

# MICAH

*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
From you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel,  
Whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2*

When the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” King Herod called for the chief priests and scribes. They told him, “Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet.”  
Matthew 2:1-7

The prophet was Micah. Ever since then, this prophecy, quoted at the top of the page, has given this book a Christmas identity.

These verses from Micah 5 and the Micah 6:8 verse, which you find at the bottom of this page, are the most quoted statements in the book. However, the familiarity of these verses may not prepare you for Micah as much as you might expect.

Here are three things to keep in mind, which will help you read Micah:

1. Micah is full of short speeches.
2. Micah jumps from present to distant future to past.
3. The more you know the historical situation that Micah lives through, the clearer and more powerful this book becomes.

To grasp Micah’s meaning, think of the book as a collection of short speeches. Instead of reading quickly from start to finish, pause after each short section to see whether you understand what it says. Try to identify who is speaking. Sometimes it is God, sometimes Micah, sometimes the rebellious people.

Micah is not organized chronologically. A short speech about the evil in Micah’s lifetime concludes with the warning that Jerusalem shall be rubble (which happened 120 years later). (3:9-12) The next verse is a prophecy that the same mountain will be lifted up as the “highest of mountains” – something that has yet to be fulfilled.

In general, Micah follows this outline:

## CHAPTERS 1-3

### Judgment against Israel and Judah

Micah often refers to Israel, the northern kingdom as Samaria or Jacob. Judah, the southern kingdom, is often identified by the capital Jerusalem or Zion.

## CHAPTERS 4-5

### The wonderful future God is planning

All nations will flock to the mountain of the house of the Lord, God’s ruler will come from Bethlehem and swords will be beat into plows.

## CHAPTERS 6-7

### The trial, punishment, and hope of guilty nations

God is the accuser, creation is the jury. The hope is God also:

*“He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” 7:19*

The word of the Lord came to Micah during the reign of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah. The prophet Isaiah is bringing God’s word at this time also. Jotham and Hezekiah were kings who did what was right in the sight of the Lord, although they did not remove all of the idol worship. Ahaz was one of the worst, even sacrificing his own son and making offerings to other gods. You can read about these kings in 2 Kings 15:27-20:21 and 2 Chronicles 27-32. During Micah’s lifetime, Assyria conquered Israel and carried many away as captives. Micah states that he is from Moresheth, a town near Jerusalem. Eventually Judah is conquered by Babylon in 586 B.C.

*He has told you O man what is good and what does the Lord require of you,  
but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*