

Bible Survey – Prophetic Writings – 29.1 - Micah

A. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF MICAH:

- 1. Author – is identified as Micah of Moresheth.**
 - a. Micah is the short form of “Micaiah ben Imlah” listed in 1 Kings 22:8. His name means “who is like YHWH” [Yahweh]. This is more than just a name, it also helps identify Micah as one who was born into a highly devout and God-centered family.**
 - b. The text identifies the city of Moresheth which is identified with modern “Tel ej-Judeidh” in the foothills of southwestern Judah. The city was near the military fortress of Lachish that housed most of Judah’s chariot arsenal. This proximity likely gave a strong sense of security.**

- 2. Historical Time Frame – is identified as during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.**
 - a. Judah was ruled at the time by – Jotham from 742 to 735 BC; Ahaz from 735 to 715 BC; and Hezekiah ruled from 715 to 686 BC.**
 - b. Assyria was the primary power at the time and Israel [Samaria] and Judah [Jerusalem] both paid tribute to secure their peaceful coexistence. Under Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser 111 Syria and northern Israel as well as Edom were increasingly engaged and raided by Sargon 11 [722-705 BC] who ultimately conquered these areas. When Sennacherib came to power, these vassal king revolted and were ultimately defeated becoming the Assyrian province of Samaria in 705 BC.**
 - c. Hezekiah wisely prepared Jerusalem for an anticipated long siege digging the engineering marvel “Hezekiah’s tunnel” – an impressive underground water source dug without line of sight instruments through solid rock as well as fortifying the city walls [2 Kings 20:20ff].**
 - d. Micah was called to bring the people’s hearts back to God instead of relying on their own resources and those of Egypt [2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 30:1-5; 31:1-3]. Though Jotham [2 Kings 15:32-38:2; 2 Chron 27] and Ahaz [2 Kings 16; 2 Chron 28] refused to heed God’s warning, Hezekiah [2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron 29-32; Isaiah 36-39] finally submitted to God and both Jerusalem and Judah were spared for a time.**

- 3. The prevailing character of God’s People is described by Micah as being:**
 - a. Rebellious and idolatrous – 1:5, 5:13-14**
 - b. Evil schemers – 2:1**

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- c. Covetous robbers – 2:2
 - d. Proud and arrogant – 2:3
 - e. Ignoring God’s call for mercy to the weak and to widows – 2:8-9
 - f. Hating good in preference for evil and wickedness – 3:2
 - g. Mercenary rulers [3:5] and false judges [3:9-11] perverting justice and peace for their own profit.
 - h. Dependent upon sorcerers and fortune tellers rather than God – 5:12
 - i. Dishonest businessmen – 6:11
 - j. Known for being violent, liars, and deceivers – 6:12
 - k. Bloodthirsty – 7:2
 - l. Bribers – 7:3
 - m. Disloyal and untrustworthy – 7:5
 - n. Despising the filial bonds of family – 7:6
4. Literary Structure – has a feeling of jerkiness most likely due to the author’s lacing together a series of “Oracles” that God gave Micah to present to three different kings over a longer period of time.
- a. These oracles include doom and hope, and they are arranged into 3 cycles: chapters 1-2; chapters 3-5; and chapters 6-7.
 - i. Each beginning with the command from God to “Listen” or “Hear” and then moving from the impending doom and future hope to follow.
 - ii. The hope oracles pertain to the faithful remnant in contrast to the doom oracles that pertain to the faithless masses.
 - iii. The message of judgment is based on the lofty moral/ethical Laws of God given at Sinai. The consoling message of hope is based on God’s enduring covenant with God’s people expressed consistently throughout redemptive history.
 - b. The truth and consistency of the Micah’s message over time and the inclusion of intra-

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Biblical sources clearly reinforce its appropriate inclusion as inspired Scripture. Micah speaks as clearly today to God’s people... the faithful remnant, as he did nearly 2,300 years ago. Such is the power of God’s Word.

- c. Then as now, many people keep journals to keep a record of what God has been teaching them or speaking to them, and at some time these are put together in a more cohesive form. This practice was used in ancient times as well. The books The Confessions of Saint Augustine; My Utmost for His Highest – Oswald Chambers and The Practice of the Presence of God – Brother Lawrence though they are non-Scriptural they provide a more modern example of such practice.

B. RESEARCH STUDY of the Old Testament Book of Micah presented in five parts. It was my final Old Testament Integrative project to present prophecy in light of Biblical Revelation in terms of redemptive history. This approach to the book of Micah provides an insight into what the prophet understood as God’s call upon him, and provides insights as to how such prophecy is applicable for our present world.

1. **Part 1: The Prophet** – this focuses on the prophet’s historical and cultural background, and his character as an obedient messenger.
 - a. Old Testament prophetic literature is characterized as being pre-exilic, exilic, or post exilic. The characteristics as well as the date of the writings are discernable through the message and references made and to whom the writings are addressed. In the opening verses Micah states that the “Word of the Lord” came to him during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah – kings of Judah. Bruce Waltke identifies that Micah (740-690 BC) delivered his message during the reigns of Jotham (742-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-686 BC).¹ Samaria was conquered and destroyed in 722 BC, and Judah was conquered and destroyed in 586 BC.² Micah identified himself as being from Moresheth-gath, a village in the hill country of Judah near the fortified city of Lachish. Micah’s country roots allowed him to identify with the poor and oppressed village populations outside the capital city... God’s humble people. Micah’s ministry was primarily to the Southern Kingdom or Judah, whose population had swelled when Samaria was conquered and the people who escaped exile, thronged to Judah and Jerusalem. Thus, Micah’s use of “Israel” was of a unified nation.³
 - b. The geographical area ruled by Israel [both Northern and Southern kingdoms] controlled key trade routes in the Middle East, and these trade routes brought enormous wealth and

¹ Baker, Alexander, & Waltke, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, IVP, 1988, pg 138

² NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, 1995, Old Testament Chronology

³ McComiskey, The Minor Prophets, Volume 2, Baker Books, 2004, pg 592

prosperity to Israel. Unfortunately, it also brought foreign cultural and pagan religious influences. Many years of great wealth dulled the vision and calloused the hearts of the leadership and the people of God, bringing religious apostasy and syncretism [the mixing of pagan and Jewish faith]. Aramean and Assyrian nations in the East pressured Samaria and Jerusalem, and reduced them to vassal states paying tribute to their kingdoms. Instead of submission to and dependence upon God, rulers thought to solve their problems in their own strength and wisdom. Both Samaria and Judah made pragmatic allegiances with other nation's to secure their protection and enhance their life – what Van Gemeren calls “Realpolitik” or power politics. Their focus being the Blessing they received in the Land, rather than on God who loved them. As the conscience of the people became increasingly dull to God, and their society more manipulative and self-serving, the common voice of the people – what Van Gemeren calls “Voxpopuli”- increasingly supported ethical and moral relativism and materialistic values. Van Gemeren observes that the result of these factors created:

A religion of manipulation where the end justifies the means. [This process] is manipulative, works at the expense of others, and undermines the essential nature of revelation. Israel's false prophets, [and later in history] the Pharisees, and the Sadducees were bound by the voxpopuli. The true prophets, our Lord, and the apostles faced the antagonism aroused against them by the human commitment to pragmatism (realpolitik) and to popular views and traditions (voxpopuli).⁴

- c. In this apostate condition the leaders and the wealthy conspired against and oppressed the poor who were helpless against them. Waltke comments:

A shocking contrast between extreme wealth and poverty was exacerbated by egregious injustices on the part of the elite rich and ruling class against the stalwart landowners, who were driven off their land and into a dependent economic status.⁵

- d. God ordained the distinct roles of prophet, king and priest for the proper care of His people. The prophet was to act as the spiritual leader and advisor to the king; he was to be the moral conscience for the nation. They were “God directed advisors to the king... guardians of the monarchy, ensuring the king did not stray from the covenant and fulfilled his theocratic role as a shepherd of God's people.”⁶ The role of the king was to rule the people as God's regent, to administrate order with justice, to settle disputes, and maintain the peace and common good. The role of the priest was to minister for the

⁴ Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, Zondervan, 1990, pg 26

⁵ Baker, Alexander, & Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, IVP, 1988, pg 138

⁶ Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, Zondervan, 1990, pg 47

people at the temple, maintaining the proscribed worship before God with the expectation of inclining their hearts toward God. In the fallen moral state of Micah's time, the priests went through the motions of worship, but their hearts were far from God. "The nation looked religious as it thronged to the Temple and offered lavish gifts, but the moral covenant, which mandated a loving spirit towards God and one's neighbor, had been replaced by a covenant between the powerful to spoil the poor."⁷ The moral and ethical character of leadership had become perverted, and infiltrated as aspects of Jewish life.

- e. It is clear from Micah's prophetic writing that the system of state God had ordained [Prophet, King, Priest] had gone horribly wrong. The leadership, who should have worked for the good of the people, cared nothing for their people (3:1-4). In this era of false prophets employed by leaders to advise them in matters of state who were paid and fed through favorable prophecies (3:5), Micah stands out as God's man. Micah claimed that he was fulfilling God's proper calling as prophet (3:8). "Whereas his rivals were self seeking, Micah was filled with zeal for the oppressed."⁸ Whereas his rivals were concerned with their well being and status before the leaders, Micah obeyed God and fearlessly preached God's Way. Micah, along with God's true prophets through the ages, were calling out "to prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God (Isa 40:3)." Micah's prophecies against the nation were fulfilled some one hundred years after his death, as were his prophecies about the Messiah when Jesus arrived some six hundred years later.

2. **Part 2: An Exegetical Outline of Micah** – this outline helps explain the overall message of the prophet Micah to the leaders of the nation and the people as well:

- a. **Superscription [1:1-2]**
- b. **Message of judgment to God's nation [1:3-16]**
 - i. **The earth lays subject before God's wrath [1:3-5]**

Mic 1:3 Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place;
he comes down and treads the high places of the earth.

Mic 1:4 The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart,
like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.

Mic 1:5 All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house
of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high
place? Is it not Jerusalem?

⁷ Baker, Alexander, & Waltke, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, IVP, 1988, pg 139

⁸ Baker, Alexander, & Waltke, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, IVP, 1988, pg 138

ii. Samaria and Judah to be destroyed for their sin [1:6-9]

^{Mic 1:6} “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations. ^{Mic 1:7} All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.” ^{Mic 1:8} Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. ^{Mic 1:9} For her wound is incurable; it has come to

iii. Exile is inevitable [1:10-16]

^{Mic 1:10} Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust. ^{Mic 1:11} Pass on in nakedness and shame, you who live in Shaphir. Those who live in Zaanan will not come out. Beth Ezel is in mourning; its protection is taken from you. ^{Mic 1:12} Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief, because disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem. ^{Mic 1:13} You who live in Lachish, harness the team to the chariot. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. ^{Mic 1:14} Therefore you will give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The town of Aczib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. ^{Mic 1:15} I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah. He who is the glory of Israel will come to Adullam. ^{Mic 1:16} Shave your heads in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourselves as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.

c. Message of judgment and hope to God’s people [2:1-3:12]

i. The wealthy [2:1-11]

1. Condemnation and judgment [2:1-5]

^{Mic 2:1} Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning’s light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. ^{Mic 2:2} They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

^{Mic 2:3} Therefore, the LORD says: “I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity. ^{Mic 2:4} In that day men will ridicule you; they will taunt you with this mournful song: ‘We are utterly ruined; my people’s possession is divided up. He takes it from me! He assigns our fields to traitors.’ ” ^{Mic 2:5} Therefore you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by

lot.

2. Wealthy have corrupted the prophets [2:6-7]

^{Mic 2:6} “Do not prophesy,” their prophets say. “Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.” ^{Mic 2:7} Should it be said, O house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the LORD angry? Does he do such things?” “Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?”

3. God’s people have defiled God’s witness to the nations [2:8-9]

^{Mic 2:8} Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle. ^{Mic 2:9} You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.

4. God’s people have defiled the land [2:10-11]

^{Mic 2:10} Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy. ^{Mic 2:11} If a liar and deceiver comes and says, ‘I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,’ he would be just the prophet for this people!

ii. The faithful remnant [2:12-13]

1. Will be gathered together [2:12]

^{Mic 2:12} “I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.

2. Will be led out [2:13]

^{Mic 2:13} One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.”

iii. The leadership [3:1-4]

1. Condemnation of leaders and rulers [3:1-3]

^{Mic 3:1} Then I said, “Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice, ^{Mic 3:2} you who hate good and love evil; who tear

the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; ^{Mic 3:3} who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?"

2. Judgment of abandonment [3:4]

^{Mic 3:4} Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.

iv. The False Prophet [3:5-7]

1. Condemnation of false prophets [3:5]

^{Mic 3:5} This is what the LORD says: "As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him.

2. Judgment of abandonment [3:6-7]

^{Mic 3:6} Therefore night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them.

^{Mic 3:7} The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God."

v. The True Prophet [3:8-12]

1. Filled with the Spirit to proclaim God's true Way [3:8]

^{Mic 3:8} But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.

2. Proclamation against injustice, bloodshed, wickedness [3:9-11]

^{Mic 3:9} Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; ^{Mic 3:10} who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. ^{Mic 3:11} Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."

3. Prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem [3:12]

^{Mic 3:12} Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will

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become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

d. God is Supreme and He Will Prevail [4:1-5:15]

i. God's Universal Kingdom [4:1-5]

1. The nations are included [4:1-2b]

^{Mic 4:1} In the last days the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. ^{Mic 4:2} Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."

2. God's Law and His Word will go out [4:2c-3a]

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ^{Mic 4:3} He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

3. God's Peace will prevail [4:3b-4]

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ^{Mic 4:4} Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

4. God will Reign forever [4:5]

^{Mic 4:5} All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

ii. God's Future Rule Over His People [4:6-8]

1. God's remnant are the weak, lame and disenfranchised [4:6-7a]

^{Mic 4:6} "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. ^{Mic 4:7} I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation.

2. God will rule them forever [4:7b-8]

The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever. ^{Mic 4:8} As for you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the

former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem.”

iii. **God’s Plan Revealed [4:9-13]**

1. King, prophets and priests have failed their calling [4:9]

^{Mic 4:9} Why do you now cry aloud—have you no king? Has your counselor perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?

2. Exile is eminent [4:10a]

^{Mic 4:10} Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon;

3. Remnant will be rescued [4:10b-c]

there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.

4. Present judgment and future glory [4:11-13]

^{Mic 4:11} But now many nations are gathered against you. They say, “Let her be defiled, let our eyes gloat over Zion!” ^{Mic 4:12} But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD? they do not understand his plan, he who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor. ^{Mic 4:13} “Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for I will give you horns of iron; I will give you hoofs of bronze and you will break to pieces many nations.” You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

iv. **Messiah Promised [5:1-5a]**

1. Man’s strength will fail [5:1]

^{Mic 5:1} Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.

2. God’s strength will prevail [5:2]

^{Mic 5:2} “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

3. Present resignation and future greatness [5:3-5a]

^{Mic 5:3} Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brother's return to join the Israelites. ^{Mic 5:4} He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. ^{Mic 5:5} And he will be their peace.

v. Present Destruction and Future Triumph [5:5b-15]

1. The Assyrian invasion is overt [5:5b-6]

When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. ^{Mic 5:6} They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword. He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he invades our land and marches into our borders.

2. The remnant invasion is covert [5:7-8]

^{Mic 5:7} The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for man or linger for mankind. ^{Mic 5:8} The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which mauls and mangles as it goes, and no one can rescue.

3. The remnant will emerge triumphant [5:9]

^{Mic 5:9} Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed.

4. God is the Devine Warrior; Idolatrous and disobedient nations will be destroyed [5:10-15]

^{Mic 5:10} "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will destroy your horses from among you and demolish your chariots. ^{Mic 5:11} I will destroy the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds. ^{Mic 5:12} I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells. ^{Mic 5:13} I will destroy your carved images and your sacred stones from among you; you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands. ^{Mic 5:14} I will uproot from among you your Asherah poles and demolish your cities. ^{Mic 5:15} I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me."

e. God's Justice [6:1-7:10]

i. God's Indictment of the Nation [6:1-8]

1. Creation sits in judgment [6:1-2]

^{Mic 6:1} Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. ^{Mic 6:2} Hear, O mountains, the LORD'S accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.

2. God's Grace/Works for the nation recounted [6:3-5]

^{Mic 6:3} "My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. ^{Mic 6:4} I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. ^{Mic 6:5} My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

3. No adequate remediation for nation [6:6-7]

^{Mic 6:6} With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ^{Mic 6:7} Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

4. No adequate excuse for people [6:8]

^{Mic 6:8} He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

ii. God's Indictment of His People [6:9-7:4a]

1. Sin of greed and dishonest gain [6:9-12]

^{Mic 6:9} Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom—
"Heed the rod and the One who appointed it. ^{Mic 6:10} Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? ^{Mic 6:11} Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? ^{Mic 6:12} Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.

2. Judgment of want [6:13-15]

^{Mic 6:13} Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.
^{Mic 6:14} You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword. ^{Mic 6:15}
You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil on yourselves, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.

3. Sin of following the idolatrous nations [6:16a]

^{Mic 6:16} You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions.

4. Judgment of scorn by the nations [6:16b]

Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.”

5. God's misery – His People's Failure and Corruption is Complete [7:1-4a]

^{Mic 7:1} What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. ^{Mic 7:2} The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net. ^{Mic 7:3} Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire— they all conspire together. ^{Mic 7:4} The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge.

iii. Judgment has come [7:4b-10]

1. God's Watchman Has Arrived [7:4b]

The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.

2. No Hope in Friends or Family [7:5-6]

^{Mic 7:5} Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words. ^{Mic 7:6} For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

3. Only Hope is in God [7:7-10]

^{Mic 7:7} But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me. ^{Mic 7:8} Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. ^{Mic 7:9} Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD'S wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness. ^{Mic 7:10} Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame, she who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.

f. Hope amid Despair – The Nation will Rise Again [7:11-20]

i. Day of rebuilding will come [7:11-13]

^{Mic 7:11} The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries. ^{Mic 7:12} In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain. ^{Mic 7:13} The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.

ii. God will again Shepherd His People [7:14-17]

^{Mic 7:14} Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago. ^{Mic 7:15} "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders." ^{Mic 7:16} Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power. They will lay their hands on their mouths and their ears will become deaf. ^{Mic 7:17} They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you.

iii. God is Incomparable [7:18-20]

^{Mic 7:18} Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ^{Mic 7:19} You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. ^{Mic 7:20} You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.

3. **Part 3:** This third portion of the paper focuses on the Theological Themes revealed in the book. Willem Van Gemeren identifies three major themes recurring through Micah’s prophetic writings, 1) condemnation and judgment, 2) purification and hope, 3) the establishment of the Kingdom of God and of His Messiah.⁹ The purpose of this paper is to follow the literary development and presentation style of the first two of these themes, and to observe how they are applied in the New Testament.
- a. Micah employed both poetic and prosaic literary devices to deliver his messages to Samaria and Judah. He initially developed the theme of condemnation and judgment in the most startling of ways – with a poetic description of God, the Great King, entering creation and treading on the high places [where idolatry flourished] and images of creation literally melting away before Him [1:3-4]. This opening poem presented a vivid portrayal of the earth’s helpless response before our Great King’s righteous anger. Micah immediately explained the cause of God’s anger – Jacob’s [Israel’s] transgression [1:5]. Both Samaria [the Northern Kingdom] and Jerusalem [the Southern Kingdom] will be destroyed because of their sins. God’s first case against His people is their persistent and unrepentant idolatry. The unfaithfulness of the people has caused the destruction of Samaria [1:6-7], and this “incurable wound” and has now brought judgment to Judah and Jerusalem [1:9]. The prophet explains his own pain – “because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl” [1:8]. The result of this incurable wound is destruction, shame and exile [1:10-16].
 - b. It was the responsibility of the earthly king, as regent for God in Heaven, to preserve a proper focus on God and worship – to “make straight the way of the lord” [Ps 5:8, Isa 40:3, Matt 3:3, Lk 3:4, John 1:23] by. The king’s leadership was also responsible to maintain God’s required social order of justice and mercy. In both areas the leaders completely failed and led the people astray – “instead of setting an example of being a counterculture, they became acculturated to the practices of the [surrounding] nations (1:7; 5:12-14). Instead of relying on the Lord, they depended on military advances, alliances, and fortifications for their security (5:11).”¹⁰
 - c. Micah condemned the wealthy that had trampled on the cause of justice and mercy. He pronounced “woe” to those that deliberately plan iniquity [2:1], and pervert justice for their own gain [2:2]. Their lust for wealth had corrupted the courts, false prophets proliferated [2:6; 11], and the land had become “ruined beyond all remedy” [2:10]. The leaders had become so perverse they “hate good and love evil.” Micah compared them to a butcher – cutting up the people as they would cut up meat for the pot [3:2-3]. Micah’s

⁹ Willem Van Gemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word, Zondervan, 1990, pg 152

¹⁰ Willem Van Gemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word, Zondervan, 1990, pg 152

imagery was both bombastic and vitriolic, and a precursor of both John the Baptist [Mat 3:7-12], and Jesus [Mat 15:1-9; 23:2-36; Lk 39:39-46] with their vivid condemnation of the leaders in their era. Micah explained that God’s judgment would be harsh and final – the faithless leaders and people would be abandoned, “they will cry out to the Lord, but He will not answer them... He will hide His Face from them because of the evil they have done” [Mic 3:4]. Jesus predicted a similar abandonment and elimination of Jewish leaders from the Kingdom of God [Lk 49-52].

- d. In chapter 6, Micah used the language of a legal prosecutor to plead God’s case against the nation, using creation as the judge [6:1-2]. First, God’s works of Grace are recounted [6:3-5], followed by the harsh truth there is no remediation for the nation [6:6-7] and no excuse for the people [6:8]. The indictment recounted the sins of greed and dishonest gain [6:9-12] and idolatry [6:16]. Micah closed his argument with a poignant lament – speaking for God he said,

What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net. Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire— they all conspire together. The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. [7:1-4]

God’s pain and sorrow are captured again in Jesus’ forlorn words to Jerusalem,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ [Mt 23:37-39]

- e. God’s purpose in Israel was to have a nation of priestly sons and daughters living in peace and tranquility with God. They were to be a living example of righteousness that the world could emulate. Hence, God’s judgments are not to totally destroy His people, but to purify a remnant that will live in righteousness. Thus God’s righteous judgment against the wicked is tempered with a message of purification and hope. Micah preached condemnation and judgment [1:3-2:11] followed with a poetic prediction of a faithful remnant that will be gathered and pastured [2:12-13]. More condemnation and judgment [3:1-12] culminating in the dismal portrayal “Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests

teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money” [3:11], followed by a vision of God’s Universal Kingdom [4:1-8]. The certainty of exile and present judgment [4:9-10a] is followed by a promise of future glory [4:10b-13]. Jerusalem will fall [5:1], but the Messiah will come [5:2-4]. The overt Assyrian invasion will rule the land [5:5b-6], but the remnant living in exile will emerge strong and triumphant [5:7-9]. Messiah will prevail and introduce “a series of divine initiatives by Israel’s Sovereign King to purge His realm from Israel’s reliance on human power both military and religious [and] Israel’s independent spirit that fractured the covenantal relationship and prevented Israel from fulfilling its sacred mission of sanctifying the earth.”¹¹

- f. Micah follows his role as God’s prosecutor [6:1-6] with a personal testimony of faith, “But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me” [7:7]. Micah advocates bearing God’s righteous judgment with the certainty of knowing restoration will come [7:8-17]. With hope placed firmly before them, God’s people were encouraged to weather the current times of testing and persecution, knowing that God’s *Hessed* [enduring] Love accompanied His faithful remnant throughout the ages. Though the faithless majority would follow the way of expedience and compromise for temporal gain, Micah and the faithful remnant would follow God for the promised hope of eternal gain [Mic 3:8, 4:5, 7:7; Jos 24:15; Rom 5:3-5]. Van Gemeren observes,

Micah affirmed that he and his followers would continue to walk in the way of the Lord (4:5), contrary to the false way of the nations. He further elaborated that this way is the old way. The Lord had revealed to Moses that He expected a loyal commitment to Him, as expressed in justice and love (6:6-8). Justice is an expression of [loyal] love (*Hessed*), which is characterized by constancy, consideration, absence of discrimination or recrimination, and a readiness to cover a multitude of sins and wrongs. The law of God’s Kingdom, to which all it’s citizens must conform (4:2), involves justice, love, and humility.¹²

- g. Jesus warned of judgment from following false prophets and leaders who craved self-interest over God and righteousness. Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God would be open only to those who loved God and were focused on His Will and Purpose.

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out

¹¹ Thomas McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Books, 1993, pg 718

¹² Willem Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, Zondervan, 1990, pg 154

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demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” [Mat 7:21-23]

- h. The object of our hope for the Kingdom of God must be God Himself. Knowledge about God and work for God will not suffice. God wants a family of redeemed sons and daughters living in an intimate loving relationship.
- i. Finally, Micah concludes his writings with a wonderful praise of God that anticipated the removal of all sin at Calvary. Micah knew that God’s compassion would ultimately win out, and that Messiah would come and reclaim His people.

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago. [7:18-20]

4. **Part Four:** of this comprehensive study of the Old Testament Book of Micah focuses on a specific part of the text... the **Biblical Exegesis of Micah 6:1-8:**

- a. In this oracle, Micah has been commissioned by God to indict and prosecute a formal grievance in a celestial court of law against God’s People. The complaint centers on the Mosaic Covenant relationship of God and His people, and the calling out of the people as a royal nation intended to be God’s Light in a dark and fallen world. Van Gemeren provides a summarized assessment of God’s covenantal development with humanity beginning with the Adamic covenant up to the Mosaic covenant:

The Lord extended to Adam’s descendants the privileges of enjoyment, procreation, and rule over this earth. He renewed these to all humankind in Noah, and incorporated them as promises to Abraham. The covenant with Abraham contains the fourfold promise; 1) God’s blessing of Abraham’s descendants comprised of peoples and kingdoms, 2) God’s blessing on the earth, 3) God’s presence in protection and blessing resulting in glory, exultation and praise, 4) the blessing of Israel to the nations. [With the development of the Mosaic covenant] the Lord graciously consecrated Israel, established His Kingship in Israel, instituted ways of reconciliation and forgiveness, and gave Israel specific and concrete instruction as to how they could live as God’s holy people on earth. At the core of the Mosaic covenant is God’s commitment to all who respond to Him from the heart... hence circumcision of the

heart was an important requisite for covenant inclusion.¹³

b. **Verse 1a**: “Listen to *what* the LORD says:”

In this opening announcement of the oracle, Micah declares the divine source of the coming oracle. The historical occasion for this oracle possibly occurred at the temple in Jerusalem with the Assyrian army advancing. The threat of the Assyrian army had no doubt caused the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside to enter into the perceived safety of the fortress city of Jerusalem and the insurmountable protection of both the famed city walls and of God’s Presence in the Temple Sanctuary. In this passage the author employs an interesting literary device in developing the drama with the deliberate use of “what,” used eight times in these eight verses and 14 times throughout the book.

c. **Verse 1b-2**: “Stand up, plead [my] case before the mountains; let the hills hear *what* you have to say. Hear, O mountains, the LORD’S accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.”

Waltke observes that verse 1b and 2 are the “proper introduction to the lawsuit where the trial scene includes the Plaintiff (the Lord), the messenger on behalf of the Plaintiff (Micah), the Witnesses (the mountains), and the Defendant (Israel).¹⁴ In these initial words God has validated Micah’s appointed role as God’s Court Prosecutor. It is interesting that in Micah’s previous sermons the problem of the Jewish leadership who misused the secular courts for their own gain, who denied justice to the people and employed the courts as a means to acquire wealth, were now called into God’s Court of Law. In God’s Court of Law, the leaders are as helpless and vulnerable as the common people had been in secular court. Jesus much later employed a warning to settle quickly legal matters (Matt 5:25), with an emphasis on God’s Righteous Judgment to come.

d. **Verse 3**: “My people, *what* have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.”

Although great power and authority rang out in the previous verse, there is a sense of pathos here as God personalizes the address to His people and asks them two questions. Waltke suggests the first question “is both defensive, protecting the Plaintiff’s innocence, and accusing, for it implies Israel’s distrust in the Lord. The second question also implies that Israel has been murmuring against Yahweh.”¹⁵ In this verse Micah corrected Israel’s improper thinking – that while the people thought they had a complaint against God, in

¹³ Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, (Zondervan, 1990), pg 237

¹⁴ Baker, Alexander & Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, (Tyndale, 1988), pg 192

¹⁵ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets, Volume Two*, (Baker Books, 1993), pg 729

reality it was God who had the real complaint against His People. Israel in Micah's time had rejected God's yoke and claim upon them, and much later Jesus encouraged Israel to accept His yoke (Matt 11:30).

- e. **Verse 4:** "I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam."

Here God brings back to mind the Exodus and the miracles by which He redeemed Israel establishing His Covenant with her, and providing her with exceptional leadership. Waltke points out that "The implication for Micah's audience is clear: their poor leadership under corrupt magistrates, venal priests, and extorting prophets (chapters 2-3) is not due to a lack of divine power or grace, but to their phlegmatic hearts toward God's Grace."¹⁶ Israel's sin is a hard and unresponsive heart toward God, toward one another, and toward the nations in general. The situation was similar in Jesus' day as He accused the Jewish leadership for their failure to properly instruct and direct the people. Just as Moses' miracles served to validate his message and leadership, Jesus' Miracles served to announce that a new and better Moses had arrived to lead the people into the Kingdom of God, but again Israel rejected God's leadership.

- f. **Verse 5:** "My people, remember *what* Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

Verse three had two questions intent on reminding Israel that the Sovereign Lord loves Israel. Verses four and five each have two statements of God's specific interventions on behalf of Israel to remind her that He has acted mightily on her behalf. Waltke concludes, "To know (*yada*) denotes both cognitive and affective knowledge of someone or something... remembrance equals participation... to speak of the past is to make it effectual, authoritative for today. Memory entails commitment to the God who performed signs and wonders in the past and so actualizes the past into the present."¹⁷

Again, Israel is confronted with the unwelcome truth that they are the problem, not God. God acted faithfully in the past and since God's Character cannot change, He acts faithfully now and always. This aspect of memory is utilized in Church life today through the remembrance of the ministry, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and in the identification with our spiritual Kingdom community in the practice of communion, as Jesus invited us to "do this in remembrance of Me." Waltke also advises about another

¹⁶ McComiskey, pg 730

¹⁷ McComiskey, pg 731

aspect of knowing – to “know about” (*yada ki*). *Yada* is a personal and intimate knowing, while *yada ki* is impersonal and distant knowing about.¹⁸ This same aspect of knowing and being known are evidenced in Jesus’ statements in the New Testament (John 8:19, 10:14, 14:7; Matt 7:15-23). Personal knowing and loving are transformational elements, while knowing about is merely informational having no transcendent component.

- g. **Verse 6:** “With *what* shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?”

The intent of Micah’s preaching in verses one to five was to shock the people into wakefulness and repentance. They should have been ashamed of themselves, but they didn’t get it. “Instead of responding to such a wonderful Lord with loving and obedient hearts, Micah’s generation transformed the covenant into a contract.”¹⁹ Verses six and seven each begin with a question about the proper sacrifice to bring the Lord followed with greater and more extravagant gifts. A burnt offering was an acceptable gift to bring to the temple, and year-old calves were a significantly more extravagant gift. Temple worship was to have been both joyous and somber, with personal and community celebrations of the Jewish feasts. Gifts were to be brought out of thankful and joyous hearts, including gifts of contrition, piety and forgiveness. However,

“Profound unbelief in God’s gracious character and actions induces such spiritual blindness, and as a result it debases the covenant of grace into a nonloving, bargaining contract. Outwardly, the worshiper appears religious, but in truth his insulting questions betray that he is desperately wicked within.”²⁰

Micah’s audience went through the motions of faithful worship, but instead of a living and joyous faith, theirs was reduced to dead ritualism. The message to the Church is also clear here... attendance, tithing, and service are no substitute for a loving and responsive heart.

- h. **Verse 7:** “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

In verse six the question is asked, “with what shall I come before the Lord?” Verse seven asks a more serious question, “Will the Lord be pleased with...?” The escalation of extravagance begun in verse six now takes on the most ridiculous extreme in this extreme

¹⁸ McComiskey, pg 731

¹⁹ Baker, Alexander & Waltke, pg 194

²⁰ McComiskey, pg 732

hyperbole. “Thousands of rams” had been previously offered – once by Moses at the dedication of the Tabernacle, and once by King Solomon at the dedication of the temple, but these were extreme gifts that were only offered at the most serious and propitious of occasions. “Ten thousand rivers of oil” makes this farce clear to his listeners as this is an unimaginable extravagance because olive oil was produced and sold in small amounts. These two suggestions are an absurdity intended to shock the hearer’s sensibilities. Rather than confessing their sin and repenting, God’s People remained hard of heart and self justified. The suggestion of such extravagant offerings announced that no gift would be sufficient to avoid the coming judgment, other than true heartfelt repentance.

The final offering suggestion “shall I offer my firstborn” is of such great offence to the Character of God that no one who knew Him would ever conceive of it, and yet the paganized Jewish culture had adopted this horrible practice – offering their own children as a sacrifice to their syncretistic pagan/God perverted worship. As Waltke pointed out, “Yahweh does not make these kinds of demands upon His people.”²¹ That the people would entertain such a notion betrayed their total lack of understanding of what God wanted from them.

- i. **Verse 8:** “He has showed you, O man, *what* is good. And *what* does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

This final verse of the passage leaves no doubt that the people should have known what is required of them, and that God had made it abundantly clear through the Torah and through the ministry of the prophets. Micah’s summary of Godly requirements is stunningly simple and direct, and following this oracle one can visualize Micah raising his voice with every new development... finally screaming this last verse at the top of his lungs to his listeners. Waltke comments:

“The prophets did not repudiate sacrifice but subordinated it to ethics. Sacrifices without a spiritual commitment that displays itself in ethics profit nothing. The law itself taught that each member of the covenant community must not try to escape the fundamental condition of every human as human, who is required to search out what is good. Having disallowed ignorance as an excuse, the prophet now sets forth that the Lord requires covenantal solidarity.”²²

Waltke goes on to clarify that walking humbly with God means to “walk wisely, circumspectly, and with sound understanding” in response to God’s *Hessed* love. He

²¹ McComiskey, pg 733

²² McComiskey, pg 733

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further clarifies that the image being portrayed is one of marked contrast to the arrogant, self-righteous behavior of the wealthy elite, or even of the similarly deluded spiritual elite: “Before God’s love, humans are not free to grab what they can out of life or be indifferent to others.”²³

Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders of His day as “blind guides and hypocrites” in a series of seven woes (Matt 23:13-29). These leaders were expected to exhibit a shepherd’s heart for the people; instead they lorded over them using their role as spiritual guides for their personal advantage. Sadly, the same can be seen in our church today. I have a dear friend who sells corporate jets to a wealthy clientele. In the process of background checks to provide a database of these wealthy owners, he was horrified to find that many churches and television evangelists owned many of these jets, some had multiple jets – each costing millions to purchase and hundreds of thousands to operate each month. Instead of using this wealth to comfort the poor, to secure justice and mercy in their community – millions of dollars are spent on luxury and personal comfort. We obviously have not yet learned the lesson Micah and Jesus were teaching about.

- j. **Summary:** God’s people [then and now] were to be a counter culture living conspicuously different from their worldly neighbors within their existing political, social and cultural context; where the spiritual calling into God’s community under His leadership took precedence. When God’s people are properly submitted in a loving relationship with Him, when their faith is evidenced through moral righteousness and ethical acts of justice and mercy, they are fulfilling their calling as salt and light to their surrounding culture.

5. **Part 5:** The fifth portion of this paper focuses on my personal application of Micah’s prophetic message in today’s world. **Personal Application – Micah and me:**

- a. In completing this study on Micah I imagine that he and I have much in common:
 - i. I think we are both contemplative persons, we are both given to action, we are natural but reluctant leaders, we prefer the quiet interaction of a small group to the center stage of a public office, and we prefer living in a rural more intimate community over the hustle and bustle of big city life.
 - ii. I think we appreciate the quietude and solace of nature where we can observe God’s Fingerprints which delight us. We prefer plain folk who are honest, thoughtful, sensitive and kind, to the bombastic, self-centered, egotistical, movers and shakers that make up much of our social-cultural communities.

²³ McComiskey, pg 734

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- iii. We both delight in hearing God’s voice, though I wonder why I don’t hear it more often. We delight in hearing and learning eternal truth, and find it pretty easy to sit and absorb hours of dialog, readings, and teachings.
 - iv. We enjoy solitude and group interaction for short times, and prefer relational intimacy with our wife or a few close friends for prolonged times.
 - v. We are both certain that God has called us and we have been given a vital message to share with our community of believers.
 - vi. In all of these, I imagine that Micah and I are very much alike. In face-to-face encounter, I am sure we would have seen a peer, someone we could relate to. As contemporaries, I am sure we would have been friends. What would distinguish us would be Micah’s passion and purpose – he knew what God called him to do and didn’t shy away from it. I am less certain, still looking for the way and means by which God would use me for His Kingdom purpose.
- b. I think the message I have been given is also unpopular. As I look around at my community, even my community of believers, and I see a fatal attraction to form and a lack of appreciation for substance. As I look around my church I know there are many who are cultural Christians who attend out of habit, where many “know about” [*yada ki*] the Truth, but few are vitally in love with God [*yada*]. I also see leaders who love their position of prominence, but who avoid getting their hands dirty in ministry.
- c. As Christian leaders have sought new ways to make the faith accessible to a larger audience, we have reduced faith to a formula – just say this and you are saved. No need for life change, or Kingdom mindedness. Where moral and ethical imperatives are tempered by cultural relativity. Where love of God is an ideal to be longed for, but not a way of life to be lived out everyday.
- d. Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all the nations, not just to make believers to populate the congregation (James 2:19). We are called to engage our community in dialog, to witness to the truth we know and have experienced, to be counter-cultural, and to be salt and light. Jesus also knew that there would be wheat and tares, as well as sheep and goats in our communities – whom He would sort out at the proper time. As for me now... I am my brother’s keeper, and I have a responsibility to engage them – to challenge them to have a first-person intimate and vital relationship with the Living God. It is there for us now... the Spirit is calling! Jesus’ warning in Matt 7:21-23 haunts me, and it is one I am sure Micah would relate to:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

- e. **The people to whom Jesus spoke thought they had met the requirements for entry into God’s Kingdom, but they “knew about” [yada ki] rather than “knew and loved” [yada] God. How do I rouse myself and find my voice to challenge the “somnambulant [sleeping] faithless” in our pews from their complacency, while not extinguishing a smoldering wick or breaking a bruised reed?**
- f. **I believe that if Micah were here today he would confront both the liberal left and self-righteous right components at home in our churches, and he would move them to make a choice to accept or reject God on His terms. Micah would make them uncomfortable in their status quo. Micah would confront church leaders to shepherd their flock, and to return to True Worship. Micah, the Apostles Paul, James and Peter, as well as John the Baptist and the prophets of old all found their voice and entered their ministry by compulsion from the Spirit. Paul complained “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16), and Jeremiah complained, “His Word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jer 20:9). These were men on fire for God – ignited by the Holy Spirit that compelled them to act. I am still smoldering, I have not yet ignited – but I sense it is coming.**
- g. **Conclusion: In summarizing Prophetic Motifs, VanGemeran differentiated between the Spirit and the flesh. The flesh & the Law give rise to the old community that is hard of heart, characterized by love of self, it displays no loyalty, it is evidenced in acts of greed and injustice, and those who perpetrate this are heirs of the curse. In contrast, The Spirit & the Law give rise to a new community that is circumcised in heart, characterized by love of God, displays perseverance, evidenced in acts of righteousness, justice, and love, and who are heirs of the Promise. “Seeking the Lord, which signifies a living faith, that is, a concern with justice and righteousness....**

Only those who walk with Yahweh will have a share in the New Jerusalem! The remnant are those who know Yahweh and glorify Him in their lives. (Mic 6:6-8)”²⁴ LaSor, Hubbard & Bush conclude in their interpretation of Micah, “It is not in displays of worship but a righteous way of life that validates a healthy relationship with God.... In the closing response Micah’s later hearers take his message to heart. His descriptions of sin became

²⁴ VanGemeran, pg 238

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a mirror in which they check their lives. His words of hope gave them a new heart to live as God's people in a darkened world."²⁵

Pray for wisdom... pray for patience for the ignorant who are content with the status quo... pray that God would ignite a fire in His Church... that we would see how amazing and wondrous God is and be attracted to Him in a way that is transformative. Pray for revival.

²⁵ LaSor, Hubbard, & Bush, pg 275