

Lesson 19  
21-22 February 2022  
Genesis 37-41



## **Another Perspective: Micah**

**Timeline and Map** – Micah is prophet #4 on the timeline, so he was a contemporary of Hosea. The only thing we know about Micah other than his name is that he came from Moresheth, a town located about 22 miles southwest of Jerusalem. However, he had messages for both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, so we will draw a stickman for him right on the border between the two countries, with his feet in Judah and his head in Israel.

**Micah's Name and His Message** – Micah's *name* means "who is like Yahweh?" and that is the question he uses at the very end of his book to summarize his *message*. After six chapters of spelling out the sins of both kingdoms and warning them both of terrible judgment to come, he ends with a beautiful description of God, giving hope for God's people: *"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old."*

**Puns in Micah's Book** – We have seen before that God seems to love puns and plays on words. For example, Isaac's name means "laughter", and we saw situation after situation in which laughter played a part in the events of his birth and his life. The Holy Spirit does a similar thing over and over in the opening chapter of Micah's book as he "uses wordplay to reveal the various disasters Judah will face when its towns are captured by the Assyrians" (quote from the *Women's Study Bible*, page 1406). Let's look at the towns mentioned in Micah 1:10-15 and see how this plays out:

- **Beth-le-aphrah** means "house of dust", and its inhabitants are told to roll themselves in the dust—a sign of anguish and despair.
- **Shaphir** sounds like "beautiful", but its people will be led out in nakedness and shame.
- **Zaanan** sounds like "come out", but they will be too afraid to leave their homes when their enemies come against them.
- **Beth-ezel** means "house of taking away", and the people *will* be taken away as their village is destroyed: they will be either killed or taken into exile.
- **Maroth** is related to the word for bitterness. (Think of Naomi in the book of Ruth when she told the women of her hometown to call her "Mara" because she thought that God had dealt very bitterly with her.) In the same way, the people of Maroth will long to see good, but will be bitterly disappointed.
- **Lachish** sounds like the word for "steed". The town was a military outpost, meant to guard their country. In time of war, the soldiers stationed there would have harnessed horses to chariots for

battle. But now they will harness their steeds to those same chariots in order to flee for their lives when the Assyrians come against them.

- **Moresbeth-gath** is similar to the phrase “one who is betrothed,” and the phrase that is translated “parting gifts” could also be translated “dowry”. The idea behind what Micah is saying here is that the Assyrians will take a “dowry” of loot along with the “bride” (the town itself).
- **Achzib** means “deceitful.” The kings of Israel expect to receive lots of revenue from the town, but they are deceived, because it will be destroyed.
- **Mareshah** sounds like the Hebrew word for “conqueror,” a word they often used to describe how their ancestors had conquered Canaan. But now the Israelites themselves will be conquered.

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### **Jen Wilkin, *God of Covenant* video #8: *Joseph in Egypt***

**Answers to Significant Questions** – When we reach the story of Joseph in the Bible, we are finally able to answer the question the Israelites of Moses’ day would have had in their minds: how did their ancestors end up in Egypt? The story has even more significance for us. When Jesus said that Moses wrote of *Him* (John 5:46), the story of Joseph is one of the clearest places where we see a type of Christ in the Old Testament.

**Understanding Joseph’s Story** – Most of us are very familiar with Joseph’s story, having heard it many times in Sunday School or VBS as children. But now we can study it with adult understanding, putting it in context with all that has led up to it. For example, we understand that Joseph was the favored son of Jacob because Jacob loved Rachel, and he hated Leah—and all their children know it. We see how that favoritism played out in the lives of Jacob’s sons: rather than place their anger on their father Jacob, they direct it toward the object of his favoritism.

**Sources of Offense to the Ten Older Brothers** – When Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to Jacob, it would have been highly offensive to them, because he was younger than any of them. His robe was also a huge source of offense. Most versions of the Bible translate the description of the robe as a “coat of many colors”, which would be the kind of garment worn by royalty. But the Hebrew description can also mean “a coat with very long sleeves”. This kind of long-sleeved robe would have belonged to an overseer, not a common worker. In either case, Joseph’s coat indicated that he was a person of very high standing. And if Jacob saw Joseph as an overseer, it would explain why he treats Joseph the way he does, in particular why he would have sent Joseph to check on the other brothers and why Joseph would have been bringing him a report when he got back.

**Joseph’s Character** – Scripture consistently portrays Joseph as a man of *character*, as a man of *virtue*, and as a man who *does well* in whatever he puts his hand to. We need to regard did these opening verses about Joseph’s life in light of the context of the rest of the story and not be too quick to judge his



actions. If Joseph did make mistakes in dealing with his brothers, it was probably the result of youth and naivete, not of moral failure.

**Joseph's Dreams** – Jacob rebuked Joseph when he told his second dream, but he did not discount it, nor did he forget it. Why do you think this was so? For one thing, he loves Joseph, almost irrationally. But even more significantly, he himself is a son who had a dream about heaven opening and angels going up and down on a staircase that reached from earth to heaven. So he leaves room for Joseph and *his* dreams.

**Joseph at Shechem** – Once again Jacob sends Joseph in his role of overseer to check on his ten older brothers, who had gone to Shechem...which is a place associated with violence and danger. But when he gets there, he discovers that his brothers have traveled on to Dothan, which is another three days' journey away. The encounter he has with an unnamed man at Shechem seems a little odd and insignificant, but consider the implications of this three day "delay" in reaching his brothers: a caravan is on its way to Egypt and will reach Dothan the same day that Joseph does. If Joseph had arrived any earlier, his brothers would have just left him to die in the cistern, but instead they decide to spare his life and sell him to the slave traders in the caravan. God's timing is always perfect!

**Reuben's Response** – Reuben talks his brothers out of outright killing Joseph and suggests that they throw him into a nearby cistern instead. He intends to rescue Joseph and return him safely to Jacob, hoping to be restored to his father's good graces after the major offense he had committed earlier with Bilhah. His status as the firstborn is on the line, and he knows it.

**Judah's Role** – We need to pay attention whenever Judah's name is mentioned, because we know that the Messiah will come through his line. It is significant that scripture tells us that his brothers "*listened to him*" when he suggested that they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites instead of leaving him to die in the cistern. But why should they, when he is only number four in the line of inheritance? Remember that they are all keenly aware of what has taken place in their family in recent years. They know that Reuben, the oldest, is out of favor for committing adultery with their father's concubine. And they know that Jacob is displeased with the next two sons, Simeon and Levi, because of their murderous deeds at Shechem. So Judah is rising in importance as the next son in line for the rights of the first-born.

**The Irony of the Situation** – When the ten sons return to Jacob, they practice deception on him with goat's blood and a robe. But Jacob had practiced deception on *his* father with goat's hair and a robe. He is reaping what he has sown.

**Judah and Tamar** – By all accounts, the events recorded in Genesis 38 are weird, awkward and strange. But these events are not recorded here by accident. We are going to see a pivotal moment in Judah's life as the story unfolds.

**Tamar's Life** – Consider the implications for Tamar of being married to a man so wicked that God puts him to death (Er). Then she is married to a second man, Onan, who just uses her for his own pleasure, but guarantees that she will have no children. Onan is withholding justice from her in a very personal

and painful way...and once again, her husband is struck dead by God. Then Judah uses a stalling technique to protect his youngest son, Shelah, from death because he is convinced that Tamar is somehow responsible for the deaths of Er and Onan. So he sends her back to her father's house, ostensibly to wait until Shelah comes of age, but actually just to be rid of her. Now Tamar will be considered a burden and a financial liability to her father's family. She has had two failed marriages and, even worse, seems to be infertile. So she is in a very dangerous, terribly unjust, and desperate situation. She resorts to prostitution, which seems horrible to us. But remember that NO ONE resorts to prostitution lightly. It is an act of desperation if it is not an act of compulsion. Tamar knows that justice has been withheld from her, so she seeks it on her own.

**Tamar's Savvy** – Tamar knows the character of her father-in-law Judah: she knows that if he sees a prostitute by the side of the road, he will avail himself of her services. And she is smart enough to ask for three significant items from Judah: his signet ring, his cord, and his staff. This is the equivalent of asking a modern day man to leave his driver's license and his credit cards as collateral. She has his forms of identification.

**God's Assessment** – We tend to judge Tamar harshly and wonder why she would do such a thing. But it is revealing to discover that Tamar is celebrated as a *righteous* woman in Ruth 4:12. And two of Israel's kings, David and Absalom, name daughters after her! (See 2 Samuel 13:1 and 14:27) Her legacy is not the one we modern readers would assign to her. Why is that?

**Judah's Change of Heart** – Judah has the power of life and death over this woman. Not only that, but she is a problem to him, and now that she is pregnant, he has a way to solve his "problem": have her burned to death. But when Judah recognizes his signet ring, his cord, and his staff, he realizes his unjustness and says, "She is more righteous than I!" What he said can also be translated, "She is righteous, and I am not!" This is a moment of awareness for Judah that will shape his behavior moving forward. He treats Tamar with respect for the rest of their lives.

**Tamar's Reward** – Tamar bears healthy twin sons, the older of whom becomes part of the line of the Messiah. Tamar herself is listed in the genealogy of Christ; she is a righteous example of a Canaanite woman being entered into the line of a Jewish Savior! She represents the bringing of Gentiles into God's kingdom. She is to be remembered and honored as a woman of valor.

**Patterns in Joseph's Life** – As we read through the account of Joseph's life, we see certain patterns repeating. One pattern involves his *status*. In situation after situation, he is first brought low, but then honored as God blesses him and enables him to perform well any task he is assigned. For example, he was brought low by his brothers, who sold him into slavery. He was initially purchased as a slave by Potiphar, but then given complete responsibility of the household because Potiphar saw that God was blessing everything Joseph did. Then Potiphar's wife brought a false accusation against Joseph, and he was once more brought low, cast into prison. But there again he was given great responsibility as the prison warden observed how well he performed any duty assigned to him.



Another pattern involved how he spoke about *interpreting dreams*. He always attributes the interpretation of the dream to what God is doing. He doesn't say, "This is my opinion of what the dream means," but rather, "This is what God is saying to you through this dream." He wants everyone to know that the interpretation is coming from his God, not one of the Egyptian gods.

A third pattern is how he brings blessing to others in the midst of his hardship—even to the ones who have caused the hardship! For example, he has been a slave and a prisoner his entire time in Egypt, yet he devises and implements a plan that will help Egypt to survive the coming famine. And once again he is greatly honored, this time by Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh gives him his own signet ring (a symbol of *authority*) and has him clothed in fine linen (giving him *dignity*) and puts a gold chain around his neck (signifying *honor*). He also provides Joseph with a wife and gives him a new name, Zaphenath-Paneah, which means "revealer of secrets".

**Joseph's Sons** – Joseph named his two sons Manasseh (forgetfulness) and Ephraim (fruitfulness). These names reflected his gratitude for how God has blessed him in all his hardships, granting him the gifts of forgetfulness and fruitfulness wherever he has gone. Moses' original audience would have instantly recognized these two names as the names of two of their tribes.

**Joseph as a Type of Christ** – *The following analogies come from Arthur Pink, a well-known commentator on the scriptures:*

- Joseph was a beloved son, deeply loved by his father who set his favor upon him.
- He was robed in honor.
- He was hated for his words, which prophesied his coming exaltation. His brothers did not believe his words, just as the Jews of Jesus' day did not believe what He said about Himself.
- He was a son sent forth by his father, and when he came to those who should have received him gladly, he was rejected.
- His brothers plot to kill him, just as the Jews plotted to kill Jesus.
- He was stripped and sold to the Gentiles.
- He was sold for a pittance.
- He was tried and handed over to justice even though he was innocent, just as Jesus was handed over to Pilate when He had done nothing wrong.
- Joseph suffered in prison between two companions, one who perishes and one who was saved. Jesus hung on the cross between two thieves, one of whom He assures will be with Him in paradise.
- Joseph was delivered alive from his judgment, just as was Christ at the appointed time.
- Joseph was given the name "Revealer of Secrets". Christ also revealed the Father to those He chose. [See Luke 10:22.]
- Joseph was exalted over all of Egypt, just as Christ will be exalted above everyone and everything. [See Philippians 2:9-10.]

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- Joseph was given outward signs of his status. We see Jesus clothed in righteousness, honor and authority in the book of Revelation.
- Joseph's glory was acknowledged by all, just as the glory of Christ will one day be acknowledged by all.
- Joseph becomes a source of bread for the world. In John 6:32-35 Jesus says, "The bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life."

**Thoughts for Today** – We too are called to share the bread of life with a world that is perishing in spiritual famine. We are called to conserve the truth of God in such a way that we have a bounty within ourselves and let the overflow spill to people around us who are perishing before us for lack of the Word. We become the instruments by which the Bread of Life is distributed from baskets to feed the five thousand. What a calling we have! And what an example to follow.