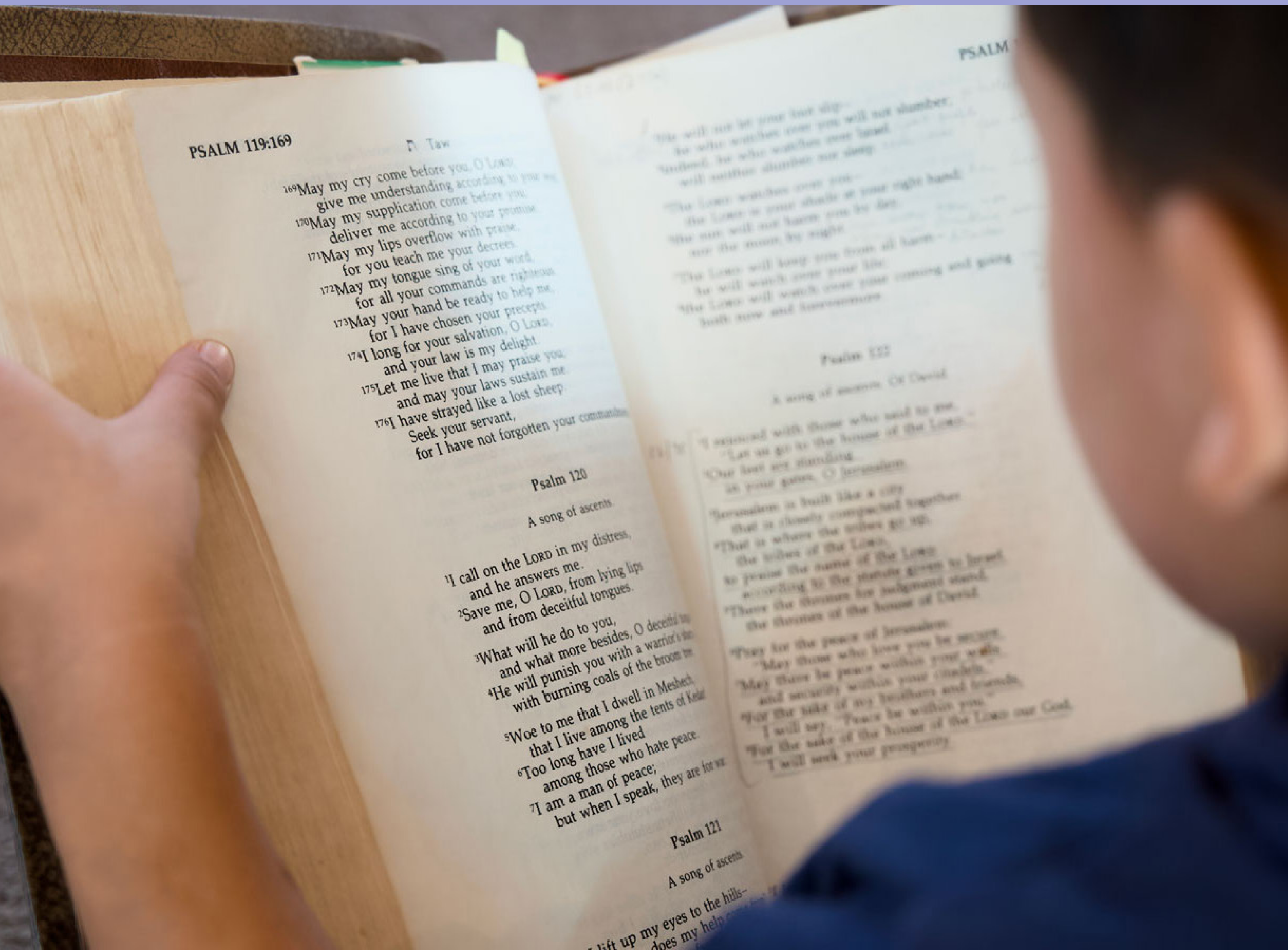




# Into the Bible

**The purpose of into the Bible  
is to get children into the Bible,  
and to get the Bible into children.**

## **VOLUME 2 STEP 3: MICAH 1-4**



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# General Introduction



**INTO THE BIBLE is a way to help children and young people, and anyone for that matter, to understand the Bible better. It's a simple translation from the original languages of the Bible, together with explanations, to make the Bible more clear.**

**Each Step INTO THE BIBLE is made up of three parts:**

- 1) A **translation**, so that children can understand the passage in order to be able to read it in their own Bible.
- 2) An **introduction** to the passage for Beginners, so that they can get to know the background to the passage they are reading. This includes the history, geography, the issues of the time, and people involved, the culture, etc.
- 3) A **Bible study** on the passage for young people, or for parents, or teachers to help them grasp what the point of each paragraph is, and what are the issues spoken about in the text .

**The method of INTO THE BIBLE is to consult the Hebrew or Greek lexicons (dictionaries) to find out what meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word best fits the context of the passage, and will also make clear sense to a young reader.** Where a word is difficult to understand I may turn it into a sentence to make sense of it. Where an issue is rather complicated, I use a footnote to explain it.

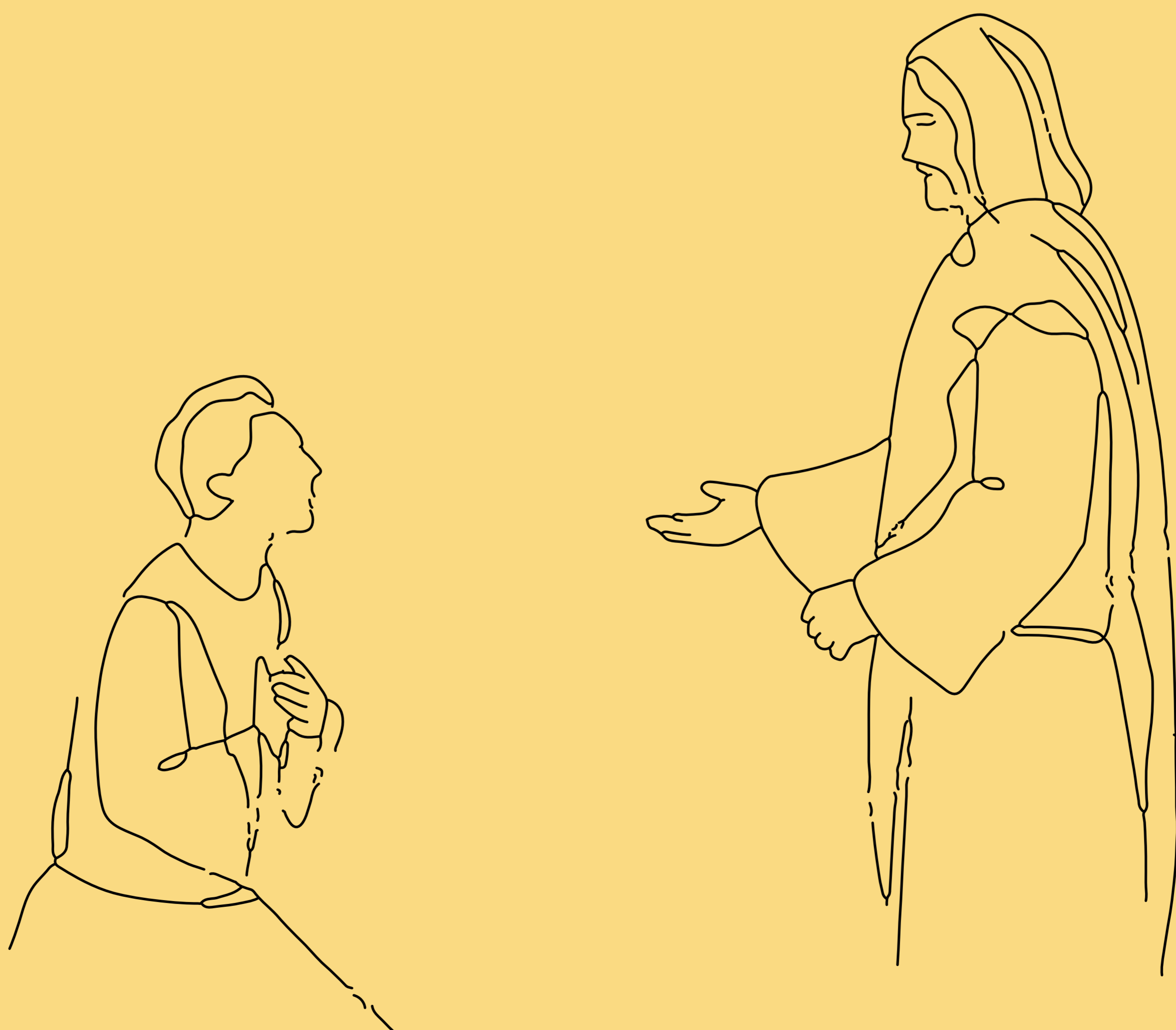
- INTO THE BIBLE is intended to prepare youngsters to be able to **read their own Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is planned to **introduce children to most of the Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is **educational.** It is meant to develop their **reading skills as well as their characters.** It can also be used by parents or teachers to teach their children. **The focus is on our children.**

**Our children are our heritage from God, and the Bible is the heritage for our children, which is also from God. The purpose of Into the Bible is to get children into the Bible, and to get the Bible into children.**

Yours in Christ,

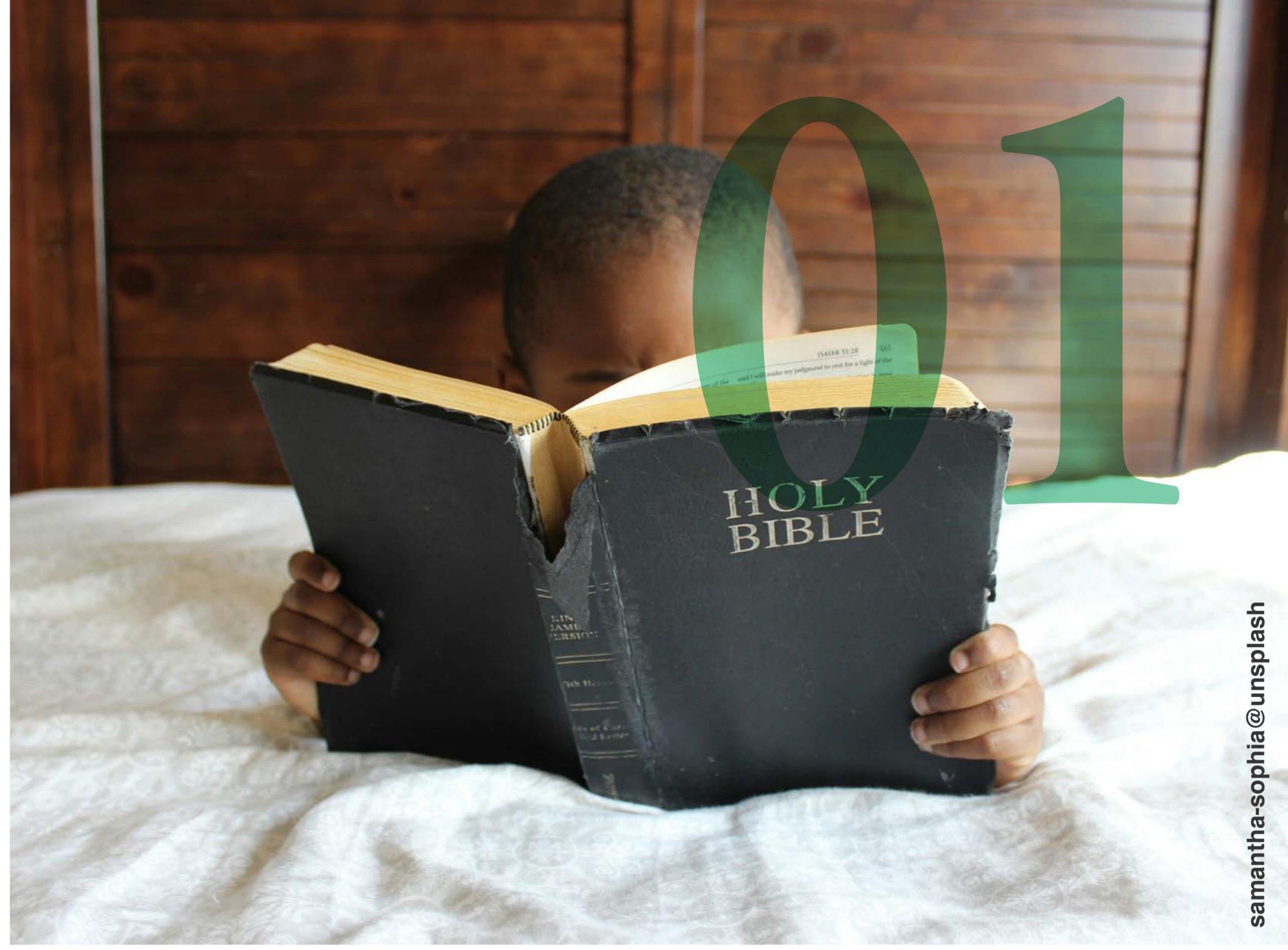
**Peter Watson**

# Micah 1-4



# John 1

# A Simple Bible Translation



## START HERE!

Read this simple translation to understand the passage, then read it in your own Bible.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1:1-4 MICAH WARNS THE NATIONS

This is the message of the Lord. It is the prophecy that came to Micah [migh-ka] who lived in Moresheth [maw-r'shet]. Micah was God's prophet during the time of Ahaz [ay-haz], and his Dad before him, and his son Hezekiah [hezza-kigh-a], the kings of Judah. Micah's prophecy was a message from the Lord about Samaria [s'mair-ee-a], the capital of Israel, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

This is the message: All people must pay attention to what the Lord has to say. The whole world, and everyone in the world, should listen. Yes, listen carefully, so that God, the Lord of the whole world, may point a finger against Israel and Judah. He will show the nations that he has a case against both of you. You have become sinful, but your God is holy. He is perfectly pure and absolutely good. God's holiness is what God's temple in Jerusalem stands for.

Keep a lookout, everyone, everywhere in the world, because the true God is going to come out of heaven, and come down to earth. He is going to conquer the countries of Israel and Judah. He will destroy all their important high places. God is going to punish his own people. All the other nations who live in this part of the world are going to see it happen.

God is going to take action against Israel and Judah. Great fires will destroy all the buildings on the mountains. Their places of worship and their castles will be completely destroyed. The people living in the valleys will no longer be safe. They will be driven out in the same way that people have to leave their homes when the rivers come down in flood.



## 1:5-7 GOD HAS REJECTED ISRAEL

People will be punished like this because Israel has disobeyed God and sinned against him. Do you know who are causing the nation of Israel to sin? It is their rulers and leaders in Samaria, their capital city. And by the way, do you know who are also causing the nation of Judah to sin? It is also their rulers and leaders in Jerusalem, their capital city.

That is why I am going to destroy Samaria, says God. I will turn the whole city into a pile of stones and rubble. People will one day plant vineyards among the stones where the city used to be. I myself will knock all their houses down, and then throw their stones down the hillside into the valley below. I shall leave nothing standing in the town. The only thing that will be left there for anyone to see will be the foundations of their buildings.

Then all their idols will be smashed to pieces. All the gifts they brought for their idols will be burnt by fire. I shall see to it that every statue and carving is destroyed. The chapels of the idols use sex to get people to go and worship there. They have made a lot of money by getting men to leave their wives and children to join those meetings. My people have also left me to worship those idols. So now I am going to wreck those places. Then in future, if they want sex like that, they can go and pay for it somewhere else.

## 1:8-16 MICAH WARNS THE TOWNS

Because God is going to punish us, I am terribly upset. I want to cry. I even walk around barefoot and without a shirt. At times I howl like the jackals and moan like the owls. This worry is driving me to despair.

Judah is like someone who has serious injuries that cannot be cured. Disaster has come to Judah. It has reached our towns. It has even got as far as Jerusalem.

There are heathen people living nearby in Gath [gat]. Please don't tell them in Gath about this. They will celebrate when they hear our bad news.

Micah warns Dusty-Town that they are going to squirm in the dust. (Whenever Hebrew people were filled with grief or got deeply depressed, they would sit on the ground and pour dust over their heads.)

Micah warns Pleasant-Town that life will become very UN-pleasant for them. They are going to go through a shameful, embarrassing and disgraceful time. Their enemies would take even their clothes away from them.

Micah warns Freedom-Town that they are going to be trapped, like in a prison, and will NOT be able to escape.

Micah warns The House-Next-Door-Town that they will be very upset when they lose their good standing or reputation as the town next door to Jerusalem. Travellers and tourists will no longer stay there. The town is going to be destroyed. The people are going to be ruined.

Micah warns the people of Bitter-Town that they are going to suffer a lot of bitter pain. They will long for relief, but the disaster will be sent by God. Their enemies will attack right up to the gates of Jerusalem, and they will not be able to escape from them.

Micah warns the Fort of Lachish: You, who live in Lachish [la-cheesh], every one of you had better hitch up your chariot to its team of horses. You've got a big fight coming your way! You were the people who first brought sin into Zion, which is the centre and heart of Jerusalem. You copied the sins of Israel. You encouraged the leaders of Judah to follow the bad example of the leaders of Israel.

Therefore you may as well give the things you own to the poor people in the village of Moresheth Gath. Whatever you don't give away is going to be destroyed by an army that will attack you.

Micah warns another place called False-Town. At this town was a stream, a small river. But it was unreliable. It was a wadi [wah-dee]. It would often dry up so that there was no water in it at all. Micah says that False-town itself will also be unreliable and useless, like their wadi. When danger comes, this town will let both kings down: the king of Israel and also the king of Judah. A river that dries up and has no water flowing in it will be of no use whatsoever as a defence when an enemy attacks. A dry river bed is very easy for an army to cross.

Near Lachish is a place called Conquer-Town. Micah warns the people living there that instead of being the conquerors they liked to think they are, God will bring someone to conquer them.

Now Micah warns that the Lord God, the wonderful and powerful God of the whole of Israel, is going to bring to Adullam a terrible foreign army. God's people are going to have to hide away from their enemies in the same way that David had to hide away from Saul.

Micah ends his warning to these towns with these words: Cut off your hair, all you women! Go into mourning. Cry with grief. Shave your heads until you are as bald as a vulture, because you are going to lose your children, the children you love and enjoy so much. They are going to be taken away from you. They will go into exile far away. You will never see them again.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2:1-5 GOD WILL PUNISH HIS WICKED PEOPLE**

Watch out, those people who plan how to cheat, and who work out how to commit crime. They do this even when they lie in bed. Then early next morning they go and do what they have planned, because they can get away with it. As leaders they have the power to do such things.

They have got their eye on fields that belong to others. They take over other people's houses by force. They steal from people. They will lie to people and trick them to take away their houses. They will cheat everyone out of what belongs to them.

Therefore this is what the Lord says: Because they deliberately plotted and planned how to harm others, I am planning disaster against this nation. You will not be able to save yourselves, or your pride, from the time of trouble that is coming.

At that time your enemy will mock you and make jokes about you. He will pour humiliating scorn on you. He will cause you to say: We are utterly ruined! What belongs to us is confiscated. What is even worse is that they take away what is ours, and give it to those traitors who have gone over onto the enemy's side!

So there will no longer be any godly magistrates who will make a fair and just decision as to what land belongs to you. You will lose all the land that God gave to his people.

### **2:6-9 THINGS HAVE BECOME HOPELESSLY BAD**

Their preachers say that no one must preach about these things. No one is allowed to preach that a humiliating disgrace is about to come to our nation. That is not acceptable to these people.

What are the people of Israel saying? They say: Does the Lord really get upset like that with us? Surely he won't allow such terrible things to happen to his people, will he? Doesn't God say: If any person keeps my rules and ceremonies, and does things the correct and proper way, I shall look after that person? In this sort of way you just keep on bluffing yourselves!

But I will tell you the truth about what God DOES say: My people no longer listen to me. They have changed. They have openly become my enemies instead of being my people. If they see something they like they just take it. If they see someone walking along, who is wearing something expensive and nice, they simply rob him. They do not care. They are like soldiers coming back from war with the loot they took from the enemy. They just took whatever they liked or wanted. They are proud of what they have done. They are arrogant.

They even chase women out of their lovely homes. They take away from their children the good things I wanted them to have. Those children lose out for the rest of their lives.

## 2:10-11 THERE IS NO HOPE LEFT FOR THE COUNTRY

You will have to leave your country. You must go. Get away, because you have no future here. This land is sinful. It has got dirty. The people are ugly. The country is ruined. The whole of it is sick, and nothing can change that or make things better.

The people have lost all sense of values. They prefer to listen to certain characters that talk a lot but have nothing worthwhile to say. The things that they say are not true. They tell lies. The only way they can get people to listen to them is by talking about things like wine and beer. That is what these people are interested in, and those are the sort of preachers that people want to listen to. That's because they love to get drunk. They do not want to listen to anyone who will tell them God's truth. Watch out! Don't listen to these false preachers.

## 2:12-13 BUT GOD WILL LOOK AFTER HIS PEOPLE

Now listen to **GOD'S WONDERFUL PROMISE**: My precious people, I am certainly going to gather up all of you, all the survivors of Israel, and I shall bring them safely back home, like a shepherd bringing his sheep back to their pen. Like a flock of sheep returning from the pastures to its pen, my people will all come back together.

I shall provide them with a good leader when they are slaves in another country, and he will get them out of there. They will break out of slavery like a shepherd opening a gate for the sheep to go through. Their leader will lead them out. Through him they will experience an exodus. Their king will make the journey in front of them, with the Lord at their head, to get them safely back home.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3:1-4 THE HARM THE LEADERS DO

God said: I am telling you to listen. Listen to me, you leaders who rule the nation of Israel: You ought to get to understand the importance of justice: what is right and what is fair.

But instead, you are not interested. You prefer what is bad and corrupt. You treat people badly. You are like a butcher who takes the carcass of a sheep, skins it, and then slices all the meat off its bones. That's the sort of thing that you do to your people. You live off the people you are supposed to be caring for.

Bit by bit you take away from them what they need. You skin them and make mince meat of them. You even chop up their bones. You ruin their lives. You break them down and destroy them. Then you live off what you've taken from them. It reminds one of somebody chopping up meat and putting it into a frying pan or a cooking pot. Everything that belonged to those poor people, that they needed, you take for your pleasure and enjoyment. You leave them with absolutely nothing!

Well, a time will come when those leaders will get into trouble. But when they pray to God for help, he will not listen to their prayers. He will ignore them in their need, simply because they did so much harm to others.

### **3:5-7 GOD WILL RUIN FALSE PROPHETS**

This is what the Lord says: These so-called prophets are encouraging my people to do what is wrong. They are doing them a lot of harm because they are just serving their own interests. If people support them and give them what they want, they will then tell them that they will have peace and success. But if people do not support them and do not give them what they demand, then these prophets threaten that war will come to those people.

Therefore, I'm going to make these prophets confused and useless, like people in the dark who cannot see anything. They will not be able to give anyone good advice.

They are going to be exposed as liars and cheats. They will be brought into disgrace, and be humiliated and shamed. They will get no support or guidance from God.

### **3:8-12 MICAH WARNS THE LEADERS**

But I have been filled with the ability that the Spirit of the Lord gives me, to know what is fair and just. He has given me the strength of character to stand up for what is right. I've got the courage to tell the whole country of Israel where they are going wrong, and that they are sinning against God. They have turned away from the Lord, and have broken his laws.

Listen to me, you rulers of Israel. You don't care less about what is fair and just. You twist whatever is right to suit yourselves, and you change the truth into stories you make up.

You love Zion, but you cause harm to people. You are proud of Jerusalem, but you do nasty things there and live ugly lives in that city.

Zion's leaders are dishonest. People have to pay them bribes to get them to take important decisions. Jerusalem's priests are selfish. They will not teach God's truth unless people pay them what they demand. The country's prophets are the same.

They will help you only if you pay them for it. They will then tell you what you want to know, and say that they got their message from God. They will claim that God is always with our nation, and that therefore no disaster will ever come upon us.

This is why God is so angry. It is because of all you leaders. It is your fault. Because of you the country will no longer be a kingdom, and Jerusalem is going to end up as a huge pile of ruins covered in a mass of weeds.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4:1-5 GOD WILL MAKE JERUSALEM A BLESSING**

Yet whatever happens in the future, eventually, right at the end, everything will turn out wonderfully. The day will ultimately come when Jerusalem is going to be respected more than any other religion or country. The place where the Lord is worshiped will become more important than any other place in the whole world.

People from everywhere will come to Jerusalem to learn about God. Many nations will visit this capital city. All of them will recommend it as a very good place to go to. They will say: Come on, let's go to worship the Lord. The best place to do this is at the temple of the God of Israel. We want him to teach us what is true and right, and what is best for us, so that we can live good lives. When people want to listen to the Lord like that, then Zion in Jerusalem will be the centre that teaches the whole world the law of the Lord. That is where people will study God's truth. There the nations will learn the right way to live. God's laws and instructions will go out from his capital city into the whole world.

Then the Lord will rule over many people and take control of them. He will judge between them and sort out all their differences in a peaceful and wise way. He will take decisions that are right and completely satisfactory for everyone. He will control all the powerful nations. The strong will no longer attack or bully the weak. People will stop wanting to fight. They will all prefer to do good, useful things instead. They will change the whole way they live. No nation will go to war with any other people. So, no one will have to learn and train how to fight. That will not be necessary anymore.

Instead, everyone will be able to concentrate on their own work, and how to find contentment and happiness. They will like doing what is useful and worthwhile, instead of having to do what is hard, ugly and dangerous. They will have time to relax, without strain and stress or worry. People will enjoy life. This is what God has promised us. It is guaranteed by the Lord who is in charge of millions of angels who carry out his orders.

So, even if all the nations turn away from God, and do as they like, we shall not. We shall not be like them. We shall listen to God and trust him and obey him. We shall be

loyal and faithful to him for the rest of our lives. We shall be proud of the Lord our God, and honour him, forever.

## 4:6-8 GOD WILL GET HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM

The Lord has told us what he is going to do: When that time comes, I shall gather together those who are handicapped and those who were carried away like slaves into exile. I shall collect together all those that I have punished and made so miserable.

Those are the people who have survived. They have become refugees in a country that is too powerful for them. But though they will be helpless there, the Lord is going to become their ruler once again. He will take them back to Jerusalem to rule over them there. Zion will become their home from then on and forever.

Zion will once again become the place where God's truth is taught so that God's people can live in peace. God's truth will be set up like a lighthouse so that God's people can be safe. Jerusalem shall be fully restored to the power and the pride she once had when she had her own good kings. The people will then be safe and secure, free and happy.

**God says that Jerusalem shall be fully restored!**

## 4:9-10 JUDAH HAS TO FACE ITS PUNISHMENT

But now, to get back to what is going to happen: You do not know it, but you have got a lot to cry about. You must realise that you are going to lose your king. Then you will not have good government or God's support. You are also going to lose those wise men who normally give your people good advice, especially when it comes to facing danger. Then you won't know what to do when you are in danger, will you? When trouble comes you will be trapped. You will be like a woman who has to give birth to a child. Once the baby starts to come there is no way she can avoid the strain and the pain. Once your time comes, you will not be able to avoid your punishment.

Here comes the pain, people of Zion! Just like a woman going into labour. You won't be able to get out of it. You will simply HAVE to go through with it. You are going to be chased out of your splendid city. You will have to go and stay out in the open. You will have to go all the way to Babylon, that foreign land, where you know no one. But it is when you are there, miserable and helpless and sorry, that you will be rescued. The Lord will get you out of there and set you free again. You are going to escape from your enemies, thanks to the power and goodness of the Lord.

## 4:11 – 5.1 GOD'S PLANS FOR HIS PEOPLE

But now another ugly state of affairs has come about. Many nations have ganged up

against you, Judah. They want you to give up on God and lose your faith. They talk about heathen people wrecking your place of worship and defiling and ruining God's temple in the heart of Jerusalem. They would like to see your religion become useless and embarrassing to you.

But those nations are stupid. They do not know how the Lord works or what his long-term plans are. God is doing what any farmer does. When he reaps his crops he ties them into bundles or sheaves and then takes them to the threshing floor. There he thrashes them to get his crop of corn.

The Lord has a reason why he allows other nations to attack and thrash his people. It will stop them sinning and make them better believers. Then God will use them to thrash the other nations and stop them sinning and get them to believe in the Lord. So, don't get discouraged, you Jews of Zion. The Lord is going to use you. God says: I want you to recover, because you must take the nations to the threshing floor. I'm going to make you believers who belong to Zion very powerful. I shall make you like strong animals that have horns like iron and hooves like bronze. You are going to conquer many nations and smash their opposition into tiny pieces. Then I shall see to it that what belongs to those nations will be dedicated to me, the Lord. Their great wealth will end up belonging to the Ruler of the Whole World.

But right now, you have got a problem. You are going to need to get your army ready. You will need to turn Jerusalem into a military fort prepared for war because it is going to be attacked. Your enemies will surround the city in order to break through its walls. They are going to insult the ruler of Israel.



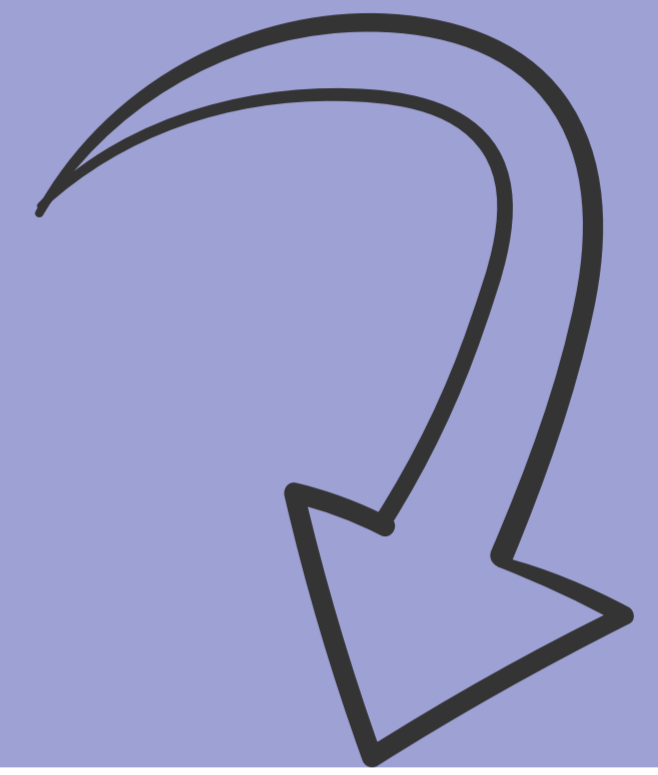
**NOW YOU CAN READ MICAH 1-4 IN YOUR OWN BIBLE.**

# Micah 1-4

## Passage background & introduction



Read this part to get to know the background of the chapters you read in section 01.



The prophet Micah [migh-ka] lived at the same time as the prophet Isaiah [igh-zigh-ya]. That was over 700 years before Christ. They lived quite near each other in the country of Judea.

Micah lived in a small town called Moresheth [maw-r'shet]. Today nobody knows exactly where that town was. It was to the west of Jerusalem, down the mountain toward the sea. It may have been somewhere near the land of the Philistines who lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. In modern times that land is called the Gaza Strip [gah-za], in Palestine.

The great problem that Micah and Isaiah faced was that the Jews were turning to idolatry, that is, the worship of idols. There are four big problems about idolatry.

- The first is that they made idols for themselves. The trouble with an idol is that it is not real. It is something people make up. They pretend that it is God, but it is God the way they want him to be. They decide what their god should be like. They invent all sorts of gods to suit themselves.
- The second problem is that they give up on God. They stop worshiping him, and therefore they stop obeying him. They ignore him. They prefer their own god.
- The third problem is that once they start to disobey God, they begin to behave badly. They become wicked. They cheat and tell lies. They cause trouble. They do horrible and cruel things to one another.

- The fourth problem is that God will not put up with this. He will punish them. They will be attacked by their enemies, and all sorts of things will go wrong for them. God will then not protect or help them. When they pray to him for help, he will not listen to their prayers.

God sent Micah to protest to God's people that all this idolatry was bad, and to warn them that they would be punished.

In Micah's time, God's people were divided into two nations that were often fighting with each other. In the south was the country of Judah. Its capital was the city of Jerusalem, where Isaiah lived. Micah also lived in Judah. To the north was the country of Israel. It was also called Ephraim [ef-ree-im].

When Micah began to work for God, the father of Prince Ahaz [ay-haz] was the king of Judah. When he died Ahaz took over as king at the age of 20. He ruled for 15 years. Then his son Hezekiah became king and reigned for 30 years. Micah died sometime during the good King Hezekiah's reign. So the most important part of Micah's work for God, his prophesying, was during the 15 years of the reign of the bad King Ahaz, father of good King Hezekiah.

Prince Ahaz got married when he was just 10 years old, and his son Hezekiah was born when Ahaz was just 11. He was one of the worst kings that ever ruled in Jerusalem. However, his son Hezekiah was one of the best kings the Jews ever had.

But unfortunately Hezekiah's son, Manasseh [m'nas-sa] was a disaster, a very bad man and a cruel king, like his granddad Ahaz. However, Manasseh changed later on. He was captured by the Babylonians and taken to Babylon in chains. There he repented of his sins and turned to God. God then got him back to Jerusalem, and he became a really good king. He ended up being the longest ruling king in the history of Judah and Israel. He ruled Judah for 55 years. (King David had ruled for 40 years, and his son King Solomon had also ruled for 40 years. So had Israel's first king, Saul. The first three kings, in a row, had ruled for 40 years each.) There were some kings of Judah who began as good kings but ended up as not-so-good kings. Manasseh was the one king who did the opposite: he began as a very bad king and ended up being a good king.

It is possible that the wonderful old prophet Isaiah was killed by Manasseh. However, Manasseh's grandson was one of the greatest kings Judah ever had, like his great-granddad Hezekiah. His name was Josiah. Josiah would be the last good king that ever ruled over Judah. He would rule for about 30 years, as Hezekiah had also done. The kings who came after him were all bad or weak rulers, who would not listen to God.

Let's get back to Ahaz, the core of the problem in Micah's time. When a country has a bad leader, it usually means that there are a lot of rotten people in that country. Ahaz

was utterly rotten and cruel. The whole country was so corrupt that he could get away with all his wickedness and evil doings. He even killed one of his own sons. Fortunately, this was not Hezekiah, his eldest son.

It is also usually the case that when the people have become godless, their leaders also turn out to be wicked. When this happens, God steps in to deal with the whole corrupt nation. That is what happened in Ahaz's time.

What was also tragic was that when Judah did get a good king, like Hezekiah or his great grandson Josiah, the nation did not change. It remained corrupt even when the king put things right in order to get the people back to worshiping God and obeying him. Once the king was dead and gone, the people went back to their bad old ways. The problem is that it is one thing to make good laws, but it is another to get people to obey them.

When God decided that it was time to punish the country, he raised up trouble for its people. Judah was attacked by Israel. In one day, the army of Israel killed over one hundred thousand soldiers of Judah. 100,000! Another of King Ahaz's sons was also killed on that day.

What did Ahaz do? First he went into God's temple and stripped it of all its gold, and sent the whole lot to the great king of Assyria [a-sirr-i-a], the super-power in those days. He also had the gates of the temple locked so that it could no longer be used for the worship of God. What had happened was that the king of Assyria had become Ahaz' god. Ahaz asked the king of Assyria to do him a favour. He begged him to attack Israel from the other side, from the north. He promised that he would be loyal to Assyria and do whatever they wanted him to do. He would take orders from Assyria instead of from God.

The king of Assyria did what Ahaz asked. He came down and conquered Israel and completely destroyed it. Israel had been even more sinful than Judah, and for much longer too. Israel now came to an end as a nation. This happened over 700 years before Christ. From then on, in Ahaz's time, only the tribe of Judah existed as God's people. (The tribe of Judah would eventually become the Jews.)

The actual date in history of Assyria's attack on Israel and their complete conquest of the country is 722 BC. That is when Israel came to an end. But Judah survived under King Ahaz. It survived for another 130 years.

King Hezekiah took over from Ahaz a few years before 700 BC. That was just a few years after Assyria had conquered and destroyed Israel. He immediately re-opened the temple for worship of God. Then he set about destroying all the places where idolatry was practised, up in the hills or the mountains. Up there in the heights the people had

built chapels to worship their idols. Ahaz had encouraged this. His son Hezekiah put a stop to it.

Round about the year 700, the Assyrians, who had destroyed Israel, attacked Judah. They did so because Hezekiah refused to do what his dad Ahaz had done. He would not take orders from Assyria. He took orders from God. So the Assyrians conquered the whole country of Judah. Finally, they came to Jerusalem and surrounded it. Jerusalem was doomed. It was only a matter of time before the huge and powerful Assyrian army broke through the gates and walls of the city and crushed it.

But God sent a special message through Micah's friend, the great prophet Isaiah. God told Isaiah to tell King Hezekiah that he, God Almighty, would not allow Jerusalem to be destroyed. God himself would deal with the terrifying army of Assyria.

One night God sent an angel to attack the army. He killed over 180,000 soldiers while they were asleep. As the Bible puts it: **When they got up in the morning, they were all dead!** You can read about this in Isaiah chapter 37 verse 36.

The power of Assyria was broken. The rest of the army that survived went back to Assyria. So great was the disgrace and humiliation of this defeat for such a powerful and proud army that the king of Assyria was assassinated. When he went into his temple to worship his god two of his sons killed him.

**You can read about this amazing event in five verses in 2 Kings 19:32-36 and then again in five verses in Isaiah 37:33-37.**

Today some experts say that the Assyrians were killed by a plague. They call it the bubonic plague although they have no proof of that. But a natural plague does not hit everyone during just one night. The few Assyrians who survived got a great shock when they woke up in the morning. Normally not everybody dies within a few hours of when the plague begins. It started in the night and it ended before the morning. Nor did the plague touch the Jews who were trapped in Jerusalem and would therefore have been more likely to catch any plague.

No! Rather, it was a miracle. It was done by God's angel, as the Bible says.

Hezekiah did a lot of good, but the nation did not really change. They liked their private chapels up on the hills too much. In their private chapels people decided what they liked and what they believed in, and what they did not like and would not believe in. They themselves decided how they were going to behave. They did not want to listen to God. God was not all that popular with them. Friendship and having a good time was what really mattered.

One hundred years after Hezekiah's godly reign, God punished Jerusalem. The same thing happened to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, as happened to Samaria the capital of Israel before 700 BC. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians who had conquered the Assyrians. The leader of the Babylonians, who had defeated Assyria, was the Crown Prince Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem would be destroyed not long after 600 BC. That was when Nebuchadnezzar was king, and in the days of the great prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, long after Isaiah and Micah had died.

History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC. Later on the Jews rebelled against the Babylonians. God told the prophet Jeremiah to warn them not to do this, but they would not listen. So Nebuchadnezzar's army came back again and destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC. His soldiers completely destroyed the temple that King Solomon had built nearly 400 years before. All this was during the time of Josiah's sons and grandsons. Between 597 and 587 BC the Jews were taken away into exile to Babylon.

These were the things happening in Micah's time. Micah had to speak to the people with all these bad and terrible things that were either going on, or were about to happen.

Micah, like Hezekiah, came 200 years after King Solomon died. After Solomon, Israel split into two countries, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Micah lived at the time that Israel-in-the-North was destroyed by the Assyrians, some time before 700 BC. That was over 100 years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, sometime after 600 BC. He saw the Assyrians attack and wipe out Israel, and he saw the Assyrians conquer Judah, but fail to capture Jerusalem. He saw the Assyrian army retreat back to Assyria, having been defeated by God.

### GOD'S WARNINGS AND PROMISES

It is very, very hard for a prophet to warn people that what they are doing is wrong, and that they are going to be punished for it. People do not like to hear that kind of talk, and will not listen to it. But when God used prophets to warn his people, the warnings came true. The punishment did happen exactly as the prophet had predicted.

When the punishment came, nothing that they believed in could help them.

The reason why they were to be punished was because of the way they behaved. God was not interested in any of their excuses. It was what they did that counted.

But the prophets of God always brought hope to the people, as well as warning them. The prophets told the people that God loves us. He does not want to punish us.

The other good news that the prophets brought was that God has decided that he is going to get things right in the end. He will do this even though the leaders of the people and the religious leaders have turned away from God, and made a mess of the

country. He will do this even though so many people do not want to listen to him. God has not lost his temper with everyone.

God's faithful people must hang on to the hope that God has promised. God has told us that he will get everything right and very good in the end. His purposes are wonderful!

In the NEW TESTAMENT we find that Jesus Christ was like the prophet Micah. Jesus emphasised two things:

- First, that God will not tolerate sin. The people who sin are going to be punished. They are going to die. Jesus made this crystal clear. If people who call themselves Christians commit sin, they are going to be punished the same as anyone else. We cannot get away with sin by calling ourselves Christians. A true Christian is someone who repents of sin and stops it. A true Christian obeys God. A Christian lives the way a Christian should, the way the Bible teaches us.

#### **Genuine Christians must be good people.**

- The second thing that Jesus focused on was that God is going to look after us. God never forgets that he is our Father. He never loses sight of the fact that we are weak. He knows that we need him. He appreciates that we cannot save ourselves. He has promised to care for us. He has assured us that he is going to get us to heaven. He loves us. He loves us despite our faults. If he punishes us, it is only for a while. It is only to teach us a lesson and make us better people. He is like a good coach, training us to be fit for heaven. He is not going to fail. He won't fail us even if we fail him. He has guaranteed us that even if we lose our way he will find us and carry us safely home. God won't forget us. God won't let us down.

#### **God truly loves his people – always!**

Now there is a big problem with the two ideas that we must be good people, and that God loves us.

- The first problem is that people do NOT want to obey God.
- The second problem is that because people don't want to listen to God, they are NOT able to believe his promise that he will look after us and support us. This was because of their sin and disobedience.

This was the problem all the prophets faced.

It is the problem that we still face today.

# Micah 1-4

## A Bible study on our passage



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Now let's grasp the points of each paragraph and the issues being spoken about, and together we can grow in our knowledge and love of God.



### 1:1-4 MICAH WARNS THE NATIONS

*This is the message of the Lord. It is the prophecy that came to Micah [migh-ka] who lived in Moresheth [maw-r'shet]. Micah was God's prophet during the time of Ahaz [ay-haz], and his Dad before him, and his son Hezekiah [hezza-kigh-a], the kings of Judah. Micah's prophecy was a message from the Lord about Samaria [s'mair-ee-a], the capital of Israel, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.*

*This is the message: All people must pay attention to what the Lord has to say. The whole world, and everyone in the world, should listen. Yes, listen carefully, so that God, the Lord of the whole world, may point a finger against Israel and Judah. He will show the nations that he has a case against both of you. You have become sinful, <sup>1</sup>but your God is holy. He is perfectly pure and absolutely good. God's holiness is what God's temple in Jerusalem stands for.*

*Keep a lookout, everyone, everywhere in the world, because the true God is going to come out of heaven, and come down to earth. He is going to conquer the countries of Israel and Judah. He will destroy all their important <sup>2</sup>high places. God is going to punish his own people. All the other nations who live in this part of the world are going to see it happen.*

*God is going to take action against Israel and Judah. Great fires will destroy all the buildings on the mountains. Their places of worship and*

*their castles will be completely destroyed. The people living in the valleys will no longer be safe. They will be driven out in the same way that people have to leave their homes when the rivers come down in flood.*

<sup>1</sup>**but your God is holy:** This is the big difference between God and all other gods that people like. Other gods fit in with how the people are. God does not. God wants his people to become like him.

### **What is HOLY?**

Holy means that God is very special. He is perfect. He is perfectly good. He is brilliant and beautiful. He is absolutely pure, utterly clean, and without any fault whatsoever. He is greater and better than anything else or anyone else. He is the best, the very, very best!

That is why he wants us to be good. He does not want us if we are bad. He wants us to stop doing what is wrong, and to become better people. In the same way that parents want their children to be good and to behave well and to be respected by others, God wants us to admire him and to become more like him. He wants us to take his goodness into our lives. He wants us to be proud of him, and he wants to be proud of us.

Since **he is holy** this puts a lot of people off believing in him.

Because **he is holy** it means that we have to change if we are to become faithful to him.

But people don't want to change!

<sup>2</sup>**high places:** When the prophet speaks about the "high places", he means two things:

- First, obviously, he is talking about the mountains and the hills.
- But secondly, and more importantly, he is talking about the special buildings on those mountains and hills.

Some of them were castles or fortresses that protected the country.

But many of them were chapels, or places of worship, built to worship either God or idols. But in those isolated chapels they could believe what they liked, and do what they wanted to do. God had told them, in the Bible, not to do that. (Deuteronomy 12.)

They were to make their sacrifices of worship to God in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem were the country's leaders whose responsibility was to see to it that God's people listened to him. Those leaders were well trained in the Bible - that is, they should have been!

But unfortunately the kings allowed people to build these chapels on the high places.

The two good kings who would not allow it, and put a stop to it, were Hezekiah and his grandson Josiah. The bad kings like Ahaz and his grandson Manasseh actually encouraged the people to worship idols at these private chapels, where they could do as they liked. Those kings thought that if they let people do whatever they wanted to do, it would make them, their kings, more popular.

Bad kings also stopped people worshiping God, even at the temple in Jerusalem. The temple of God was meant to be the place where they were taught and encouraged to follow God's rules. But wicked kings wanted the people to obey them, not God. They did not like the idea of people putting God first. So they locked the doors of the temple and put a stop to anyone worshiping there. They said that people could go and worship at the high places instead. That is exactly what the people wanted, so that is what they did.

## **1:5-7 GOD HAS REJECTED ISRAEL**

*People will be punished like this because Israel has disobeyed God and sinned against him. Do you know who are causing the nation of Israel to sin? It is their rulers and leaders in Samaria, their capital city. And by the way, do you know who are also causing the nation of Judah to sin? It is also their rulers and leaders in Jerusalem, their capital city.*

*That is why I am going to destroy Samaria, says God. I will turn the whole city into a pile of stones and rubble. People will one day <sup>1</sup>plant vineyards among the stones where the city used to be. I myself will knock all their houses down, and then throw their stones down the hillside into the valley below. I shall leave nothing standing in the town. The only thing that will be left there for anyone to see will be the foundations of their buildings.*

*Then all their idols will be smashed to pieces. All the gifts they brought for their idols will be burnt by fire. I shall see to it that every statue and carving is destroyed. The chapels of <sup>2</sup>the idols use sex to get people to go and worship there. They have made a lot of money by getting men to leave their wives and children to join those meetings. My people have also left me to worship those idols. So now I am going to wreck those places. Then in future, if they want sex like that, they can go and pay for it somewhere else.”*

<sup>1</sup>**plant vineyards among the stones:** That means that people will no longer live there. The only thing they will be able to do there is farming. The whole town will be turned into a rough farm. Even farming among the ruins and foundations of the buildings of the town will be difficult. They won't be able to plant crops there. The only thing they would be able to grow there would be grapes. Grapevines grow well in rocky soil.

<sup>2</sup>**the idols use sex:** When people worship God, he wants them to live good, clean lives. This is what is meant by MORALITY. God has told us to be MORAL. Sex is a privilege from God that is given to a man and his wife, so that they can love each other and have children together. Morality means that a man and a woman get married before they have sex together. They promise to be faithful and kind to each other for the rest of their lives. Then their sex is blessed by God with love and with children.

What made the private chapels so popular was that anyone could have sex with anyone they wanted to. God will not accept that sort of worship. God is pure and clean. He is holy. He wants us to be decent too. Sex with someone who is not one's wife or husband, is called immorality. God does not allow it. But the people disagreed with God, and therefore disobeyed him.

## 1:8-16 MICAH WARNS THE TOWNS

*The king would not listen to God's warnings. Nor would the leaders of the nation at Jerusalem listen. The whole nation of Judah would not listen. So Micah begins his prophecy by trying to warn some of the towns in Judea. He warns a number of Jewish towns between Gath [gat], near the sea, and Jerusalem, up in the mountains. He warns them that they are going to be invaded and conquered by the Assyrians [a'sirr-ee'ns]. It is going to be an awful experience for them all. The towns he mentions go up in a rough line from near the sea to the top of the mountains where Jerusalem is.*

*Some of the towns had names with special meanings. Micah plays games with their names to show the people what is going to happen to them.*

*Because God is going to punish us, I am terribly upset. I want to cry. I even walk around barefoot and without a shirt. At times I howl like the jackals and moan like the owls. This worry is driving me to despair.*

*Judah is like someone who has serious injuries that cannot be cured. Disaster has come to Judah. It has reached our towns. It has even got as far as Jerusalem.*

*There are heathen people living nearby in <sup>1</sup>Gath [gat]. Please don't tell them in Gath about this. They will celebrate when they hear our bad news.*

<sup>1</sup>**Gath** [gat]: Gath used to be the capital city of the Philistines. Gath was right near the border with Judah. Today the country where the Philistines used to live is known as the Gaza Strip [gah-zah]. Moresheth [more-r'shet], where Micah lived, was somewhere near Gath. In fact, Moresheth was also sometimes called Moresheth-Gath.

When the Assyrians conquered Judah, the Philistines, their enemies in Gath, would of course know all about it. This was a bitter thought for Micah and for the Jews.

In fact, when the Assyrians did attack, they swept past what is now Tel Aviv, on the coast. They headed on towards what is now the Gaza Strip, and then turned inland, right near to Gath, in order to attack a town in Judah called Lachish [La-cheesh, ch as in loch.] They then went up the mountains, right through Judah, to Jerusalem.

The Hebrew name Gath [gat] is nearly like the Hebrew word for "tell" (gad).

So, "Tell it not in Gath" sounds something like "Gad it not in Gat" in the Hebrew language.

*Micah warns <sup>2</sup>Dusty-Town that they are going to squirm in the dust. (Whenever Hebrew people were filled with grief or got deeply depressed, they would sit on the ground and pour dust over their heads.)*

<sup>2</sup>**Dusty-Town**: "Ophrah" [off-rah] in Hebrew: Micah warns the towns that are going to be attacked by the Assyrians. He warns them by teasing them. He uses the meaning of each town's name to warn them of the danger coming to them. The Hebrew word "a-phra" [a-fra] means dust or pile of rubbish. The town's name, which is Ophrah [off-rah], actually means a lovely young buck, or fawn. But it could also be translated as Dust-Town, or even Rubbish-Dump Town, if one wanted to criticise it. Now Micah is warning them about what is going to happen to their lovely town: It is going to be reduced to a heap of rubbish, and it is going to be a terrible and traumatic time for them.

The prophet Micah uses the same method for the whole list of towns that he is warning.

*Micah warns <sup>3</sup>Pleasant-Town that life will become very UN-pleasant for them. They are going to go through a shameful, embarrassing and disgraceful time. Their enemies would take even their clothes away from them.*

<sup>3</sup>**Pleasant-Town**: In Hebrew, “Shaphir” [sha-feer]. Shame and embarrassment and disgrace, on top of fear, is the exact opposite of the word ‘pleasant,’ which means nice, lovely and enjoyable.

*Micah warns <sup>4</sup>Freedom-Town that they are going to be trapped, like in a prison, and will NOT be able to escape.*

<sup>4</sup>**Freedom-Town**: In Hebrew the name is the same word used for ‘Exodus.’ The Exodus was when God used Moses to take the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. In Hebrew the name is, “Zaanán” [tsa-a’nan]. Freedom is one of the things in life that people value most. It is important to young people when they start to become adults. People love to be able to do what they would like to do. That is what freedom means.

*Micah warns <sup>5</sup>The House-Next-Door-Town that they will be very upset when they lose their good standing or reputation as the town next door to Jerusalem. Travellers and tourists will no longer stay there. The town is going to be destroyed. The people are going to be ruined.*

<sup>5</sup>**The House-Next-Door-Town**: In Hebrew, “Beth HaEzel” [bet ha-ay-tsel]. This town was close to Jerusalem. Pilgrims used to travel from all over Israel to come to Jerusalem to worship God and celebrate the main religious feasts. There would be hundreds of thousands of them, so that all accommodation in Jerusalem was fully booked, and visitors needed to find somewhere else to stay for the week of the feast. The town next door to Jerusalem was a popular place for pilgrims or tourists to stay. It had a good reputation for its hospitality. Beth Haezel [bet ha-ay-tsel] was the place for visitors to stay: the accommodation was good, the food was good, and the town was close to Jerusalem. But the Assyrians were going to ruin all this.

*Micah warns the people of <sup>6</sup>Bitter-Town that they are going to suffer a lot of bitter pain. They will long for relief, but the disaster will be sent by God. Their enemies will attack right up to the gates of Jerusalem, and they will not be able to escape from them.*

<sup>6</sup>**Bitter-Town**: The Hebrew name means ‘Lots of Bitterness.’ “Marot” [ma-rawt]. Lots of bitterness means lots of fear, lots of suffering, and lots of people being killed. Bitter means tragedy for that whole area. It is a terrible thing to be conquered by foreign soldiers who hate the people they are attacking. It is something that we hope will never happen to us, or to our family and relatives, or to our friends.

All these towns were attacked by the Assyrians at the end of Micah's life-time. Micah spent his life warning the nations of Israel and Judah that God was going to send a great army to attack them because of their sins against God.

Micah now has a special warning for the town of **Lachish** [la-cheesh, ch as in loch.] It is situated on the main road from Egypt up to Jerusalem, about 40 kilometres (30 miles) from Jerusalem. The town was surrounded by two high, thick walls, one inside the other.

Lachish was an important town because it was on the main road that goes from the coast up into the hills of Judea. So any foreign army would first of all need to attack Lachish, and then go on up to Jerusalem in the mountains.

Lachish would be attacked by the Assyrian army about 20 years before 700 BC. The Assyrians were very proud of their conquest of Fort Lachish. Experts digging into the past have found pictures carved out on Assyrian walls boasting about how they conquered the fort of Lachish. Experts have also dug down into the ground at Lachish, and have found mass graves containing the bones of over 200,000 Jews whom the Assyrians killed.

Lachish would be attacked again, and destroyed, by the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar, in about 600 BC. So Lachish was attacked by the Assyrian army in 720 BC and again by the Babylonian army in 600 BC.

*Micah warns the Fort of <sup>7</sup>Lachish: You, who live in Lachish [la-cheesh], every one of you had better hitch up your chariot to its team of horses. You've got a big fight coming your way! You were the people who first brought sin into Zion, which is the centre and heart of Jerusalem. You copied the sins of Israel. You encouraged the leaders of Judah to follow the bad example of the leaders of Israel.*

*Therefore you may as well give the things you own to the poor people in the village of Moresheth Gath. Whatever you don't give away is going to be destroyed by an army that will attack you.*

<sup>7</sup>**Lachish:** [la-cheesh, ch as in loch]: Lachish was an important fort. It protected the main road that went from the coast up to Jerusalem at the top of the mountain ridge. Foreign armies marched along the coast, either from the north (like Assyria) or from the south (like Egypt.) Then, to conquer Judah and the main mountain range that runs parallel to the Jordan River, the attacking army would have to go up that road to Jerusalem. Fort Lachish guarded that road, about 30 miles or 40 kilometres downhill from Jerusalem. The fort was on a small, steep hill. At the top the fort was surrounded by a huge wall

that was over 5 metres thick (something like 20 feet thick!) About 15 metres further down the hill was another high wall that ran right around the thick one at the top. So the fort at the top was surrounded by two powerful walls, one inside the other.

*Micah warns another place called <sup>8</sup>False-Town. At this town was a stream, a small river. But it was unreliable. It was a wadi [wah-dee]. It would often dry up so that there was no water in it at all. Micah says that False-town itself will also be unreliable and useless, like their wadi. When danger comes, this town will let both kings down: the king of Israel and also the king of Judah. A river that dries up and has no water flowing in it will be of no use whatsoever as a defence when an enemy attacks. A dry river bed is very easy for an army to cross.*

**<sup>8</sup>False-Town:** In Hebrew “Achziv,” [ach-zeev, ch as in loch]. One of the worst things is life is anything false. What is false is a lie. Whenever we believe a lie we get into trouble. Whenever we tell a lie, we get into big trouble. Even if people believe us for a while, we are going to have to explain to God why we lied. All people also hate a liar. We hate people lying to us. When people lie to leaders it can cause those rulers to make bad decisions that cause harm to the whole country. False means something that one cannot trust. Anyone who is false is someone one cannot trust.

*Near Lachish is a place called <sup>9</sup>Conquer-Town. Micah warns the people living there that instead of being the conquerors they liked to think they are, God will bring someone to conquer them.*

**<sup>9</sup>Conquer-Town:** In Hebrew Conquer-Town is “Mareshah” [ma-reh-shah]. If one travelled from Lachish, past Conquer-Town, one came to a town with a strong wall around it, called Adullam [a-dull-im]. It lies between Lachish and Jerusalem. Not far from Adullam, in one direction, is where David fought Goliath. Not far from Adullam, in another direction, is a famous cave, called the Cave of Adullam. That is where David had to hide from King Saul who wanted to kill him. So, because of David and Goliath, and because of David’s Adullam Cave that area in Judah was regarded as being a very safe place and a place with a proud history. But Micah warns the country that the Assyrians are going to wreck the place.

*Now Micah warns that the Lord God, the wonderful and powerful God of the whole of Israel, is going to bring to Adullam a terrible foreign army. God’s people are going to have to hide away from their enemies in the same way that David had to hide away from Saul.*

*Micah ends his warning to these towns with these words: <sup>10</sup>Cut off your hair, all you women! Go into mourning. Cry with grief. Shave your heads until you are as bald as <sup>11</sup>a vulture, because you are going to lose your children, the children you love and enjoy so much. They are going to be taken away from you. They will go into exile far away. You will never see them again.*

<sup>10</sup>**Cut off your hair:** In those days when people got terribly upset or sad, such as when someone died, they would go into a state of mourning. They would shave their heads as a sign that they were going through deep grief and sadness.

<sup>11</sup>**a vulture:** a vulture is a huge, ugly bird that feeds on the dead carcasses of animals that die in the wild. When vultures find a carcass they circle above it high in the air. This causes other vultures to see them and go and join the ones circling over the carcass. When the vultures see that the carcass is safe, and that there are no wild animals eating it, they dive down to tear at the flesh themselves. They then start fighting one another to get as much of the meat as they can.

A vulture has no feathers on top of its head. So it looks bald and sad and bad. That is definitely NOT what a woman wants to look like! But that is what is going to happen to them because of their sin.

## **1:8-16 MICAH WARNS THE TOWNS**

*Because God is going to punish us, I am terribly upset. I want to cry. I even walk around barefoot and without a shirt. At times I howl like the jackals and moan like the owls. This worry is driving me to despair.*

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## **Chapter 2**

### **2:1-5 GOD WILL PUNISH HIS WICKED PEOPLE**

*Watch out, those people who plan how to cheat, and who work out how to commit crime. They do this even when they lie in bed. Then early next morning they go and do what they have planned, because they can get away with it. As leaders they have the power to do such things.*

*They have got their eye on fields that belong to others. They take over other people's houses by force. They steal from people. They will lie to people and trick them to take away their houses. They will cheat everyone out of what belongs to them.*

*Therefore, this is what the Lord says: Because they deliberately plotted and planned how to harm others, I am planning disaster against this nation. You will not be able to save yourselves, or your pride, from the time of trouble that is coming.*

*At that time your enemy will mock you and make jokes about you. He will pour humiliating scorn on you. He will cause you to say: We are utterly ruined! What belongs to us is confiscated. What is even worse is that they take away what is ours, and give it to those traitors who have gone over onto the enemy's side!*

*So, there will no longer be any godly magistrates who will make a fair and just decision as to what land belongs to you. You will lose all the land that God gave to his people.*

## **2:6-9 THINGS HAVE BECOME HOPELESSLY BAD**

*Micah now points out what is a huge problem in the country. No one is allowed to say what people do not want to listen to. People do not want to listen to the truth. They will not accept that what they are doing is wrong, and they will also not accept that God is going to punish them for what they are doing.*

*Their preachers say that no one must preach about these things. No one is allowed to preach that a humiliating disgrace is about to come to our nation. That is not acceptable to these people.*

*What are the people of Israel saying? They say: Does the Lord really get upset like that with us? Surely he won't allow such terrible things to happen to his people, will he? Doesn't God say: If any person keeps my rules and ceremonies, and does things the correct and proper way, I shall look after that person? In this sort of way you just keep on bluffing yourselves!*

*But I will tell you the truth about what God DOES say: My people no longer listen to me. They have changed. They have openly become my enemies instead of being my people. If they see something they like they just take it. If they see someone walking along, who is wearing something expensive and nice, they simply rob him. They do not care. They are like soldiers coming back from war with the loot they took from the enemy. They just took whatever they liked or wanted. They are proud of what they have done. They are arrogant.*

*They even chase women out of their lovely homes. They take away from their children the good things I wanted them to have. Those children lose out for the rest of their lives.*

## **2:10-11 THERE IS NO HOPE LEFT FOR THE COUNTRY**

*You will have to leave your country. You must go. Get away, because you have no future here. This land is sinful. It has got dirty. The people are ugly. The country is ruined. The whole of it is sick, and nothing can change that or make things better.*

*The people have lost all sense of values. They prefer to listen to certain characters that talk a lot but have nothing worthwhile to say. The things that they say are not true. They tell lies. The only way they can get people to listen to them is by talking about things like wine and beer. That is what these people are interested in, and those are the sort of preachers that people want to listen to. That's because they love to get drunk. They do not want to listen to anyone who will tell them God's truth. Watch out! Don't listen to these false preachers.*

## **2:12-13 BUT GOD WILL LOOK AFTER HIS PEOPLE**

*Now listen to GOD'S WONDERFUL PROMISE: My precious people, I am certainly going to gather up all of you, all the survivors of Israel, and I shall bring them safely back home, like a shepherd bringing his sheep back to <sup>1</sup>their pen. Like a flock of sheep returning from the pastures to its pen, my people will all come back together.*

*I shall provide them with a good leader when they are slaves in another country, and he will get them out of there. They will break out of slavery <sup>2</sup>like a shepherd opening a gate for the sheep to go through. Their leader will lead them out. Through him they will experience <sup>3</sup>an exodus. <sup>4</sup>Their king will make the journey in front of them, with the Lord at their head, to get them safely back home.*

<sup>1</sup>**their pen:** The pen is where the sheep are put at night, or if the weather is bad or freezing, or if there is any danger from wild animals or poachers.

<sup>2</sup>**like a shepherd opening a gate for the sheep:** This is an amazing prophecy. It is a wonderful choice of words. Although this prophecy is in the form of poetry, it is so close to the actual truth.

**Poetry in the Bible is telling the truth** by using good ideas that can form a picture in our minds.

Micah preached about 700 years before Christ. What he said came true nearly 150 years later.

In 540 BC the Persian King Cyrus [sigh-ris] conquered Babylon. In his first year as the new ruler of Babylon, he gave the order for all peoples in exile to be returned to their homelands. This included the Jews. He simply allowed everyone to leave Babylon

straightaway and go back home. He even encouraged and helped the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. It was a miracle!

The great prophet Isaiah, who lived at the same time as the prophet Micah, also predicted or prophesied that Cyrus would send the Jews back to Judah. The prophecy was so clear and so accurate that some Jews showed it to Cyrus to read for himself. We know that Cyrus was deeply affected by Isaiah's prophecy of what he had just done. The prophecy had been made 150 years before.

Read Isaiah's prophecy about Cyrus is in Isaiah 44.28 and in 45.1 and 13.

After the Jews got back home from their exile, the name of their country was changed from Judah [joo-da] to Judea [joo-dee-a] (which is also sometimes spelt as Judaea [joo-day-a].)

<sup>3</sup>**an exodus:** Micah and Isaiah lived just about halfway between the exodus of Moses from Egypt and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Moses was about 700 years before Micah and Isaiah, and Jesus was about 700 years after them.

Micah uses the Hebrew word for **exodus** here. This is the same word used for the exodus that happened under the leadership of Moses and Aaron about 700 years before Micah's time. In that great exodus, over half a million Israelite men, plus their families and animals, were able to make a dramatic escape from slavery in Egypt. In the next exodus that Micah predicts, over 42,000 Jews, with their families and animals, would simply walk away from exile in Babylon.

In the first exodus, 700 years before, the whole nation of Israel left Egypt. In the next exodus, about 150 years after Micah, only those Jews who wanted to go back to Judah and Jerusalem left Babylon. There were many Jews who did not want to go back. They preferred to stay in the areas around Babylon because they were doing so well there.

<sup>4</sup>**Their king:** About the year 600 before Christ the king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar [neb-yoo-kad-nezza]. He took the last king of Judah as a prisoner into exile in Babylon. The Jews remained in exile there for about seventy years. During that time they had no king. Their last king was a prisoner in Babylon.

However, when the Jews were allowed to go back to Jerusalem they were led by the last king's grandson. His name was Zerub-babel [z'rub-ba-bel in English, z'roov-ba-vel in Hebrew], which means "Born in Babylon." (Babel means Babylon.) He was a godly man, with a deep faith in the Lord. So, although he was not crowned king, he was of the royal line of King David.

Zerubbabel had a number of sons. One of them became the ancestor of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, while another of Zerubbabel's sons became the ancestor of Mary's husband, Joseph. When Mary's son Jesus was born, he would become the King

of all God's people, who would lead them out of the slavery of sin and death, into their wonderful, everlasting home in heaven.

See Matthew 1.13 for Mary's family line, and Luke 3.27 for Joseph's family line. Both go all the way back to Zerubbabel and his sons.

## Chapter 3

### 3:1-4 THE HARM THE LEADERS DO

*God said: I am telling you to listen. Listen to me, you leaders who rule the nation of Israel: You ought to get to understand the importance of justice: what is right and what is fair.*

*But instead you are not interested. You prefer what is bad and corrupt. You treat people badly. You are like a butcher who takes the carcass of a sheep, skins it, and then slices all the meat off its bones. That's the sort of thing that you do to your people. You live off the people you are supposed to be caring for.*

*Bit by bit you take away from them what they need. You skin them and make mincemeat of them. You even chop up their bones. You ruin their lives. You break them down and destroy them. Then you live off what you've taken from them. It reminds one of somebody chopping up meat and putting it into a frying pan or a cooking pot. Everything that belonged to those poor people, that they needed, you take for your pleasure and enjoyment. You leave them with absolutely nothing!*

*Well, a time will come when those leaders will get into trouble. But when they pray to God for help, he will not listen to their prayers. He will ignore them in their need, simply because they did so much harm to others.*

### 3:5-7 GOD WILL RUIN FALSE PROPHETS

*This is what the Lord says: These so-called prophets are encouraging my people to do what is wrong. They are doing them a lot of harm because they are just serving their own interests. If people support them and give them what they want, they will then tell them that they will have peace and success. But if people do not support them and do not give them what they demand, then these prophets threaten that war will come to those people.*

*Therefore I'm going to make these prophets confused and useless, like people in the dark who cannot see anything. They will not be able to give anyone <sup>1</sup>good advice.*

*They are going to be exposed as liars and cheats. They will be brought into disgrace, and be humiliated and shamed. They will get no support or guidance from God.*

**<sup>1</sup>good advice:** The job of prophets was to get guidance or advice from God for the leaders and the people, especially whenever trouble came.

If someone knows what is going to happen, and can give good advice, he is highly respected by people. But if he does not know what is going to happen, and just pretends that he does, then his advice will be useless. It will be worse than useless because it will be false. If people believe what is false they are going to get into trouble. Anyone who gives wrong or bad advice will end up being regarded as a fool. The more trouble and suffering there is, the more people will hate the person who gave that useless advice.

### **3:8-12 MICAH WARNS THE LEADERS**

*But I have been filled with the ability that the Spirit of the Lord gives me, to know what is fair and just. He has given me <sup>1</sup>the strength of character to stand up for what is right. I've got the courage to tell the whole country of Israel where they are going wrong, and that they are sinning against God. They have turned away from the Lord, and have broken his laws.*

*Listen to me, you rulers of Israel. You don't care less about what is fair and just. You twist whatever is right to suit yourselves, and you change the truth into stories you make up.*

*You love <sup>2</sup>Zion, but you cause harm to people. You are proud of <sup>3</sup>Jerusalem, but you do nasty things there and live ugly lives in that city.*

**<sup>1</sup>the strength of character:** To many people this sounds arrogant: "I've got courage and strength of character, and you lot are confused and foolish." But the fact is that Micah did have the courage to speak up and tell the nation what was wrong. He did have the strength of character to see that they were sinning, and then to tell them that. He did warn them, and God did then punish them. The Assyrians did come and conquer Israel, and the Babylonians would come later and conquer Jerusalem.

It is no use just using the argument that someone is arrogant when he is telling the

truth and everyone else is making excuses. It takes a huge amount of courage to say what is right when so many people, especially leaders, are doing what is wrong.

What Micah says here is true. God's Spirit had indeed filled him with strength of character and courage. This kind of courage is what helps people. Accusing good people of arrogance does not help anyone. It is wicked.

<sup>2</sup>**Zion:** Zion [zigh-in, or tsee-awn in Hebrew] was the heart of Jerusalem and also Judah. It was even the heart of the whole of Israel. That is the part of the city where the temple of the Lord was. It was also where the king lived. It was the holy and the royal headquarters of the nation, in Jerusalem. Zion stood for what the nation believed in. Zion was what the people were proud of, what they felt they belonged to. Zion was something like a national flag or the national anthem for them.

<sup>3</sup>**Jerusalem:** Jerusalem was the city of King David. It was the capital of Judah, and the true capital of Israel. It was the place God chose to put his temple and to set up true worship.

**Jerusalem was the headquarters of the law and of the worship of the Lord.**

Jerusalem was where both the king and the high priest lived. The whole nation had to go to Jerusalem to worship God three times a year. Jerusalem was situated on a mountain and further protected by high and strong walls right around it. It was very difficult for any army to attack Jerusalem. It was almost impossible for a foreign army to break through into the city and conquer it. Almost!

## Chapter 4

### 4:1-5 GOD WILL MAKE JERUSALEM A BLESSING

God will make Jerusalem a blessing to the nations. If you turn to Isaiah chapter 2 you will find Isaiah saying exactly the same thing. The first five verses of Micah 4 and the first five verses of Isaiah 2 are the same. So it is quite possible that Micah and Isaiah shared their messages that they had got from God. Since God gave both Isaiah and Micah the same message here it does show us clearly the importance of this little section. Read it carefully and remember it. It is important to God, and therefore it must be important to us. It is a wonderful and beautiful message of hope from God to us.

Isaiah 2.1-5, Micah 4.1-5

*Yet whatever happens in the future, eventually, right at the end, everything will turn out wonderfully. The day will ultimately come when Jerusalem is going to be respected more than any other religion or country. The place*

*where the Lord is worshiped will become more important than any other place in the whole world.*

*People from everywhere will come to Jerusalem to learn about God. Many nations will visit this capital city. All of them will recommend it as a very good place to go to. They will say: Come on, let's go to worship the Lord. The best place to do this is at <sup>1</sup>the temple of the God of Israel. We want him to teach us what is true and right, and what is best for us, so that we can live good lives. <sup>2</sup>When people want to listen to the Lord like that, then Zion in Jerusalem will be the centre that teaches the whole world the law of the Lord. That is where people will study God's truth. There the nations will learn the right way to live. God's laws and instructions will go out from his capital city into the whole world.*

*Then the Lord will rule over many people and take control of them. He will judge between them and sort out all their differences in a peaceful and wise way. He will take decisions that are right and completely satisfactory for everyone. He will control all the powerful nations. The strong will no longer attack or bully the weak. People will stop wanting to fight. They will all prefer to do good, useful things instead. They will change the whole way they live. <sup>3</sup>No nation will go to war with any other people. So no one will have to learn and train how to fight. That will not be necessary anymore.*

*Instead, everyone will be able to concentrate on their own work, and how to find contentment and happiness. They will like doing what is useful and worthwhile, instead of having to do what is hard, ugly and dangerous. They will have time to relax, without strain and stress or worry. People will enjoy life. This is what God has promised us. It is guaranteed by the Lord who is in charge of millions of angels who carry out his orders.*

*So, even if all the nations turn away from God, and do as they like, we shall not. We shall not be like them. We shall listen to God and trust him and obey him. We shall be loyal and faithful to him for the rest of our lives. We shall be proud of the Lord our God, and honour him, forever.*

**<sup>1</sup>the temple of the God of Israel:** The temple of the Lord in Jerusalem had been built by King David and King Solomon, his son. David collected all the materials needed for the temple, and Solomon built it. They had built the temple there so that God would be worshiped there by the nation. David and Solomon made sure that the leaders who

worked in Jerusalem worshiped and obeyed God. The temple priests were highly trained in God's truth. The people came to them to worship God correctly and to be taught his truth, his goodness and his laws. For the Jews the temple was where people listened to God and learnt about him.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came and took the place of the temple. He has become the way to God. He is what we now believe in, in order to find God and listen to him and obey him. Through the Bible we now learn how to please God and how to rely on him. As we learn about the temple in the Old Testament we get to know better what Christ and the Bible mean to us. Here we learn that the temple is the place of truth not only for the people of God but also for the whole world. Jesus is the temple where the whole world gets to know God.

<sup>2</sup>**When people want to listen to the Lord:** The prophet Micah, inspired or briefed by the Lord, tells us that a time will come when people will want God. After they have suffered they will turn to the Lord. It will happen all over the world. When they do want to listen to God they will know that the truth about God is what is written in the temple at Jerusalem. They will understand and appreciate that what is taught there about God is the true way to find God. People throughout the world will come to realise that they cannot find the truth for themselves. They need to learn it from God's servants and God's teachings. That is what the temple at Zion in Jerusalem is for.

Once people start to listen to God, God is going to take over control of their lives. This will change them into better people. They will become people who want peace, peace instead of fighting others to get what they want, or even fighting just because they like fighting.

<sup>3</sup>**No nation will go to war:** God's great plan works out in two stages. The first stage is that God changes people's lives. We become believers and we obey God. God's commands are that we do what's right and live in peace. We do this by trusting in God. We learn to trust in God by believing in his Son, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. This is the way God changes us.

The second stage is that God is going to change the world. His Son is going to come back in glory as the King of the kingdom of God. From then on wars and fighting and trouble and all evil will end. It will all stop. All nations, and all people, will have a great change of attitude. They will listen to God and stop doing what they have been doing over the centuries. They will stop hating one another. They will learn to live together in peace, in harmony and in love. They will all want to do this. Everybody will become kind to everybody else. It's going to be lovely! It's going to be glorious! God will do it...

This is **God's promise**, through Micah, and through Isaiah, to his people and the world.

## 4:6-8 GOD WILL GET HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM

*The Lord has told us what he is going to do: When that time comes, I shall gather together those who are handicapped and those who were carried away like slaves into <sup>1</sup>exile. I shall collect together all those that I have punished and made so miserable.*

*Those are the people who have survived. They have become refugees in a country that is too powerful for them. But though they will be helpless there, the Lord is going to become their ruler once again. He will take them back to Jerusalem to rule over them there. Zion will become their home from then on and forever.*

*Zion will once again become the place where God's truth is taught so that God's people can live in peace. God's truth will be set up like a lighthouse so that God's people can be safe. <sup>2</sup>Jerusalem shall be fully restored to the power and the pride she once had when she had her own good kings. The people will then be safe and secure, free and happy.*

**<sup>1</sup>exile:** Exile was the method God used to punish the nation for rebelling against him. The people were to be conquered by the very powerful nation of Babylon. The Babylonians would take the people of Judah away from their own country, and make them slaves in foreign lands. They would be upset, confused, humiliated, frightened and helpless. They would lose everything that had belonged to them, especially their homes and their culture, their freedom and happiness.

**<sup>2</sup>Jerusalem shall be fully restored:** This statement sums up the whole of the Old Testament. This is the promise that all God's true people must keep their eye on. It is very hard to believe this, because Israel failed so badly to protect Jerusalem and what it stands for. Israel failed hopelessly to make Jerusalem, and its witness to the true God, as a shining light of hope to the world. But what Israel and its kings failed to do, God told his prophets that he is going to do it. We can rely on God and what he has promised us.

For this promise to be fulfilled, the first thing that would need to happen is for the Messiah to come. That would happen 700 years later. The next thing that would have to happen is for the church of Christ, the Messiah, to tell the world about God's goodness and salvation, and his righteousness and hope. Then Jesus Christ is going to come back and fully restore the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, on earth. What Jerusalem stood for is going to win and triumph through the whole world.

Christians will suffer a lot, because people don't want God.

But Christians must keep their eye fixed on this Old Testament prophecy:

**God says that Jerusalem shall be fully restored!**

## **4:9-10 JUDAH HAS TO FACE ITS PUNISHMENT**

*But now, to get back to what is going to happen: You do not know it, but you have got a lot to cry about. You must realise that you are going to lose your king. Then you will not have good government or God's support. You are also going to lose those wise men who normally give your people good advice, especially when it comes to facing danger. Then you won't know what to do when you are in danger, will you? When trouble comes you will be trapped. You will be like a woman who has to give birth to a child. Once the baby starts to come there is no way she can avoid the strain and the pain. Once your time comes, you will not be able to avoid your punishment.*

*Here comes the pain, people of Zion! Just like a woman going into labour. You won't be able to get out of it. You will simply HAVE to go through with it. You are going to be chased out of your splendid city. You will have to go and stay <sup>1</sup>out in the open. You will have to go all the way to Babylon, that foreign land, where you know no one. But it is when you are there, miserable and helpless and sorry, that you will be rescued. The Lord will get you out of there and set you free again. You are going to escape from your enemies, thanks to the power and goodness of the Lord.*

**<sup>1</sup>out in the open:** When the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, they took many of the people away to Babylon. The route or way to Babylon, through Syria, was something like a thousand miles. The captured Jews had to walk there. They had nowhere to stay as they travelled: no hotels or restrooms, nor tents or shelter. They were prisoners and they were forced to keep going out in the open.

Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews who were left behind had to go and live in the countryside. They lost their homes and had to live in the fields or forests, or in caves. Many Jewish towns and villages had also been destroyed by the Babylonians.

## 4:11 – 5.1 GOD'S PLANS FOR HIS PEOPLE

*But now another ugly state of affairs has come about. Many nations have ganged up against you, Judah. They want you to give up on God and lose your faith. They talk about heathen people wrecking your place of worship and <sup>1</sup>defiling and ruining God's temple in the heart of Jerusalem. They would like to see your religion become useless and embarrassing to you.*

*But those nations are stupid. They do not know how the Lord works or what his long-term plans are. God is doing what any farmer does. When he reaps his crops he ties them into bundles or sheaves and then takes them to <sup>2</sup>the threshing floor. There he thrashes them to get his crop of corn.*

*The Lord has a reason why he allows other nations to attack and thrash his people. It will stop them sinning and make them better believers. Then God will use them to thrash the other nations and stop them sinning and get them to believe in the Lord. So, don't get discouraged, you Jews of Zion. The Lord is going to use you. God says: I want you to recover, because you must take the nations to the threshing floor. I'm going to make you believers who belong to Zion very powerful. I shall make you like strong animals that have horns like iron and hooves like bronze. You are going to conquer many nations and smash their opposition into tiny pieces. Then I shall see to it that what belongs to those nations will be dedicated to me, the Lord. Their great wealth will end up belonging to the Ruler of the Whole World.*

*But right now, you have got a problem. You are going to need to get your army ready. You will need to turn Jerusalem into a military fort prepared for war because it is going to be attacked. Your enemies will surround the city in order to break through its walls. <sup>3</sup>They are going to insult the ruler of Israel.*

**<sup>1</sup>defiling:** The people who came to worship God at the temple in Jerusalem were extremely religious. They were most careful how they worshiped God. They had lots of holy rules that they followed strictly, to make sure that their worship was acceptable to God and honoured him. If anyone broke any of those precious rules they would spoil or defile the temple of God. This was utterly unacceptable to all religious Israelites and Jews. For them defilement of the holy things of God was the worst possible sin and crime and evil that there could ever be.

God's problem with his people was that while they kept all the rules of the temple, they did not live the way God told them to. They became religious fanatics instead of being good people. The fanatics taught the people what suited themselves, not what helped the people. It is easy to live by rules that you yourself have made up. It is not easy to live the way God wants us all to live. But that is what they should have concentrated on.

The same applies to us.

<sup>2</sup>**the threshing floor:** Farmers reaped their harvests by cutting down the ripe corn and tying it into sheaves. They took the sheaves to the threshing floor where they beat the corn against the floor to loosen the grain from the stalks and the husks. Husks were what the grains of corn were wrapped in as they grew on the stalk. The husks could not be eaten and were of no use. They would be burnt to get rid of them.

Nobody likes to be punished, but it does teach us some very useful lessons.

**Take, for example, when God punishes a country by sending a bad drought. There is little or no rain for two or three years. Before that, people did not like wet, cold, windy weather, especially in the winter, and especially if it spoilt our sports programs.**

**But once the rains came back, and relieved the people, their attitude changed. Wet, cold, windy weather, even in winter, became lovely, beautiful, and most welcome! This was even if it spoilt our sporting games!**

**That is how God works. That is how he teaches us to learn to appreciate him, and whatever he does. We have to learn how to accept his rule and leadership.**

<sup>3</sup>**They are going to insult the ruler of Israel:** This probably means the Lord of all Israel, that is, God. When the heathen nations attacked Israel or Jerusalem, they were attacking and insulting God.

There is an amazing chapter in the book of Isaiah, who lived at the same time as Micah. Isaiah actually lived in Jerusalem. He tells how the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem to attack it. The first thing they did was to try to break down the spirit of the soldiers defending the walls of the city. The commander of the Assyrian army started mocking King Hezekiah and insulting God.

That night the angel of God killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. The Assyrian king and his army then gave up and went back to Assyria.

**You can read about it in Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37.**

**The story is also told in 2 Kings, chapters 18 and 19.**

This is the only place in the Old Testament where the same story, that is two chapters long, is told twice. So it is the most popular story in the Bible. You should read it!



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GOD will never give up on us,  
thanks to JESUS.



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\*(Further volumes 9 to 12 are to be planned, researched and written, God willing.)



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