

Who was Micah in the Bible?

There are several men named Micah in the Old Testament (1 Chronicles 5:5; 8:34; 23:30; 2 Chronicles 34:20), but this article will focus on the two more prominent ones. The name Micah comes from the Hebrew word Micayehû, which means “who is like Jehovah?” indicating that men named Micah had parents who were devout believers in Yahweh. We read about the first Micah in Judges 17–18. He lived during the time that Israel had no king and “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). The second Micah was a prophet in Judah for 59 years, during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He prophesied in Judah while Hosea and Amos prophesied in Israel, and he was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah.

Judges 17 and 18 give the account of a man named Micah who is one example, among many, of the lawlessness that dominated Israel during the time of the judges. The people had abandoned Yahweh, chasing idols like the pagan nations around them and incorporating many aspects of idol worship into the worship of the true God. They refused obedience to the Lord, but since they did not yet have a king, every person did as he pleased, which resulted in chaos and debauchery. Micah exemplifies the spiritual attitude of the people at that time. He stole some silver from his mother and later returned it to her, at which point she dedicated it to the Lord’s service—and then used some of it to make a silver idol, which they set up in their home.

Micah then met a Levite man and invited him to stay at his house to be his personal priest (Judges 17:7–12). Micah and his mother believed themselves to be right with God but had so incorporated worldly practices that they did not see the contradiction of having a graven image in their house. They assumed the Lord was pleased with their actions and would bless them for having a Levite as a priest over their false religion

(Judges 17:13). God's commandments were forgotten as Micah and his household followed their own ideas of worship, totally contrary to those prescribed by the Lord: "You shall not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath. You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Exodus 20:4-5).

Micah's actions are similar to those of many professing Christians today. Deciding that God's written Word is outdated or constrictive, they invent a counterfeit Christianity that has "a form of godliness but denies its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). Absent from this counterfeit are difficult expectations such as dying to self (Galatians 2:20) and carrying one's cross (Luke 9:23). Instead, practitioners construct idols of health, wealth, and success, assuming God is pleased with their self-worship. This brand of cultural Christianity dominates Western and European cultures. Micah may as well be their patron saint.

The second significant Micah in Scripture is a stark contrast to the idolatrous Micah's worldliness. The second Micah was the author of the book by the same name. He is described as being from Moresheth, a small but important town in southwest Judah near the Philistine territory. Micah was given a word from the Lord about the future of Samaria and Jerusalem (Micah 1:1). He is sixth in the order of those we call Minor Prophets, so called because their writings are comparatively short. It was the prophet Micah who foretold of Christ's birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6). His is a message of both hope and doom, declaring the lovingkindness of God toward those who repent and turn to Him (Micah 7:18-19). And Micah condenses God's requirements into this familiar refrain: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah

6:8).

The prophet Micah reminds us that, despite God's zero-tolerance toward our sin, He is also ready and waiting to forgive and restore those who repent. Even in the midst of strong warnings to Judah, Micah includes the hope that God will relent on the promised judgment if they will turn from evil. He ends his book with this thought: "He will again have compassion on us; He will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast out all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Christians can take comfort in those words as well. Because of the Messiah that Micah prophesied, Jew and Gentile can enjoy the benefits of God's forgiveness when we turn from evil and "walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).