

# CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The title of the book (v. 1) and a preface demanding attention (v. 2).
- II.** Warning given of desolating judgments hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (v. 3, 4), and all for sin (v. 5).
- III.** The particulars of the destruction specified (v. 6, 7).
- IV.** The greatness of the destruction illustrated,
  - 1.** By the prophet's sorrow for it (v. 8, 9).
  - 2.** By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it (v. 10-16). These prophecies of Micah might well be called his lamentations.

## ⌄ MICAH 1:1-7

### JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

Here is,

- I.** A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, v. 1. This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it when they know the author and his authority.
  - 1.** The prophecy is the *word of the Lord*; it is a divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is preached by the ministers of Christ according to what is written there, must be heard and received, not as the word of dying men, which we may be judges of, but as the word of the living God, which we must be judged by, for so it is. This word of the Lord came to the prophet, came plainly, came powerfully, came in a preventing way, and he saw it, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, saw the things themselves which he foretold, with as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished.

2. The prophet is Micah the Morasthite; his name *Micah* is a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet some ages before (in Ahab's time, <sup><1278></sup>1 Kings 22:8); his surname, the *Morasthite*, signifies that he was born, or lived, at Moresheth, which is mentioned here (v. 14), or Mareshah, which is mentioned v. 15, and <sup><1654></sup>Joshua 15:44. The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might enquire in that place, at that time, and might find there was, or had been, such a one there, who was generally reputed to be a prophet.

3. The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of three kings of Judah — Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings, and Hezekiah one of the best; such variety of times pass over God's ministers, times that frown and times that smile, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are interwoven, by which it appears that even in the wicked reign he preached comfort, and said *to the righteous* then that it should be *well with them*; and that in the pious reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked then that it should be *ill with them*; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same.

4. The parties concerned in this prophecy; it is *concerning Samaria and Jerusalem*, the head cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Though the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them.

II. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy (v. 2), in which,

1. The people are summoned to draw near and give their attendance, as upon a court of judicature: *Hear, all you people*, Note, Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; we all must, for we are all concerned in what is delivered. "*Hear, you people*" (*all of them*, so the margin reads it), "all you that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand." It is an unusual construction; but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy are the very same in the original with those wherewith Micaiah ended his, <sup><1278></sup>1 Kings 22:28.

2. The earth is called upon, with *all that therein is*, to hear what the prophet has to say: *Hearken, O earth!* The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming; sooner will the

earth hear than this stupid senseless people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the church, and those in it, will not hear, the earth, and those in it, shall, and shame them.

**3.** God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power, and justice, are vouched in testimony against this people: “*Let the Lord God be witness against you, a witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully as watchmen, but you would not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove, to your conviction and confusion, that it was the word of God, and no word of his shall fall to the ground.*” Note, God himself will be a witness, by the judgments of his hand, against those that would not receive his testimony in the judgments of his mouth. He will be a witness *from his holy temple* in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment (v. 3) against those that turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them, out of his holy temple at Jerusalem.

**III.** A terrible prediction of destroying judgments which should come upon Judah and Israel, which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah; for it is foretold,

**1.** That God himself will appear against them, v. 3. They boasted of themselves and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but, though God never deceives the faith of the upright, he will disappoint the presumption of the hypocrites, for, *behold, the Lord comes forth out of his place, quits his mercy-seat, where they thought they had him fast, and prepares his throne for judgment; his glory departs, for they drive it from them. God's way towards this people had long been a way of mercy, but now he changes his way, he comes out of his place, and will come down. He had seemed to retire, as one regardless of what was done, but now he will show himself, he will rend the heavens, and will come down, not as sometimes, in surprising mercies, but in surprising judgments, to do things not for them, but against them, which they looked not for,* <sup>260</sup> Isaiah 64:1; 26:21.

**2.** That when the Creator appears against them it shall be in vain for any creature to appear for them. He will *tread* with contempt and disdain *upon the high places of the earth*, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him or in opposition to him; and he will so tread upon them as to tread them down and level them. High places, set up for the

worship of idols or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the mountains and rocks, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes and bear off their fears? They shall be *molten under him*, melted down *as wax before the fire*, <sup><BRD></sup>Psalm 68:2. Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys, and their products? They *shall be cleft*, or rent, with those *fiery streams* that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted. They shall be ploughed and washed away as the ground is by *the waters that are poured down a steep place*. God is said to *cleave the earth with rivers*, <sup><BRD></sup>Habakkuk 3:9. Neither men of *high degree*, as the mountains, nor *men of low degree*, as the valleys, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and, like *a sweeping rain*, to *leave no food*, <sup><BRD></sup>Proverbs 28:3. This is applied particularly to the head city of Israel, which they hoped would be a protection to the kingdom (v. 6.) *I will make Samaria*, that is now a rich and populous city, as *a heap of the field*, as a heap of dung laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones gathered together to be carried away, and *as plantings of a vineyard*, as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in. God will make of that *city a heap*, of that *defenced city a ruin*, <sup><BRD></sup>Isaiah 25:2. Their *altars* had been as *heaps in the furrows of the fields* (<sup><BRD></sup>Hosea 12:11) and now their houses shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The *stones of the city* are *poured down into the valley* by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him. They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very *foundations* shall be *discovered*, that had been covered by the superstructure; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

**IV.** A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments (v. 5): *For the transgression of Jacob is all this*. If it be asked, “Why is God so angry, and why are Jacob and Israel thus brought to ruin by his anger?” the answer is ready: Sin has done all the mischief; sin has laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he would never have appeared thus against them. Note, External privileges and professions will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the *house of Israel*, if Jacob be guilty of transgression and rebellion, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all others most provoking to him, for they are most reproaching. But it is asked, *What is the transgression of Jacob?* Note, When we feel the smart

of sin it concerns us to enquire what the sin is which we smart for, that we may particularly war against that which wars against us. And what is it?

**1.** It is idolatry; it is the *high places*; that is the transgression, the great transgression which reigns in Israel; that is spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage-covenant, which merits a divorce. Even the *high places of Judah*, though not so bad as the transgression of Jacob, were yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns. *Howbeit the high places were not taken away.*

**2.** It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of those two kingdoms. These were the most populous places, and where there were most people there was most wickedness, and they made one another worse. These were the most pompous places; there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgot God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country, by authority and example; so that from them idolatry and *profaneness went forth throughout all the land*, <sup>-2285</sup>Jeremiah 23:15. Note, Spiritual distempers are most contagious in persons and places that are most conspicuous. If the head city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish, be vicious and profane, *many will follow their pernicious ways*, and write after a bad copy when great ones set it for them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading ruling vices, and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. Those have a great deal to answer for indeed that not only sin, but *make Israel to sin*. Those must expect to be made examples that have been examples of wickedness. If the transgression of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall *Samaria become a heap*. Let the ringleaders in sin hear this and fear.

**V.** The punishment made to answer the sin, in the particular destruction of the idols, v. 7.

**1.** The gods they worshipped shall be destroyed: *The graven images shall be beaten to pieces by the army of the Assyrians, and all the idols shall be laid desolate. Samaria and her idols* were ruined together by Sennacherib (<sup>-2301</sup>Isaiah 10:11), and *their gods cast into the fire, for they were no gods* (<sup>-2379</sup>Isaiah 37:19); and this was the Lord's doing: *I will lay the idols desolate*. Note, If the law of God prevail not to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself.

2. The gifts that passed between them and their gods shall be destroyed; for *all the hires thereof shall be burnt with fire*, which may be meant either of the presents they made to their idols for the replenishing of their altars, and the adorning of their statues and temples (these shall become a prey to the victorious army, which shall rifle not only private houses, but the houses of their gods), or of the corn, and wine, and oil, which they called the *rewards*, or *hires*, which *their idols*, their *lovers*, gave them (<sup><302></sup>Hosea 2:12); these shall be taken from them by him whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they had defrauded of the honour due to him. Note, That cannot prosper by which men either are hired to sin or hire others to sin; for *the wages of sin will be death*. *She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of a harlot*. They enriched themselves by their leagues with the idolatrous nations, who gave them advantages, to court them into the service of their idols, and their idols' temples were enriched with gifts by those who went a whoring after them. And all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the *hire of a harlot* again, wages to an army of idolaters, who shall take it as a reward given them by their gods. *It shall be a present to king Jareb*, <sup><306></sup>Hosea 10:6. What they gave to their idols, and what they thought they got by them, shall be as the hire of a harlot; the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper, nor do them any good. It is common that what is squeezed out by one lust is squandered away upon another.

## <300> MICAH 1:8-16

### JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

We have here a long train of mourners attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

I. The prophet is himself chief mourner (v. 8, 9): *I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked*, as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the public grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear that it was not out of ill-will that they denounced the judgments of God (so far were they from desiring the woeful day that they dreaded it more than any thing), partly to show how very dreadful and mournful the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them, that by repentance they

might turn away the wrath of God. Note, We ought to lament the punishments of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so (<sup><201></sup>Jeremiah 9:1); so did this prophet. He *makes a wailing like the dragons*, or rather the *jackals*, ravenous beasts that in those countries used to meet in the night, and *howl*, and make *hideous noises*; he mourns *as the owls*, the *screech-owls*, or *ostriches*, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments: —

**1.** That Israel's case is desperate: *Her wound is incurable*; it is ruin without remedy; man cannot help her; God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilead and a physician there; but they will not apply to the physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore *the wound is incurable*.

**2.** That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand: *The enemy has come to the gate of Jerusalem*. Soon after the destruction of Samaria and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army, under Sennacherib, laid siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way any further; however, it was with great concern and trouble that the prophet foresaw the fright, so dearly did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

**II.** Several places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn; but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistines hear them (v. 10): *Declare it not in Gath*; this is borrowed from David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan (<sup><101></sup>2 Samuel 1:20), *Tell it not in Gath*, for the uncircumcised will triumph in Israel's tears. Note, One would not, if it could be helped, gratify those that make themselves and their companions merry with the sins or with the sorrows of God's Israel. David was silent, and stifled his griefs, when *the wicked were before him*, <sup><101></sup>Psalms 39:1. But, though it may be prudent not to give way to a noisy sorrow, yet it is duty to admit a silent one when the church of God is in distress. "*Roll thyself in the dust*" (as great mourners used to do) "and so let the house of Judah and every house in Jerusalem become a *house of Aphrah*, a *house of dust*, covered with dust, crumbled into dust." When God makes the house dust it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust, thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that concern us. Dust we are; God brings us to the dust, that we may know it, and own it. Divers other places are here named that should be sharers in this universal mourning, the names of

some of which we do not find elsewhere, whence it is conjectured that they are names put upon them by the prophet, the signification of which might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them, thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described, in the prediction of it, by the impressions of terror it should make upon the several cities that fell in his way, <sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 10:28, 29, etc. Let us observe the particulars here,

- 1.** *The inhabitants of Saphir*, which signifies *neat and beautiful* (thou that dwellest fairly, so the margin reads it), shall *pass away* into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of all their ornaments *and having their shame naked*. Note, Those who appear ever so fine and delicate know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those who have been inhabitants of Saphir.
- 2.** *The inhabitants of Zaanan*, which signifies the *country of flocks*, a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall *not come forth in the mourning of Bethazel*, which signifies a *place near*, shall not condole with, nor bring any succour to, their next neighbours in distress; for *he shall receive of you his standing*; the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanan! shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. Those may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours who find they have enough to do to help themselves and to hold their own.
- 3.** As for *the inhabitants of Maroth* (which, some think, is put for Ramoth, others that it signifies the *rough places*), they *waited carefully for good*, and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed; for *evil came from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem*, when the Assyrian army besieged it, v. 12. The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances when they saw the holy city itself in danger, and might well overlook the Assyrian, that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming *from the Lord*.
- 4.** Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, <sup>230C</sup>Isaiah 36:1,2. The inhabitants of that city are called to *bind the chariot to the swift beast*, to prepare for a speedy flight, as having no other way left to secure themselves and their families; or it is spoken ironically: "You have had your chariots and your swift beasts, but where are they now?" God's quarrel with Lachish is that she is *the beginning of sin*, probably the sin of



idolatry, *to the daughter of Zion* (v. 13); they had learned it from the ten tribes, their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. Those must expect to be first in the punishment who have been ringleaders in sin. *The transgressions of Israel were found in thee*; when they came to be traced up to their original they were found to take rise very much from that city. God knows at whose door to lay the blame of the transgressions of Israel, and whom to find guilty. Lachish, having been so much accessory to the sin of Israel, shall certainly be reckoned with: *Thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath*, a city of the Philistines, which perhaps had a dependence upon Gath, that famous Philistine city; thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain, for (v. 14) *the houses of Achzib* (a city which joined to Mareshah, or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it, ~~Joshua~~ Joshua 15:44) *shall be a lie to the kings of Israel*; though they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them. Here there is an allusion to the name. *Achzib* signifies *a lie*, and so it shall prove to those that trust in it.

**5.** Mareshah, that could not, or would not, help Israel, shall herself be made a prey (v. 15): *“I will bring a heir* (that is, an enemy) *that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir at law to them, and he shall come to Adullam, and to the glory of Israel, that is, to Jerusalem the head city;”* or *“The glory of Israel shall come to be as Adullam, a poor despicable place;”* or, *“The king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam, in laying the country waste.”*

**6.** The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to (v. 16) and called to weeping and mourning: *“Make thee bald, by tearing thy hair and shaving thy head; poll thee for thy delicate children, that had been tenderly and nicely brought up; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle when she casts her feathers and is all over bald; for they have gone into captivity from thee, and are not likely to return; and their captivity will be the more grievous to them because they have been brought up delicately and have not been inured to hardship.”* Or this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of *Mareshah*, as v. 15. That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounces the judgments of God against it; for it shall be an aggravation of its sin that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it either with God or with his prophet.