

WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



LESSON 8 – MICAH

FACILITATOR'S

Note

In this lesson we will explore the prophecy of Micah. His message, which included visions (“which he saw” in 1:1) addresses both Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, respectively. His message included the threat of judgment and punishment, because of the wickedness into which Israel/Judah had descended, as well as the promise of forgiveness and restoration of their covenantal relationship with God. Micah’s ministry occurred during the reigns of the Judean kings, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Jotham had tried to follow in the footsteps of his father, Uzziah, doing what was right in God’s eyes (2 Chronicles 27:2), but his son Ahaz, did not. Ahaz followed the practices of the wicked kings of the Northern kingdom, worshipping Baal and even engaging in child sacrifice (2 Chronicles 28:1-4), thus influencing Judah (the Southern Kingdom) to look increasingly like their wicked brethren in Samaria. Micah issued threats/warnings of impending punishment from God by the hand of her enemies. The Assyrian empire was pre-eminent during Micah’s lifetime; during Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah’s reigns, Judah was oppressed by Assyria, forced to pay them heavy tribute, and lost life and land to them in various battles. During this same period, the Northern Kingdom was also oppressed by Assyria. In spite of warnings from God through Micah’s older contemporaries, Hosea and Amos, the Northern Kingdom did not repent of her idolatry and sinfulness and God, through the sword of Assyria, crushed Samaria and sent much of Israel into exile. Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah, tried to right the wrongs of his father’s reign, by doing what was right in God’s sight, undertaking major reforms (2 Chronicles 29:1-31:20). Because of his faithfulness to God, no doubt influenced by the preaching of Micah and Micah’s older contemporary, Isaiah, the Assyrian threat to Jerusalem by Sennacherib was belayed by God who intervened, destroying Sennacherib’s army and sending him home to Nineveh in shame. Even so, Judah’s spiritual condition did not improve. Her people were morally bankrupt. The rich enlarged their possessions by driving the less fortunate from their own property (2:1-2); women, children and the poor were stripped of what was rightfully theirs (2:8-9); officials could be bought with bribery and priests and prophets spoke for hire (3:9-11); merchants cheated their patrons (6:10-12). Micah lamented that he could find not one godly person among his people, the best of them was a “thorn hedge” (7:1-4). Eventually, Micah’s warnings of judgment and punishment, including exile, came to pass.

Through this lesson we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS).

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HEAD  → HEART  → HANDS 

We hope that by this study your class participants will not only hear, know, and understand the Word, but that they will also be driven to become the “Living Word” to the world around us. Your role in this process as a class facilitator is very important. Go beyond these lessons to demonstrate how what the Minor Prophets teach us can and should be lived daily. Use your life and the lives of others as examples of this “Living Word” concept.

*As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for this lesson by digging into the Word and reading through the book of **Micah**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **2 Kings 15:32-20:21, 2 Chronicles 27:1-32:33, Jeremiah 26:16-19** as background to the book. As you move through **Micah**, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.*

PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Presentation of introductory material on the prophecy of Micah.
- Understand that God’s character demands that sin be accounted for; it cannot be ignored.
- Recognize that God’s compassion and steadfast love always remain, even in the presence of His judgment and punishment.
- Understand that what God requires of us, what He has made know throughout Scripture, is not worship comprised of ritual but worship that is demonstrated through the practice of justice, mercy and humility.

DISCUSSION STARTERS



(OPTIONAL)

- Can God be both just (sins must be held accountable and receive due punishment) and gracious (a compassionate God who loves and cares for His children) at the same time? How?

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KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From God's Word through Micah

- OVERVIEW

- Author

- The author is identified as Micah of Moresheth
- Moresheth was a town in Judah, approximately 25 miles SW of Jerusalem, located in the Shephelah region between Lachish and Achzib.
 - Moresheth was also known as Moresheth-Gath (Micah 1:14)
 - the city was located near the edge of good farming country
 - the city is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture
- The name Micah, a shortened form of Micaiah, means “who is like Yahweh”
- There are several Micahs mentioned in the OT including:
 - A man of the hill country of Ephraim, mentioned in Judges 17:1-18:31, as part of the discussion regarding the settlement of the tribe of Dan
 - The son of Mephibosheth (Merib-baal) – see 1 Chronicles 8:34,35
 - The first in rank (chief) of the priests of the family of Kohath (1 Chronicles 23:20)
 - A descendant of Joel the Reubenite (1 Chronicles 5:5)
 - Micah of Moresheth – prophet and author of the Book of Micah – whose title, “of Moresheth” may have been used to distinguish him from the prophet Micaiah, son of Imlah, who prophesied during the reign of Ahab, King of Israel (see 1 Kings 22:8ff)
- Unlike Hosea and Amos, we have no information about Micah’s call to be a prophet, or of any of his personal experiences.
 - All we know is what can be inferred from this book, namely, that he was a native of Moresheth and apparently a man of the country, not of the city or palace like his older contemporary, Isaiah
 - His vision and message are not concerned with international politics (e.g. the affairs of Egypt or Assyria)
 - He does not serve as an advisor to kings
 - His focus is primarily on the fate of the farmers in the area of Moresheth-Gath, and their suffering as a result of Israel’s sinfulness and Assyria’s oppression
 - Acknowledgment of his role as a prophet is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah 26:17-19

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○ Date

- The ministry of Micah (see 1:1) occurred during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah
- The reigns of these Judean kings spans a period ranging anywhere from about 20 years (circa 736 B.C. to 716 B.C.) to 55 years (circa 740 B.C. to 686 B.C.)
 - Dating the reigns of the kings is complicated due to co-regency and general lack of precision in ancient times
 - Note: There is evidence to support coregencies of the Judean kings, which if accepted, resolves inconsistencies in the dates of these reigns when coregencies are a priori excluded
 - Jotham was co-regent with Uzziah, circa 751 B.C. to 740 B.C., then reigned until his death, circa 732 B.C.
 - Ahaz was co-regent with Jotham, circa 736 B.C. to 732 B.C., then continued his reign until circa 716 B.C.
 - Hezekiah was co-regent with Ahaz, circa 729 B.C. to 716 B.C., and reigned until his death, circa 686 B.C.
 - Taking the maximal span of Micah's ministry as the time from the start of Jotham's sole reign (otherwise, Uzziah would likely have been mentioned) until the time of Hezekiah's death yields 54-55 years
 - Taking the minimal span of Micah's ministry to be a little more than the span from the beginning of Ahaz's sole reign until its end yields about 20-21 years

○ Key Theme(s)

- God will not overlook the sins of His people; His character demands judgment and punishment for their sins.
- God's compassion and steadfast love always remain, even in the face of judgment and punishment
- True worship of God entails not just ritual but an imitation of His love shown through the practice of justice, mercy and humility
- **ASK:**
 - Do these themes still speak/apply to us today?

○ Micah in the New Testament

- The prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem-Ephrathah was uttered by Micah (5:2) and it was recognized/accepted as such by the Jewish scholars of Jesus' day (Matthew 2:1-6)
- Jesus uses the words of Micah 7:6 -- Micah's lament over the treachery between people, even family members, in his day -- to describe the impact that His own work/ministry would have on society (Matthew 10:35-36)

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o Historical Background

- Micah's period of ministry began after, but overlapped, the ministries of his older contemporaries, Isaiah (who prophesied in Jerusalem) and Hosea (who prophesied to the Northern Kingdom)
- As seen in 1:1, Micah's ministry occurred during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah
- Under King Ahaz's reign (circa 736-716 B.C.), Judah spiraled downward into sin and idolatry (2 Kings 16:1-4; 2 Chronicles 28:1-7; 22—27)
 - Ahaz, unlike his father Jotham, did not do what was right
 - Ahaz followed the wicked practices of the kings of Israel, worshipped and served the Baals, and sacrificed his sons in the fire as an offering
- Early in Ahaz's reign, circa 735 B.C., Judah came under attack in the Syro-Ephraimitic war and suffered much loss -- life and land (see 2 Kings 16:5-6; 2 Chronicles 28:1-19)
 - Syria under King Rezin, and Israel (Northern Kingdom) under King Pekah, were trying to form an anti-Assyrian alliance to oppose the ever-expanding Assyrian empire
 - Syria and Israel tried to compel Judah, and neighboring states, to join the alliance but Judah (Ahaz) refused, inciting Rezin and Pekah to attack Jerusalem in an effort to depose Ahaz
 - Syria wrested Elath from Judah, giving it to the Edomites, and took many Judean captives back to Damascus, and Israel killed many Judeans
 - Judah also suffered loss (life and land) from Edomite and Philistine raiding parties
- Ahaz requested/received some help from Assyria to maintain his state/kingship, but at the cost of heavy tribute for the rest of his reign (2 Kings 16:7-9; 2 Chronicles 28:16-21)
- Assyrian aid to Judah led to campaigns in Syria-Palestine (733-732 B.C.) in which Tiglath-Pileser III conquered/captured Damascus, killed Rezin, captured/annexed large portions of northern Israel, and carried away many Israeli captives to Assyria (2 Kings 16:9, 2 Kings 15:29)
- The Assyrian war machine dismantled Syria and Israel (Northern kingdom) in stages, until Shalmaneser V destroyed Samaria (Israel's capital) and sent into exile thousands of those living in the Northern Kingdom, circa 723 B.C. His successor, Sargon II, carried off even more, circa 721 B.C., resettling Samaria with foreigners in their place (2 Kings 17:24).
- Assyrian oppression of Judah (Southern Kingdom) was present throughout the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah
 - Ahaz paid heavy tribute to Assyria to maintain his seat of power

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- Circa 711 B.C., after the fall of Samaria, Assyria (under Sargon II) crushed the Philistines at Ashdod (Isaiah 20), and threatened Judah, winning many battles in Palestine (per records Sargon left behind in his palace at Khorsabad)
- Unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah, king of Judah, had resisted the Assyrian yoke (2 Kings 18:7), inciting Sennacherib to march to Jerusalem, circa 701B.C. to demand its surrender and much tribute
 - The march to Jerusalem entailed many battles in neighboring towns
 - Lachish, a town very near Micah's hometown of Moresheth-Gath, was besieged and destroyed.
 - Sennacherib considered the conquest important enough to decorate the walls of his great palace at Nineveh with scenes of Lachish's encirclement and destruction (the reliefs are now in the British Museum), and inscriptions boasting of how he took 46 of Hezekiah's walled cities and trapped him in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage
- Hezekiah and Jerusalem were spared from destruction as God intervened, destroying Sennacherib's army (2 Kings 18:13-19:36), but the damage to Judah, especially Micah's territory, was severe
- **THE TEXT**
 - The text of Micah can be divided into 4 major sections:
 - Section 1 – Judgment of Israel/Judah for their sins (Chapters 1-3)
 - Section 1A – Judgment for their sins against God (1:1-16)
 - Section 1B – Judgment for their sins against one another (2:1-13)
 - Section 1C – Judgment for the sins of their leaders (3:1-12)
 - Section 2 – The Coming Kingdom (4:1-13)
 - Section 3 – The Coming Shepherd-King (5:1-15)
 - Section 4 – The Indictment, Coming Punishment and Restoration (6:1-7:20)
 - **Section 1A (1:1-16) Judgment for Sins Against God**
 - Chapter 1 deals with God's pronouncement of judgment against his people, both Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) for their sinfulness, and in particular, their sins against Him -- chiefly, idolatry.
 - 1-4: Micah announces that God Himself will come down from heaven and march against Judah and Israel, treading on the high places
 - The high places generally referred to the locations where pagan altars were erected and idol worship took place (2 Kings 12:3, 14:4, Ezekiel 6:6)

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- 5: God will do so because of the sins of Israel and Judah, in particular, their idolatry is called out
 - Samaria, the capital of Israel, was the center of idol worship in the Northern Kingdom
 - Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, was also engaged in idolatry, -- hence it was called the "high place of Judah" -- a trend that grew worse under King Ahaz
- 6-7: God pronounces His judgment on Israel: Samaria will be razed and all her idols destroyed
 - The punishment was carried out by Assyria in stages, circa 733-721 B.C.
 - During the consecutive reigns of the Assyrian kings, Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, most of the Northern Kingdom was captured/destroyed (including Samaria), its people deported to Assyria, and its lands resettled by foreigners that the Assyrians brought in from other conquered lands (see notes in Historical Background above)
- 8-9: Micah laments the situation for Israel because nothing can stop the destruction that is coming from God because of her sin – "her wound is incurable" – and sadly, the same holds for his Judean countrymen and those in Jerusalem – "it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem."
- 10-15: Micah gives specifics of the destruction that will come to Judah through the use of a series of puns (the longest sustained list of puns in the OT) that describe the towns that will fall to a conquering army (1:15)
 - Some of the city names listed are well-known (Gath, Lachish, Mareshah, Achzib, Adullam) while others are unknown (Beth-le-aphrah, Shaphir, Zaanan, Beth-ezel, Maroth) but in all cases, Hebrew word play is present to describe Micah's dismay at the coming destruction
 - Gath – Micah quotes a phrase, "Tell it not in Gath," from David's elegy for Jonathan and Saul who died by the hands of the Philistines (2 Samuel 1:20). The phrase had become a proverbial saying in Israel that expressed disapproval for the malicious joy that their hostile Philistine neighbors felt over misfortunes that befell Israel. Gath signified "Tell town" and Micah is saying, "Tell it not in Tell town, weep not all because misfortune is definitely coming, so don't let the Philistines see your tears and rejoice.
 - Beth-le-aphrah – means "house belonging to Aphrah" or "house of dust." People would sprinkle or cover themselves with dust as a common practice/sign of mourning. Micah's phrase, then, means there will be great mourning, for those who live in the

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house of dust will roll themselves in it because the devastation is so great.

- Shaphir – sounds like the Hebrew word for “beautiful.” The inhabitants of “beautiful” will not be beautiful for long, as they will be marched away naked and in shame.
 - Zanaan – sounds like the Hebrew word for “exit,” “march,” or “go out.” In contrast, the inhabitants of Zanaan will be shut up inside their city, unable to exit/go out (perhaps cowering in fear of the enemy)
 - Beth-ezel – means “House of Taking Away.” Beth-ezel is lamenting that their village was taken away, i.e., destroyed.
 - Maroth – means (or conveys the concept of) bitterness. The inhabitants of Maroth will writhe in bitterness, longing for good to come.
 - Lachish – the Hebrew word for “steeds” sounds like Lachish. The city was a well-known military city about 30 miles SW of Jerusalem, famous for its chariot horses. In 1:13, however, the inhabitants are urged to harness their steeds to chariots not to do battle but to flee; the verse also implies that Judah’s idolatrous practices first began in Lachish.
 - Moresheth-gath – sounds like the Hebrew for “one who is betrothed.” So Micah speaks of giving the city wedding gifts as she (the bride) passes from the oversight/rule of her own family to the authority of her new (and cruel) husband, the invading conqueror (namely, Assyria).
 - Achzib – sounds like the Hebrew for “deceitful, disappointing.” The houses of Achzib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. (Achzabim are brooks that are dry in the summer, and thus, deceptive to thirsty travelers -- see Jeremiah 15:18.)
 - Mareshah – is related to the word, yoresh, the Hebrew word for “conqueror” or “dispossessor.” The inhabitants of Mareshah will themselves be conquered.
 - Adullam – the town to which David fled when he was pursued by Saul (1 Samuel 22:1). David’s descendants will themselves be forced to flee to Adullam.
- Taking the unknown towns to be real based on their association with the known towns that are listed, it is reasonable to infer that Micah was seeing (1:1) the advance of the Assyrian army through southwest Judah, Micah’s country, on its way to Jerusalem

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- Though the towns lay to the southwest of Jerusalem, they would be on the route typically traveled by invading armies coming from the north who would go southward on the traditional path, called the Great Trunk Road, until they reached Gath.
- 16: Judah will be exiled, in shame and reproach, with no hope for reprieve
 - Baldness was worn as a sign of shame, grief and remorse (Isaiah 15:2, Jeremiah 16:6)
 - A rebuke is issued to Judah. Viewing her as a parent whose children are all her villages/people, she is instructed to shave her head in mourning, for her children will be exiled.
- **ASK:**
 - Micah lamented that the punishment coming to his nation because of their sinfulness could not be stopped “for her wound is incurable” (1:9). People/nations can reach the point of no return, as also seen in Nahum. How do you feel about the nation in which you live? Is its wound beyond cure? Discuss.
- **Section 1B (2:1-13) Judgment for Sins Against One Another**
 - Chapter 2 continues God’s pronouncement of judgment on His people for their sinfulness, in particular, for their sins against one another – chiefly, the sins of the rich and powerful against their fellow Israelites, and the sins of the religious leaders (e.g. false prophets) who supported the leaders and influential rich and denounced God’s true spokesmen.
 - These verses do not clearly identify which of the two kingdoms, Northern (Israel) or Southern (Judah), is being addressed, so both should be held in view
 - 1-5: Accusation is made and sentence issued against the powerful who plot and carry out schemes by which they steal land/property from others to make themselves rich
 - 1: They do this because they can, no one can stop them
 - 2: “they oppress a man and his house...”: the Hebrew for “oppress” implies the use of violence
 - An obvious example is found in 1 Kings 21:1-16, where Ahab and Jezebel had Naboth murdered so that they could claim his vineyard
 - 3-5: God promises disaster for these wicked oppressors. They’ve coveted and seized land/property to which they had no claim, so they will suffer the same fate: their land/inheritance will be seized and never returned.
 - 4: “he changes ...; how he removes ...” – He could be God or the apostate who seizes the land of the oppressors. In either case, the oppressors receive their just due.

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- Recall land-grabbing and transfer of estates/land from tribe-to-tribe was prohibited by the Mosaic Law (see Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 36:7)
- 6-11: God calls out the false prophets who were trying to silence Micah, the rich and powerful who were mistreating women and children, and He repeats His promised sentence of exile (cf 1:16)
 - 6: The false prophets and influential did not like/want to hear any bad news from Micah. Attempts to silence the true prophetic voice occurred often in Scripture (e.g. Amos 7:10-16)
 - 7: Micah's rhetorical questions emphasize that the bad news he is delivering is the fault of the people, not God. God is no less patient or compassionate than before; rather, His people have become godless, they do not walk uprightly.
 - 8-9: It was as if God's people had "risen up as an enemy" against Him! They robbed peaceful passers-by of their clothes, women of their homes, children of their inheritance.
 - 10: They will be exiled, driven from the land they have polluted by their wicked deeds
 - The Canaanites were expelled from their land because of their wicked practices, and their land was given to Israel. (Leviticus 18:3-30; Deuteronomy 18:9)
 - God's people have become wicked, so as with the Canaanites, they will be expelled
 - 11: A final scathing comment: The prophet that the people most liked/accepted would be one who preached overindulgence – plenty of wine and strong drink for all!
- 12-13: God, the Shepherd of Israel, promises to gather all His people together into the fold under His leadership and protection
 - God typically, after delivering a harsh message of judgment, ends with a note of hope/restoration (Hosea, Joel, Amos and Obadiah also end in this way)
 - 12: "... gather the remnant of Israel": the remnant of Israel may refer to refugees from the Assyrian invasion and deportation (which may not have occurred yet) or it could refer to a future exile (e.g. destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar)
 - 13: God is the Shepherd-King who opens the breach and leads the people out

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- **ASK:**
 - Micah's people, as described in 2:8-9, were not upright and would be unrecognizable as "people of God." How about you? How about the congregation of which you are a part? Are you recognizable as God's people? How so? Explain.
- **Section 1C (3:1-12) Judgment for Sins of the Leaders**
 - Chapter 3 continues God's pronouncement of judgment on His people for their sinfulness, in particular, for the sins of Israel's leaders.
 - 1-4 – Judgment against the rulers/heads, i.e. civil leaders such as judges, magistrates
 - Among all the people of Israel, the leaders should know, value and practice justice, and yet, their conduct is heinous
 - Micah likens them to cannibals, butchers or wild beasts who violently feed on their own people
 - Micah utters God's judgment against them: He will ignore them when they cry out to Him for help; He will hide his face from them because what they do is evil
 - 5-8 – Judgment against the prophets
 - Prophets are to declare God's word to help people stay on the right path, walking per His word, but most of them are false prophets, doing just the opposite, actually leading the people astray.
 - Per Micah, these prophets preach good news as long as the people provide for them and keep their bellies full, otherwise, they become hostile toward the people –these prophets care nothing for the truth.
 - Micah utters God's judgment against them: they will receive no more vision from Him. Though they seek an answer from Him, there will be none. Like the erring civil leaders who will receive no answer from God, so also these erring prophets will receive no vision.
 - Micah, as a true prophet (filled with the Spirit and seeking to do what is right and just) will continue to declare to his people the truth about their sins, whether they like it or not.
 - 9-12 – Final judgment against all leaders (civil leaders, prophets and priests) resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem
 - 9: "Hear this, you ...": Micah cautions all the leaders to listen to the judgment he is about to pronounce.
 - 10-11: Their conduct has been wicked, they pervert justice, and they perform their duties in any manner that brings them compensation: the civil leaders accept bribes, the priests teach for (demand) a fee, and the prophets practice divination for money. And these leaders actually

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believe/claim that they have God's blessing because they are His people, and so, no harm will befall them. It's disgusting.

- 12: Micah delivers the harsh truth to them – because of their wickedness, Jerusalem will be completely destroyed.
 - With this utterance, Micah is the first OT prophet to predict the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple – not a popular message
 - This prediction was fulfilled later, during the final Babylonian invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem and the Temple were razed, circa 586 B.C.
 - This prophecy, about 120 years later, saved the life of Jeremiah, who prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and was seized by the priests and false prophets who disliked his message and demanded he be put to death (see Jeremiah 26:1-24).
- **ASK:**
 - Micah's description of the sins of the rulers, prophets and priests showed that corruption was rampant – officials could be bought with bribes, prophets and priests demanded/accepted money to tell people what they wanted to hear. Do you see those same sins present in our nation or have we risen above that?
 - What was the task of the true prophet, according to Micah? (see 3:8)
 - Are you a prophet, and do you have the same task? Explain.
- **Section 2 (4:1-13) The Coming Kingdom**
 - Following the stern accusations and punishments of the first three chapters, Chapter 4 provides encouragement and hope in the promise of a glorious restoration of Jerusalem/Judah that will be accomplished in the last days.
 - 1-5: The last days are a unique time, during which Zion will be the center (focus) of the world, and all nations will stream there in peace to seek the knowledge and will of the Lord.
 - The "last days" are certainly future to Micah's time, and per Hebrews 1:2, seem to be the Christian age (time following the resurrection/ascension of Christ)
 - vv1-3 are basically identical to Isaiah 2:2-4; it is not known if Isaiah quoted Micah, Micah quoted Isaiah, or they each quoted some common earlier source.
 - "mountain of the house of the Lord" : an idiomatic expression whose meaning is debated
 - To Israel/Judah, this would have been taken to mean the Temple mount in Jerusalem.

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- Many Christians take this to mean the church, and in particular, Christ
- Other interpreters take this literally to mean the Temple mount, and that due to structural changes they believe will occur when Jesus returns (Zechariah 14:1-10), will actually become physically higher than its neighboring mounts (per [2]).
- “For out of Zion shall go forth the law...”: this was believed by the early church fathers to refer to the Christian Age (per [1]).
- He (God) shall reign decisively and effectively from Zion (v3)
- This period in the last days that Micah describes is marked as a time of:
 - Freedom from ignorance of the Law of God, as nations flow to Zion to learn of God’s will/ways (vv1-2)
 - Freedom from war, as nations stop fighting and cease training for war (v3).
 - If taken literally, then this period, though we are in the last days, has clearly not yet occurred.
 - If not taken literally, a meaningful interpretation is elusive
 - Freedom from want (v4)
 - Freedom from fear (v4)
- 5: Although the heathen peoples were worshipping their various gods, Micah’s people (Judah/Israel) would hold to the God of Israel forever and ever – instrumental in bringing about the fulfillment of what is described in vv1-4.
 - 6-8: God promises to gather Judah/Israel together and return Zion to greatness
 - “In that day”: during the period of the latter days described in vv1-4
 - 6: For the glories of vv1-4 to be attained, Israel/Judah must be gathered from the dispersion/afflictions God imposed upon them
 - This passage looks far ahead, for at the time Micah received it, Judah (and possibly Israel, i.e., the Northern Kingdom) had not yet been exiled
 - Note that it is God who exiles/afflicts AND gathers
 - 7: The Lord will reign forever from Mount Zion over those He gathers
 - The gathered (or some portion of it) are spoken of as a remnant, a key idea in Scripture
 - Only a remnant of Israelites came out of Egypt and entered Canaan
 - Only a remnant of Israel held to God during the days of Ahab, while the rest worshipped Baal (1 Kings 19:18)

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- A remnant of Judah was preserved during the invasion of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:20-31)
 - A remnant of Judah was preserved in the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 36:15-20)
 - Only a remnant of Israel had saving faith like Abraham (Romans 9:1-11:10)
 - God's reign from Mount Zion, once the gathering occurs, will be forever
 - Mount Zion, if taken literally, is Jerusalem
- 8: God promises a return of dominion and kingship to Israel
 - A promise of return to dominion carries with it the idea of the greatness of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon
 - This passage looks far ahead, to a time when kingship in Judah/Israel would no longer be present as it still was in the days of Micah
 - The kingship will return
 - The kingship ceased when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the people (most, not all) were exiled to Babylon
 - The return of the king was announced to Mary and is realized in Jesus (Luke 1:26-33)
 - The phrases "tower of flock" and "hill" (or "stronghold") may refer to literal places
 - "tower of the flock": in Hebrew, the phrase is Migdal-Eder (Shepherd's Tower), mentioned in Genesis 35:21 as being near Bethlehem
 - "hill (or stronghold)": in Hebrew, Ophel. An area on the SE slope of the Temple hill, opposite Mount Zion. It was fortified during Micah's ministry by Jotham (2 Chronicles 27:3) and Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33:14)
- 9-10: Now Micah switches the focus back to the present, to the dark times that Israel/Judah must now endure before the glories of vv1-8 can come to pass
 - Exile to Babylon is promised.
 - This occurred much later (roughly 120 years) when Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar; exiles were taken in waves, with the first beginning circa 606/605 B.C., and the last circa 587/586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed

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- Isaiah also prophesied of exile to Babylon after Hezekiah unwisely flaunted his wealth/treasures before Babylonian emissaries (Isaiah 39:1-8)
- God says that He is exiling them to rescue them (from themselves).
 - Israel's descent into sin/idolatry had made her utterly corrupt as declared in Chapters 1-3
 - Their suffering from invasion/exile will purify them
 - It is important to note that once the exiles returned from Babylon per Cyrus' decree, Israel never again had a problem with idolatry
- 11-13: Many nations will assemble to oppose Judah/Israel, per God's plan, but they will be unsuccessful as God's people will prevail
 - 11: The nations assemble for the purpose of defiling Zion, i.e., they have contempt for Israel and want them to suffer
 - 12: This assembly is actually the Lord's doing, part of His plan to gather the enemies of Israel together just as sheaves are gathered to the threshing floor
 - Threshing is the process (after harvesting) by which the edible part of a crop (e.g. cereal grain) is loosened from the inedible chaff that encompasses it.
 - Winnowing is the follow-on process which separates the loosened edible part from the chaff
 - Which nations are in view is unclear
 - The Assyrian empire was oppressing Judah/Israel during much of Micah's reign, leading up to the 701 B.C. siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (see Historical Background above)
 - The Babylonian empire would next oppress Judah, ultimately destroying Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.
 - The view could be far looking, to enemies future to the return of the exiles from Babylon (this view has in its favor v13 which does not describe Judah/Israel as they were prior to the exile)
 - The view could also be a general summary of Israel's unassailability, i.e., their ability to persist (as they have to this day) in spite of concentrated efforts to exterminate them
 - 13: God makes Jerusalem (daughter of Zion) an unassailable ox – iron horns, bronze hoofs -- that treads out the grain
 - The nations are threshed, Israel triumphs
 - All this brings glory to God, the Lord of the whole earth

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- ASK:
 - To what do you think “the mountain of the house of the Lord” (4:1) refers? Why?
 - In contrast to 4:3, nations today are still fighting and training for war, so what/when are these “latter days” of 4:1? Explain.
- **Section 3 (5:1-15) The Coming Shepherd-King**
 - The message of hope regarding the Coming Kingdom of Chapter 4 continues in this chapter with the promise of the coming Shepherd-King, his leadership and greatness, God’s delivery/restoral of the remnant of Israel, and God’s vengeance upon the disobedient nations.
 - 1-5a: The Shepherd-King
 - 1: Micah, as in 4:9, 11, focuses for a moment on the darkness that Judah/Israel faces now, in his time.
 - “muster your troops, daughter of troops”: the Hebrew involves word play which implies that Zion (Jerusalem) will not be able to assemble an army to defend itself
 - “strike the judge of Israel on the cheek” : refers to shameful treatment of Israel’s king
 - This verse may have in view the 701 B.C. invasion by Assyria under Sennacherib and his treatment of Hezekiah (see 2 Chronicles 32:9-15) or the 586 B.C. invasion by Babylonia under Nebuchadnezzar and his treatment of Zedekiah (see Jeremiah 39:1-8)
 - 2: The promised ruler for Israel will come out of Bethlehem-Ephrathah
 - There were other Bethlehems (see Joshua 19:15), so Ephrathah uniquely identifies it as the one about 6 miles SW of Jerusalem, where David was born
 - Bethlehem means “House of Bread” – note that out of this little town came forth the “Bread of Life” (see John 6:32-51)
 - “from you shall come forth **for me**”: this ruler’s reign is decreed by God to serve God’s purposes
 - “whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days” : an allusion to the pre-existence of the ruler, to the commitment before the foundation of the world that this ruler would come (see Acts 2:23; Ephesians 1:4)
 - The Jews of Jesus’ day knew this passage to be a prediction of the Messiah’s birthplace (see Matthew 2:1-6)
 - 3: Israel shall be given up after the loss of their king (v1), i.e., subjected to rule by her enemies, until the promised ruler is born

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- 4-5a: The promised ruler is a great shepherd who shall lead his people with strength, provide them protection/security, and whose greatness is recognized by all nations
 - This depicts the Lord Jesus as the Great Shepherd of his flock
 - Jesus Himself summarizes this role in John 10:1-18:
 - He gives an abundant life to his sheep (v10)
 - He leads his sheep (v16)
 - He lays down His life for the sheep (vv 11,15,17,18)
 - He knows His sheep and they know Him (v14)
- 5b-6: The Shepherd-King delivers His people from the Assyrian
 - “seven shepherds and eight princes”: a Hebraic rhetorical device (see Ecclesiastes 11:2, Proverbs 6:16)
 - This is a difficult passage to understand if the Assyrian is taken to be the literal Assyrian king (Sennacherib) that threatened Judah in the days of Micah, as the Shepherd-King did not emerge until much later, so the view is likely still in the future (set by v3, “until the time”) when the ruler comes
 - If the Assyrian is taken metaphorically to be the enemy of God’s people in any age, then the passage can imply that faithful followers of the Shepherd-King who lead in His place will preserve God’s people and extend the Messiah’s rule even among the Assyrians (Gentiles, in general)
 - Some interpreters (dispensational pre-millennialists) take this passage literally and believe it refers to a time yet to come, when Christ, upon His return, will deliver Israel from attacking nations (and the Assyrian)
 - The land of Assyria = land of Nimrod; Nimrod was the original founder of both Babel (Babylon) and Assyria (see Genesis 10:10-11)
- 7-9: God promises to preserve/deliver a remnant of His people from their adversaries
 - The remnant live in the midst of other nations
 - Like dew from the Lord or showers upon grass, the remnant will be a blessing to the nations in which they are found
 - The remnant is assured of victory, her enemies cut off by God
- 10-15: The Lord also promises He will cleanse His people of all their carnal aids in which they’ve trusted – making them holy – and punish the nations who disobey Him
 - “And in that day” : this is yet future to the time of Micah
 - He will cut off horses and chariots -- removing trust in military might as security against enemies (vv10-11)
 - He will cutoff sorceries, fortune tellers – removing trust in the occult (v12)

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- Seeking this knowledge was forbidden (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)
 - Note that sorcery typically involves use of drugs
- He will cutoff carved images, pillars, Asherah poles – removing idolatry and trust/dependence on false gods (vv13-14)
- He will pour out His wrath on the nations who disobeyed Him (v15)
 - Presumably, those who disobeyed are those that did not seek His will/guidance as done by the nations of 4:1-3
- **ASK:**
 - The Messianic hope, the promise of his birth and reign, are developed in Micah 5. Who/what is “the Assyrian” (5:5-6) from whom the Messiah provides deliverance for his people? Explain.
 - Who/what is the remnant of Jacob delivered by God (5:7-9)? Explain.
 - What does God destroy/remove from among the remnant in 5:10-15, and is this consistent (does it make sense) with who you believe the remnant to be? Explain.
- **Section 4 (6:1-7:20) The Indictment, Coming Punishment and Restoration**
 - In this final section, Micah presents God indictment against His people, His promise of the punishment that He will deliver, but also the promise of a final restoration with Him.
 - 6:1-5 – The courtroom scene
 - Micah presents a court session where the people of Israel are summoned to court, with the mountains and hills as the jury; God is the plaintiff, Israel the defendant (vv1-2)
 - Instead of immediately citing His charges against Israel, God first does a surprising thing: He asks, “What am I guilty of?”
 - The question is a rhetorical device He uses to remind them of all He has done for them and the absurdity of any charge they may try to make against Him. After all, He reminds them that:
 - He brought them out of Egypt, delivering them from slavery
 - He appointed godly leaders in their midst – Moses, Aaron and Miriam
 - He commanded Balaam to bless the people, even though Balak hired him to curse the Israelites
 - He blessed them through the entire journey out of Egypt, and in spite of their disobedience, brought them across the Jordan, from Shittim to Gilgal, into the Promised Land
 - “from Shittim to Gilgal” is a convicting reminder

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- Shittim was the last place the Israelites camped, before crossing the Jordan, and was also where they broke the covenant with God – the men indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women and the people participated in the sacrificial meal to Baal of Peor, the false gods of Moab
 - Balaam had advised Balak of how he could lead the Israelites into sin and thus incur God’s wrath upon them (see Numbers 31:13-16 and Revelation 2:14), namely, “if you can’t fight them, join them and corrupt from within.”
- Gilgal was the first place the Israelites camped, after crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, and there, the covenant with God was renewed
 - So what is God really guilty of, other than being patient, compassionate and merciful, in preserving His covenantal relationship with Israel?
- 6:6-8 – The people’s response to God’s questions, and His reply
 - The people reply to God’s demand for an answer with four rhetorical questions, all of which ask the same basic thing, namely, “How can any person approach God and enter into His presence? (Good question!)
 - The four questions presuppose that there is some kind of sacrifice that can be offered as the price for entering God’s presence
 - The cost of the sacrifice posed in each question increases to the point of absurdity, ending with the sacrifice of one’s firstborn child
 - Sadly, some of the Israelites did participate in child sacrifice (e.g. Ahaz, who was king of Judah in Micah’s time – see 2 Kings 16:3)
 - The questions show a lack of understanding of God’s mercy and grace
 - Micah reminds the people of what God really wants: “to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (6:8)
 - This is a basic truth that has always been expressed by God (and Scripture)
 - (Genesis 18:19-20) Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on earth shall be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”
 - (Deuteronomy 10:12-13) And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with

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all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

- 6:9-12 – God's indictment against Israel
 - God cries out to the city (perhaps Jerusalem) and cites His charges against the people of Israel
 - The charges involve injustice, violence and deception by His people
 - There are some who made themselves wealthy by dishonest business practices, in spite of the fact that God explicitly condemned/forbade this behavior (Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-16)
 - Some had made themselves wealthy through violence
 - Deceitful speech and lying is rampant among the people
 - God hates all these actions (Proverbs 6;16-19) and He is holding them accountable
- 6:13-16 – God's sentence for their wickedness
 - He will strike them a severe blow for their crimes (v13)
 - The sentence, vv14-15, promises them they will suffer hunger, difficult financial times, and enemies, despite all their efforts. (After all, the weather, the nations' leaders, the economies of the world are all under His control.)
 - Per God, the people have behaved in the manner of Omri and Ahab, arguably the two most wicked kings of Israel (see 1 Kings 16:25-33).
 - Under their leadership, the Northern Kingdom went completely astray, descending into flagrant idolatry, dishonesty, impurity, violence, lying and deceitfulness.
 - Omri founded/built Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom and the seat of idolatry in Israel
 - Ahab (and Jezebel) made Samaria infamous by erecting there a temple to Baal.
 - Therefore, the people will become desolate and an object of scorn. (v16)
- **ASK:**
 - In Micah 6:8 (one of the most famous OT passages), we are told that what God really requires of us is this: to do justice, to love mercy (or kindness), and to walk humbly with your God.
 - Are you able to do these things by your own strength?
 - Does God provide you help to do them? If so, how?

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- The message of 6:8 is not unique to Micah. What other passages in Scripture (and the OT in particular) can you point to which describe man's duty to God?
- 7:1-6 – The inevitable societal consequences of rampant sin
 - Micah laments the times in which he lives. Typically, when fields were gleaned after harvest, some leftovers were found, but Micah's search for anyone good among the people has turned up empty – there seems to be no godly remnant present (v1)
 - The good man has vanished, ungodliness abounds everywhere, each person thinks only of himself, officials are corrupt (vv1-4)
 - There is treachery and disloyalty, even among the closest family members; no one can be trusted (vv5-6)
 - Jesus uses the words of Micah 7:6 to describe the impact His ministry/work will have upon society (Matthew 10:35-36)
- 7:7-13 There is still hope because repentance and faith move Yahweh to act
 - Micah uses I/me in these verses to denote not just himself but all Zion
 - He cautions the enemies of Israel, who wanted to see Zion defiled (v4:11), not to rejoice because the LORD will still rescue Zion (vv7-8)
 - Zion must accept its judgment and punishment from God because she is guilty but God will still plead her cause like an advocate in court and ultimately restore her (v9)
 - God will then shame her enemies that taunted her and sought her destruction (v10)
 - Calls to mind the Assyrian's taunt to Jerusalem that God would not rescue them from Sennacherib's hand (2 Kings 18:19-37)
 - Zion's restoral will be seen by all, her boundaries will be extended as people pour to her from everywhere (Assyria, Egypt and beyond), while outside her, the world is a wasteland without hope (vv11-13)
 - This likely refers to the extension of salvation and covenantal relationship with Him to the Gentiles
- 7:14-20 God (Yahweh) restores His covenantal relationship with Israel
 - 14: Micah utters a prayer to God that He would once again shepherd His flock Israel, feed and protect them, as He did "in days of old" (likely referring to the days of David and Solomon – compare 1 Kings 4:25 and Micah 4:4)
 - 15: God responds that He will show them marvelous things just like He did back during the exodus out of Egypt (referring to all the miracles He performed)

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- 16-17: Micah continues, acknowledging that just like the nations responded in fear to the Israelites as they came out of Egypt, once again, the nations will see God's power and turn to Him in wonder, fear and dread.
- 18-20: Micah closes his prayer, praising God for His unequalled ("Who is a God like you") mercy, love, compassion and faithfulness to His promises
- **ASK:**
 - Micah laments the disappearance of the godly man, it seems there are none to be found among his people, and no one can be trusted. Do you feel that way sometimes about the nation in which you live?
 - What hope did Micah find in the midst of this despairing time, and can you have the same hope? Explain.
 - Micah's closes his prophetic message (7:18-20) with praise for God's faithfulness to His covenantal promises. Are his statements applicable to our covenant under Christ today? Explain.
- **REFERENCES**
 - [1] Jack P. Lewis, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Book House, 1988. ISBN: 0-8010-5509-1
 - [2] Chuck Missler, *The Prophets to the Southern Kingdom, A Commentary*, Koinonia House, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-57821-501-0

UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Micah today?

WISDOM ✋ HANDS

- What messages did you hear in this lesson that need to be shared with people you know?
- Who in your group of friends or family do you need to share the message with TODAY? Think specifically.
- Commit to each other that you will have the courage to share the message. Pray NOW and then pray for each other through the week to have the boldness to share.

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PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Ask God to help you in sharing His Gospel message of Love and Grace to a lost world. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts through this study so that we may know Him more and develop an intimate relationship with Him.

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SEMESTER OUTLINE (SPRING 2016)

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS – Why Study This? (January 3)
2. HOSEA – PART 1 (January 10)
3. HOSEA – PART 2 (January 17)
4. JOEL (January 24)
5. AMOS (January 31)
6. OBADIAH & NAHUM (February 7)
7. JONAH (February 14)
8. MICAH (February 21)
9. HABAKKUK (February 28)
10. ZEPHANIAH (March 6)
11. HAGGAI (March 13)
12. ZECHARIAH – PART 1 (April 3)
13. ZECHARIAH – PART 2 (April 10)
14. MALACHI (April 17)
15. CONCLUSION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS (April 24)