

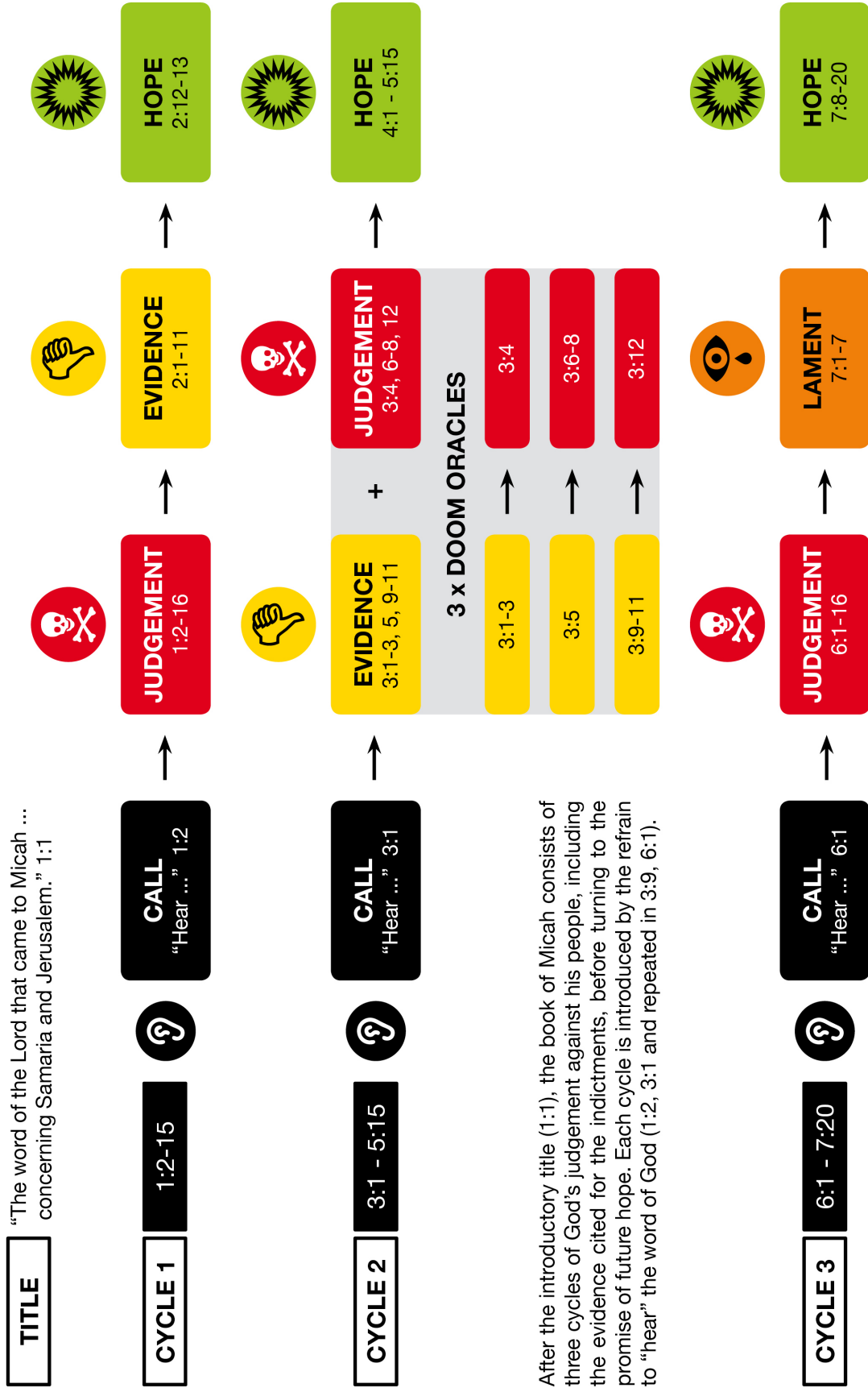


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WEEK 6

MICAH OVERVIEW

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After the introductory title (1:1), the book of Micah consists of three cycles of God's judgement against his people, including the evidence cited for the indictments, before turning to the promise of future hope. Each cycle is introduced by the refrain to "hear" the word of God (1:2, 3:1 and repeated in 3:9, 6:1).

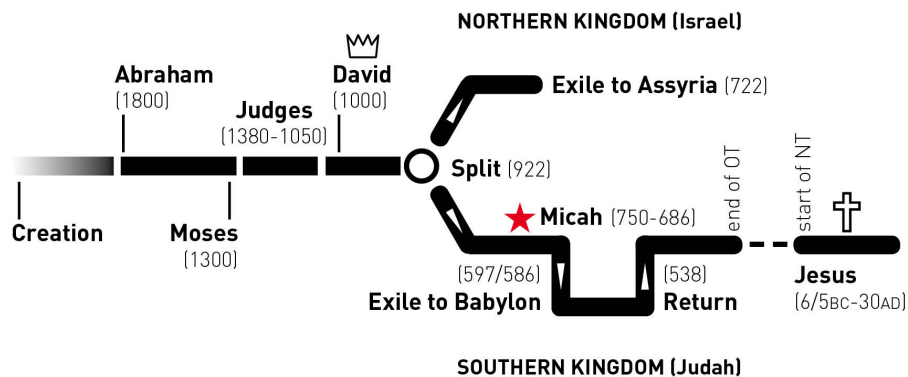
NAVIGATING MICAH



FROM WHOM? The word of the Lord came to Micah, who lived in the town of Moresheth, 35 km South-West of Jerusalem (1:1). Micah's name means, "Who is like Yahweh?" (compare with 7:18).

TO WHOM? The prophetic message of the book is addressed to Samaria and Jerusalem, Jacob and Israel (1:1; 3:1), yet all the peoples of the earth are called to listen and witness the Lord's indictment against his people (1:2; 6:1-2).

WHEN? Micah prophesied in the 8th century BC, during the reigns of the Judean kings: Jotham (750-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-687 BC).

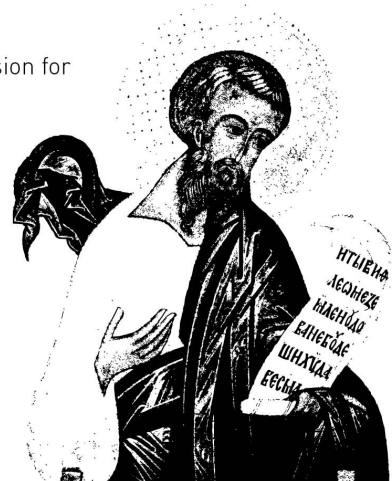


WHY? Micah seeks to set forth God's case against his people, to "declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (3:8). In a time of great affluence and prosperity, Israel and Judah were deeply infected with religious corruption and social injustice. God's leaders – civil, religious and prophetic – had failed to lead righteously, and God's people consequently were consumed by idolatry, violence, and the abuse of the weak and poor.

WHAT? The twin themes of Micah's prophecy are judgement and hope. On account of Samaria and Jerusalem's covenant unfaithfulness, the Lord God promises to bring judgement on his people through their enemies, Assyria and Babylon. Yet in his covenant faithfulness, God also promises to deliver, gather and care for a remnant of his people, in a restored Zion through his Davidic king. From Micah's prophecy, it's clear that the punishing divine judge, Yahweh, is also the gracious and merciful, shepherd king:

"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?" (7:18)

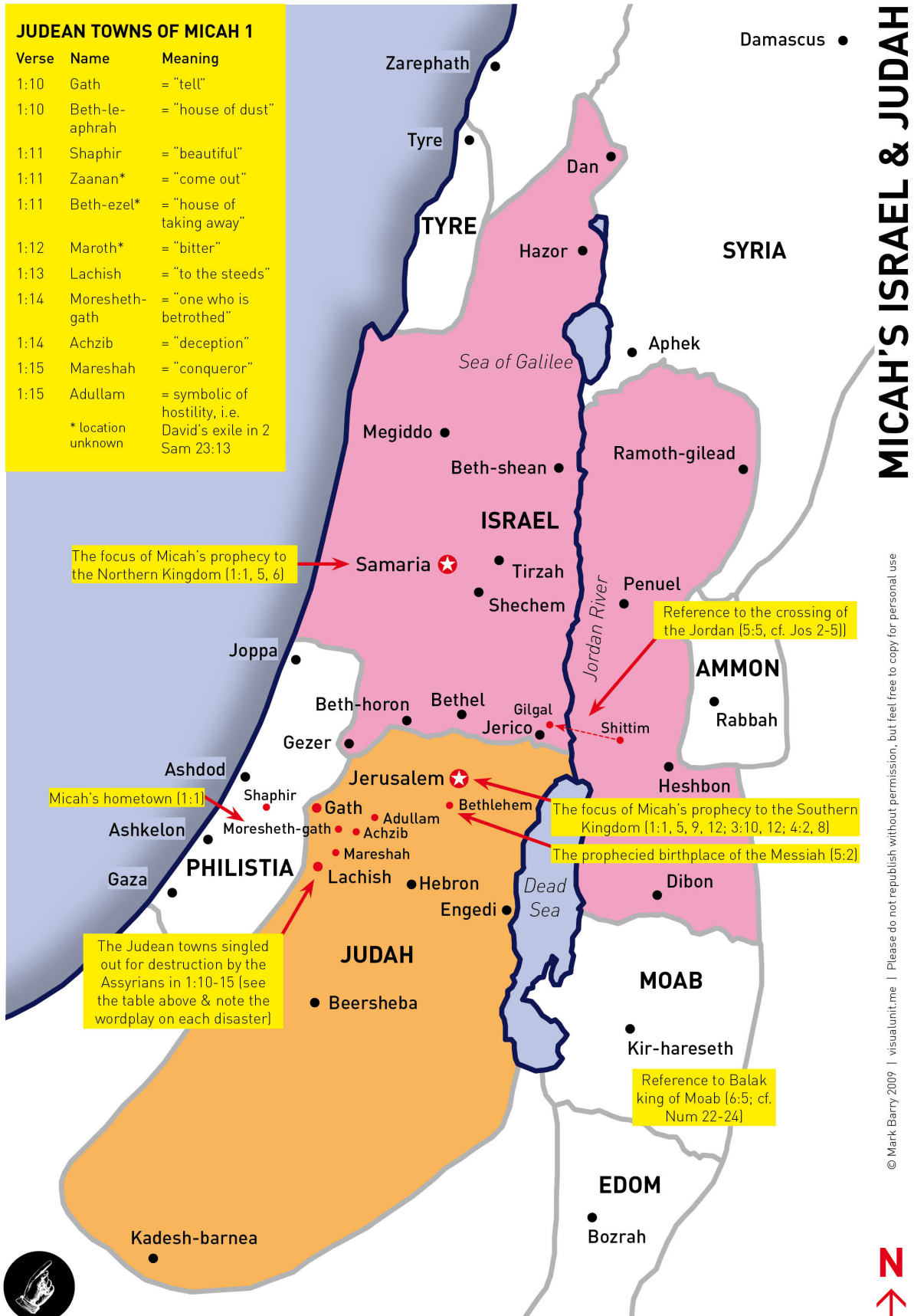
We see the prophecy ultimately fulfilled in the one born in Bethlehem, blessed with divine strength and majesty and whose "origins are from old" (5:2): Jesus, the great Lord, judge, shepherd and king. He alone is the true deliverer of everlasting security and peace for his people (e.g. Matthew 2:6; 12:15-21; John 7; 10:16). For no God is like him.



JUDEAN TOWNS OF MICAH 1

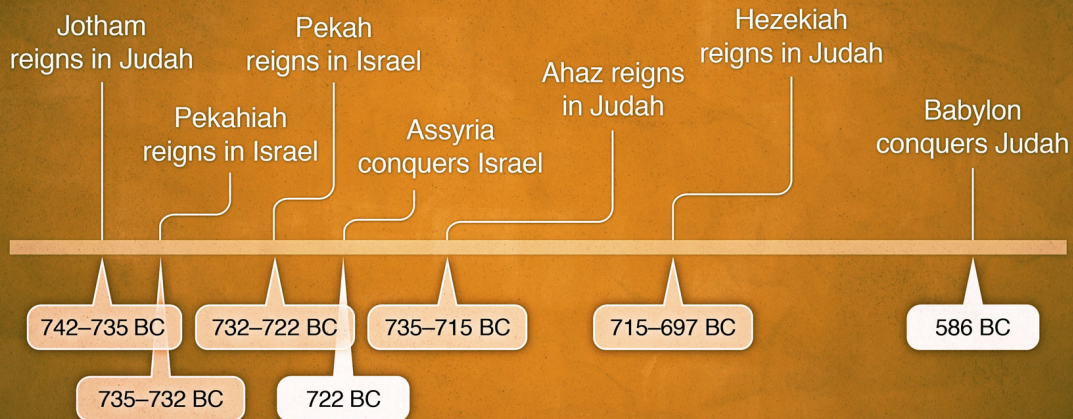
Verse	Name	Meaning
1:10	Gath	= "tell"
1:10	Beth-le-aphrah	= "house of dust"
1:11	Shaphir	= "beautiful"
1:11	Zaanah*	= "come out"
1:11	Beth-ezel*	= "house of taking away"
1:12	Maroth*	= "bitter"
1:13	Lachish	= "to the steeds"
1:14	Moreseth-gath	= "one who is betrothed"
1:14	Achzib	= "deception"
1:15	Mareshah	= "conqueror"
1:15	Adullam	= symbolic of hostility, i.e. David's exile in 2 Sam 23:13

* location unknown



TIMELINE

MICAH



*All dates are approximate

MICAH

- Contemporary of Isaiah.
- Prophesied during the late 700s (737-690).
- His name means "who is like Yahweh"—a rhetorical question which emphasizes God's transcendence.
- Micah came from the town of Morsheth, which was located in Judah (between the Mediterranean Sea and Judah). He probably lived a rustic lifestyle.
- He is one of the few prophets who is mentioned in another book.
 - **Jer 26:18-19** reminds the people that Jeremiah's message was not new and that Micah had prophesied the same during his time (more than 100 years earlier).
- Micah seems to have had a fair degree of prominence as a spokesman for God.

- Micah ministered during the great Assyrian crisis (737-690).
- He was witness to the events that brought about the destruction and deportation of the northern kingdom of Israel (remember, though, that he was a prophet to Judah).
- While we don't always know the specific dates of the oracles and there were several major invasions of Judah by the Assyrians (as Judah's kings acted foolishly — remember Isaiah) one of the most threatening came in 701BC
- **Remember back to Isaiah:** After Israel attacked Judah to force them into an alliance against Assyria, King Ahaz paid a tribute to Assyria for help. Assyria then came in and destroyed Israel and Damascus and placed Judah under tribute.
- Later, King Hezekiah refuses to pay the tribute, and Sennacherib invades.
- When all of Judah but Jerusalem lay in ruins, Hezekiah repents at Isaiah's prompting (after first turning to Egypt and Babylon), and Yahweh delivers the people.
 - 2 Kings 19:35 *"And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies."*
 - Isaiah 37:36 *"And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies."*

THE BACKGROUND OF MICAH

- It was in these types of situations that the Lord sent Micah with a message for the people.
- If we recall Isaiah specifically (but also Hosea), we know that this was a time of both political upheaval and social unrest.
- The military success of Uzziah and Ahaz had created economic prosperity for some (similar to Jeroboam II in Israel// Amos).
- With the economic growth came the development of a merchant class.
- The agrarian part of society became dependent on the merchant class, which did not treat the poor well.
- It was against this social backdrop that Micah denounced injustice and false religiosity.

THE BACKGROUND OF MICAH

- Micah prophesied during the days of King Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned during the last half of the 8th century.
- Micah's oracles are not dated, making it difficult to determine which one corresponds to a specific incident.
- Using a courtroom analogy, Micah presents a scene in which all the nations have been found guilty. However, the final judgement day has not yet come, and God, in his mercy, will still forgive your sins if you repent.
- When that day comes, the question is "Will you be part of judgment" or "will you be part of redemption?"
 - See Rev 20:11-15

THE WRITING OF MICAH

- The people, particularly the upper class, were guilty of injustice. The result was that they would suffer destruction and exile.
- **5 judgment oracles:**
 - Destruction of cult places and objects, using cosmic terms (1:3-7//3:12).
 - Political devastation, including the overthrow of cities and sending their inhabitants into exile (1:10-16).
 - Personal judgment against specific offenders (2:3-5).
 - Spiritual judgment, depriving the prophets of revelation (3:6-7).
 - Socioeconomic judgement, affecting the fertility of the land (6:13-16).



- Each of the three divisions opens with a call to “listen” to the word of God.
- **The sections:** 1. the people (1:2-2:13)// 2. The Leaders (3:1-5:15)//3. The Nation (6:1-7:20).
- Each division also contains an initial sin focusing on the sin of the people and its consequences, and then proceeds to a note of hope (Judgement // Salvation).
- The 1st and 3rd sections used the language of a legal proceeding, first depicting God as a witness (1) and then as a plaintiff with a lawsuit against Israel.
- In the 2nd section, there is no legal language, but we do see a focus on justice.
 - “In that day” introduces the hope section (4:1, 6).
 - The middle division is broken into three, introduced by “now” (4:9, 4:11, 5:1).
 - “In that day” is used again in 5:2-9 to describe a future deliverance from crisis.
 - There would be a future purging of Israel from all those elements that caused them to stray from the Lord.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF MICAH

- **Message of Doom (1:2-2:11):** The judgment of the people of God is a paradigm for world judgment.
 - Yahweh came down from his dwelling to judge the people.
 - Their idols will be torn down, Samaria will become rubble, and temple gifts will be destroyed in the fire.
 - Samaria has a plague, and it has also spread to Judah.
 - God is planning disaster against his people because they have planned evil and inequity.
 - False prophets are called out.
- **Message of Hope (2:12-13):** Confirms the election promises of God to Israel, the continued existence of a remnant.

THE RIB— THE LAWSUIT | DIVISION 1 | 1:2-2:13

- The rulers have hated good and loved evil.
 - They are so ruthless in their evil that they are said to even “strip the skin from the people’s bones”.
 - Repeated emphasis on the fact that rulers and prophets have perverted what is proper and have despised justice.
 - Justice is the maintenance of **righteousness**, which is the “order, structure, or rightness” in God’s world.
- Micah warns in 5:1 that a siege will come from Assyria and strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod. Israel will then be abandoned until “the time when she who is in labor bears a son.”

DIVISION 2 | 3:1-5:15

- **Message of Doom (6:1-7-6):**
 - Conduct within covenant matters greatly (6:1-8).
 - Reasons for indictment (6:9-12): the familiar social sins, commercial exactions, and extortion.
 - The final sentence and summary (6:13-16): the economy will be stricken (a punishment that fits the crime).
 - The Prophet’s Lament (7:1-6).
- **Message of Hope (7:7-20):**
 - Jerusalem expresses confidence in Yahweh (7:8-10)
 - Jerusalem rejoices in expectation for Zion (vv 11-13).
 - Exodus intervention grounded in the covenant made with Abraham (14-20).

THE LAWSUIT | DIVISION 3 | 6:1-7:20

- Two instances speak of a royal deliverer who would serve as the Lord's instrument for saving people from her enemies.
- In 2:13, the King is depicted as leading the people as they "break out" of an enclosure.
 - This likely refers to those who survived the Assyrian assault in 701 BC.
 - God had brought deliverance in response to King Hezekiah's request
- In 5:2-9, the deliverer is described as a "ruler". The term *Messiah* was not used in the preexilic prophets to describe a future ideal Davidic king, but we see his function here
 - His emergence from Bethlehem signifies that he was to be a new David and breaks from the current administration
 - He will be the one who will eventually bring deliverance for the remnant

THEMES IN MICAH – THE DELIVERER



They covet fields and seize them,
and houses, and take them away;
they oppress a man and his house,
a man and his inheritance.
Therefore thus says the LORD:
behold, against this family I am devising
disaster,
from which you cannot remove your
necks,
and you shall not walk haughtily,
for it will be a time of disaster.
In that day they shall take up a taunt song
against you
and moan bitterly,
and say, "We are utterly ruined;
he changes the portion of my people;
how he removes it from me!
To an apostate he allots our fields."
Therefore you will have none to cast the
line by lot
in the assembly of the LORD. "Do not
preach"—thus they preach—
"one should not preach of such things;
disgrace will not overtake us."

Micah 5:2-6

RULER OF A KINGDOM OF PEACE

For every boot of the tramping warrior in
battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his
shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:5-6

- We don't see that Micah had any revelation of when this person might come on the scene or how he would carry out his function.
- Micah's message about the deliverer was clear – the Lord intended to provide one after the necessary judgment was complete.



COVENANT IN MICAH

Who is a God like you,
pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever, because he

DELIGHTS
IN STEADFAST LOVE.

Micah 7:18

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

EXODUS 34:6-7

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.

DEUTERONOMY 7:9-10



EXAMPLES OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE COVENANT

- **Micah 6:** The lawsuit outlines the responsibilities for God's elect.
- **Micah 3:9-12:** Not even the temple in the city of Jerusalem is guaranteed to experience Yahweh's permanent favor. Here, the Zion traditions are challenged.
- *Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." 12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*



THEMES IN MICAH – WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?

He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you but to

**do justice
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?**

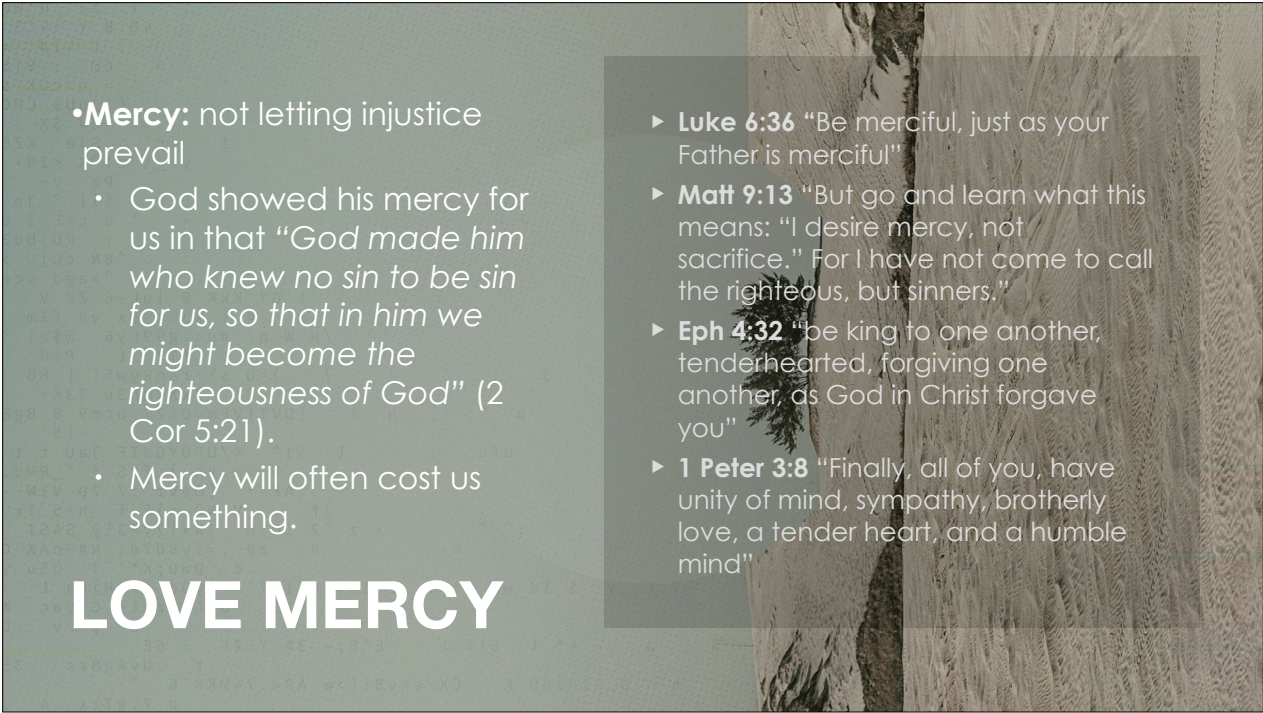
MICAH 6:8

- This verse has often been understood as a comprehensive statement about God's demands on humanity.
- We have to read verse 8 in contrast to verses 6-7.
 - *"With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"*
- Micah had to explain that God is not appeased by their religious rituals like the "gods" of their pagan neighbors.
- Instead, God's anger is appeased by proper conduct.
- They had acted unjustly and violated the terms of their covenant with God. 6:8 is an indication of what the people needed to do in order to get back on track.
- Key point once again reiterated: **Obedience is more important than sacrifice.**

- To "act" connotes a continuing, ongoing behavior.
- Act in accordance with God's righteousness.
- When not in accordance with God's righteousness, justice is bringing yourself back into alignment with his will.
- This is action, not mere talk.

- ▶ **Proverbs 21:25:** "When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers."
- ▶ **Deut 16:20:** "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you."
- ▶ **James 2:** We should not show partiality.

ACT JUSTLY



• **Mercy:** not letting injustice prevail

- God showed his mercy for us in that *"God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Cor 5:21).
- Mercy will often cost us something.

LOVE MERCY

- ▶ **Luke 6:36** "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful"
- ▶ **Matt 9:13** "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
- ▶ **Eph 4:32** "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you"
- ▶ **1 Peter 3:8** "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind"

- **Walk:** active obedience to the Lord.
- Walking is the way that one leads one's life.
- **Humbly:** passive obedience to the Lord.

WALK HUMBLY

- ▶ **Gen 5:24:** Enoch walked in an intimate relationship with God.
- ▶ **Proverbs 3:34:** "Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble, he gives favor".
- ▶ **James 1:27:** "To walk with God implies constant prayer and watchfulness."
- ▶ **Matt 5:3:** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- ▶ **James 4:6-10:** "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- ▶ Flee from Satan and draw close to God.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The answer to Israel's problems was not numerous or painful sacrifices, but they needed a change of hearts.
- ▶ **Hosea 6:6** "For I desired mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings."
- ▶ **Amos 5:21** "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies."
- ▶ **Isaiah 1:14** "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing him."

