



Micah exhorts the Israelites to repent.

## **The Prophet Micah** **Youthful Eyes Saw Carnage of Hometown** **Adult Visions Saw Total Destruction of Jerusalem**

The prophet Micah is the author of the Holy Book of Micah. His name means "one who is like God". Living between approximately 737 BC and 690 BC, the prophet Micah grew up to have prophetic visions. His contemporary prophets would be Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Jeremiah prophesied about thirty years after the prophet Micah. The Holy Book of Micah paralleled with the Holy Book of Isaiah. The historical account of this prophet's prophecies assures us that his visionary warnings were of utmost importance although written in brief words.

During his childhood, the prophet Micah was surrounded with carnage, chaos, plunder, and tragedy brought about by the deferent, non-engaging spirit of those who called themselves believers. Such people were believers by name only since they had no genuine moral characteristics that would set them apart from worldly people.

Originating from Moresheth-Gath, the prophet Micah lived in a small village nestled in the rolling

hills of southwest Judah. This man of God loved rural life and spent much of his life preaching against the vices of those found in highly populated cities. Judeans had become increasingly dishonest and idolatrous particularly those found within the large cities of Judah. The prophet Micah rebuked the corruption of city life in Israel and Judah. Yet as he grew older, corruption continued to spread throughout the region.

Although the prophet Micah's birthplace was a small rural area, it was considered the gateway to the hills south of Judah and a prominent and important "trade route". During his early youth, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, son of Sargon II, destroyed the prophet Micah's picturesque hometown. Therefore, most likely the prophet Micah, witnessed relatives murdered, his village plundered and burned down, and many of his acquaintances enslaved.

While this might present a pitiful picture of a child brought up in an era of violence, the prophet Micah was not to be influenced by it. Instead it strengthened his determination to be obedient to his faith and to God.

Most Biblical scholars believed that the prophet Micah prophesied during the rule of Jotham, the son of Uzziah who was king of Judah from 742-735 BC;

Ahaz, Jotham's son who reigned over Judah from 735-715 BC; and Hezekiah of Judah, Ahaz's son governed from 715-696 BC.

During the reign of these three kings, the people of Samaria instituted the worship of idols purchased from the income earned by prostitutes. The people of Jerusalem were so obsessed with its beautification that its finances were secured by dishonest business practices which impoverished the city's citizens. The prophet Micah, well acquainted with the practices of the day, rebuked the people of Judah fervently and frequently.

With regard to his teachings, the prophet Micah put his hand to the plow and did not look back, exhorting Jerusalem to turn away from its dishonesty in the marketplace and involvement in governmental corruption. However, the increase in sinfulness around Judah did not cause the prophet Micah to waiver but was fervent in his preaching and teaching against it. The other prophets were not immune to his teachings either. He was quick to preach against them for accepting money for their oracles.

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good. Or what does the Lord seek from you but to do justly, and to*

*love mercy, and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God?" (Micah 6:8, OSB).*

The prophet Micah was a persistent thorn in the side of those whom he tried to bring back from the ways of the world. It is normally difficult to change someone who has no direction, nor specific goals in life, but who pretentiously has accepted the perils of the day as if it were God's will. It seems the people of Judah worshipped God without any intention to alter their manners of living.

Living in spiritual lukewarmness being unaffected by any religious instruction, people did not practice discipline in daily readings, prayer or fasting. Such spiritual practices had become almost a historical rather than perpetual day-by-day discipline for Judah. Without the discernment of dedication and discipline in life, ruin and devastation would certainly be the outcome. That was what the prophet Micah's divinely inspired visions prophesied.

Hermas (an Ante Nicene Father, c.130), teaches that discipline and training are a productive process,

*"You do not know how to fast unto the Lord this useless fasting which you observe to Him is of no value' I say to you' he continued 'that the fasting you think you observe is not fasting but I will teach you what a full and acceptable fast is to the Lord...Do no*

evil in your life and serve the Lord with a pure heart. Keep His commandments, walking in His precepts, and let no evil desire arise in your heart. If you guard against these things your fasting will be perfect...Having fulfilled what is written on the day you have fasted you will take nothing but bread and water. Then reckon up the price of the meals for that day that you intended to have eaten and give that amount to a widow, an orphan, or some person in need."

Many Biblical scholars believe that St. Paul refers to this Ante Nicene Father, Hermas, "as a fellow worker in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:14).

The prophet Micah's prophecies and visions were delivered as ardently as they were divinely inspired. Impressionable childhood memories of murder and pillage persisted with him into his adulthood. However, he remained firmly convicted in his love of the Lord his God regardless of being in the midst of a minority of believers. Certainly his intent was not earthly popularity.

*"knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:20-21).*

Great prophecies would come from a child within a war-ravaged region in which faith prevailed only among a minority. The prophet Micah would become the first prophet to prophesy about the first TOTAL destruction of Jerusalem.

"The prophets used to prophesy not by word alone, but in visions also, and in their manner of life, and in the actions which they performed, according to the suggestions of the Spirit" (Irenaeus, Bishop of the church at Lyons now modern day France, c. 180).

Not only did the prophet Micah prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem but also that of Samaria (722 BC) and Judah (701 BC) at the hands of Sennacherib king of Assyria. Jerusalem was destroyed three times in Biblical history, the first one being the fulfillment of the prophet Micah's prophecy in 586 BC, about 150 years following his much ridiculed prophecy by non-believers.

Future restoration in which Judah would arise more gloriously than before was also prophesized by Micah as well as the futuristic Heavenly vision that universal peace will abide over Judah and the Lord would preside over Jerusalem. The prophet Micah also prophesied that the Lord Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem.

*"'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.'" (Micah 5:2).*

St. Matthew, one of the Holy Gospel writers, reiterated the prophet Micah's prophesied vision and confirmed it saying,

*"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:6).*

The prophets of the Old Testament were chosen by God Himself and received divinely inspirational visions which history proved as being authentic and correct. His childhood bitter experiences of witnessing idolatry and murder of his acquaintances and relatives who were taken captives and enslaved by their captors did not affect his spirit nor waste him away in tearful depression. He did not develop an indifferent attitude or get drowned in evil as his surroundings dictated. Rather, he controlled the destiny of his life.

He rose above the clamor of the ungodly becoming better than the popular avenues of his social environment; and with deliberate endeavor, he put



God ABOVE all. Because of the prophet's goodness, God divinely inspired him with visions, holiness, and righteousness.

"Men of God sustained in them a Holy Spirit, and they became prophets. They were inspired and made wise by God and so they became divinely instructed, holy, and righteous. More-over they were also deemed worthy of remembering this reward, so that they could become instruments of God..."  
(Theophilus, c. 180)

May we all learn how to love God genuinely as the prophet Micah did. May the visions and life of the prophet Micah inspire us all to embrace spiritual discipline manifest in reading, prayer, and fasting while in this world of turmoil. I pray during this Holy Great Fast that we draw near to the prophet Micah's example and his discernment.

Let us all be as those "who are like God",

Bishop Youssef  
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