

Judgment Against Corrupt Leaders

Key Verse: “Truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.”
—Micah 3:8

*Selected Scripture:
Micah 3:5-12*

AS WITH OUR PREVIOUS lesson, these words are addressed to the nation of Israel by Micah the prophet, whose name means “Who is like God.” He prophesied during the latter half of the eighth century B.C., as did Isaiah. Micah’s activities, like Isaiah’s, were primarily in Israel’s two-tribe kingdom of Judah. They were considered two of Judah’s greatest prophets.

Both Micah and Isaiah zealously supported the efforts of King Hezekiah to effect a reformation of the evils perpetrated by his father, King Ahaz. During his evil reign, Ahaz corrupted the Temple at Jerusalem by having an altar made that was fashioned after patterns he had seen in Damascus, the capital of Assyria. He also made other changes to the Temple furnishings which were not authorized by God, and eventually “shut up the doors of the house of the LORD” completely.—II Kings 16; II Chron. 28:24

Such was the condition that Hezekiah found when he was made king over Judah. “He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.” (II Chron. 29:2) In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah had the doors of the Temple

repaired and reopened. He also gathered the priests and Levites and instructed them to clean up the Temple and “carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place,” so that it might once again be fit for worship. (vss. 3-5) Micah encouraged the efforts of the king to effect these changes and to also reform the hearts of the people.

In Micah 3:9,11,12 (*New International Version*), we read these words: “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. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. . . . Therefore because of you, Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thicket.”

The leaders of the people knew what was right, but they abused their responsibilities, using their position to fill their own pockets and enlarge their lands. (chap. 2:1-9; 3:1-3) By doing so they became oppressors of the people rather than acting as their guardians. As they grew stronger in their allegiance with one another, they devised a system of organized law breaking. “Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, And a great man speaks the desire of his soul; So they weave it together.”—chap. 7:3, *New American Standard Bible*

As a result of all the evil that had taken place in Judah, God proclaimed these words through his servant Micah: “Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.”—chap. 3:6,7

God’s desire for Israel, and for his people of all ages, is that they serve him beyond mere outward show and ceremony—that is, with holiness of heart. Without this, no offering or service to God has value in his sight.—I Sam. 12:20,24; Prov. 4:23; Isa. 1:11; Mic. 6:6-8 ■