isn’t just your “handle” but describes - sometimes prophetically - your *character* and your *destiny*. In showing how the name of these cities is in some way a prophecy of their destiny, Micah shows how our character becomes our future
	1. **Where is Gath?** The city of **Gath** belonged to the Philistines, and it hurts Micah to think that the Philistines will rejoice at the pain of God’s people.
		1. **“Gath” means “weep town.**” This is saying, “Wee not at Weep Town.”
			1. **See 2 Samuel 1:19-20’s use of the same inference, “Tell it not in Gath.”** This is from David’s eulogy for Saul and Jonathan…..in other words, don’t tell our enemies so they can gloat.
	2. **Where is** **Beth Aphrah? “Go ahead and mourn, roll yourself in the dust**” because your judgment is truly something to mourn about. To Micah, **Aphrah** sounds like the Hebrew word for *dust*, so he told the citizens of **Beth Aphrah** to roll in the dust in anticipation of coming judgment.
	3. **Discuss the pun of “Shaphir.”** The name of this town sounds like the word for *beautiful*. It won’t be beautiful for long, and Micah warns the citizens of **Shaphir** to prepare for judgment.
	4. **What about** “**Zaanan**?” The name of this town sounds like the Hebrew word for *exit* or *go out*. When the siege armies come, they won’t *exit* at all - they will be shut up in the city until it falls.
	5. **Examine “Beth Ezel’s” play on words**. The name of this town means *the nearby city*. When the army of judgment comes, it won’t be near and helpful to any other city, rather it will be taken away.
	6. **Why did Micah reference “Maroth**?” The name of this town means *bitterness*, and when the army of judgment comes, the citizens of **Maroth** will know plenty of bitterness.
	7. **See Micah’s ‘word play’ with** **Lachish**. The name of this town sounds like the Hebrew word for *to the chariot horses*. **Lachish** was an important fortress city, and they should go *to the horses* to fight, but ironically they will go *to the horses* to flee the army of judgment. **(She (Lachish) *was* the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion.)**
		1. **Discuss that this town first introduced idolatry in Judah as Jeroboam the son of Nebat had in Israel**; it was the link of idolatry between Israel and Judah. **THE FIRST IDOLATRY IN JUDAH!! This is the link of idolatry to the Northern and Southern Kingdom! This important city was taken years later at the time of Sennacherib’s invasion. He considered its conquest significant enough to have scenes of its encirclement and fall decorate his great palace at Nineveh.**
	8. **What does Micah’s hometown, “Moresheth**” **mean?** The name of this - Micah’s hometown - sounds like the Hebrew word for *betrothed*. Here he speaks of giving the city wedding gifts as she passes from the rule of one “husband” (Judah) to another (the invading army).
	9. **Look at the town “Achzib.” What does its “root” imply?**  **Aczib**: The name of this town sounds like the Hebrew word for *deceitful* or *disappointing*. This city will fall so quickly it will be a deception and a disappointment for Israel.
		1. **Compare this to Jeremiah 15**:18. Achzabim are brooks that are dry in the summer, deceiving the thirty travelers.
	10. **Discuss the town of Mareshah.** The name of this town is related to the Hebrew word for *possessor* or *heir*. The invading army will soon possess this city. SHE WILL BE POSSESSED BY SOMEONE ELSE.
	11. **Examine the term, “Adullam**.” This was the place of refuge for David when he fled from King Saul. It will again be a place of refuge for the high and mighty among Israel, when they are forced to hide out in **Adullam**.
		1. **Reference Joshua 15:35 and I Samuel 22:1**. It will happen again, says Micah, for the aristocracy of Israel will be forced to take refuge in this area.
2. **Discuss the ending of this section in verse 16?** This chapter closes with an appeal to Jerusalem as the parent of her children: the outlying villages.
	1. **Re-visit Mosaic Law which requires trimmed beards—Deuteronomy 14:1.** This was an ultimate form of shame, grief and remorse.
		1. **Reference Isaiah 15:2 and Jeremiah 16:6.**
		2. **See Leviticus 21:5 and Deuteronomy 14:1.** Priests were forbidden to be bald and individuals were forbidden to imitate the heathen.
		3. **“Eagles” and “baldness” are also seen in Obadiah 1:4. Review.**
			1. **Eagles have been traditional symbols of Israel’s enemies, Herod, Rome, Nazi Germany, Britain, Russia, and???America???**
			2. **What was the ending of Israel as a nation?** Civil War after Solomon dies—931 B.C.; 734-732 B.C. –first invasion by Assyria into Northern Kingdom and taken captive by Assyria; 701 B.C. Sennacherib defeated by Angel of the Lord and turned back from Jerusalem; 605 B.C. Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon.
			3. **70 years after taken captive, Judah is released to go home. See 2 Chronicles 36:21.** They were regathered in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.
3. **Why was Micah’s ministry successful when other prophets were not?**
	1. **He personally identified with these people. See Micah 1:8 and 16.**
	2. **Talk about his specificity, town by town.**
	3. **Micah was persistent, served 40-60 years, through three kings.**
	4. **Parallel with Galatians 6:9.**
4. **Sum-up the theme of Micah 1? Apply it to today’s culture.**

**And, here are the promises:**

**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?”**

**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. “**

**Micah 5:2, ‘But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet, out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old From everlasting.”**