

II. Micah 1-3

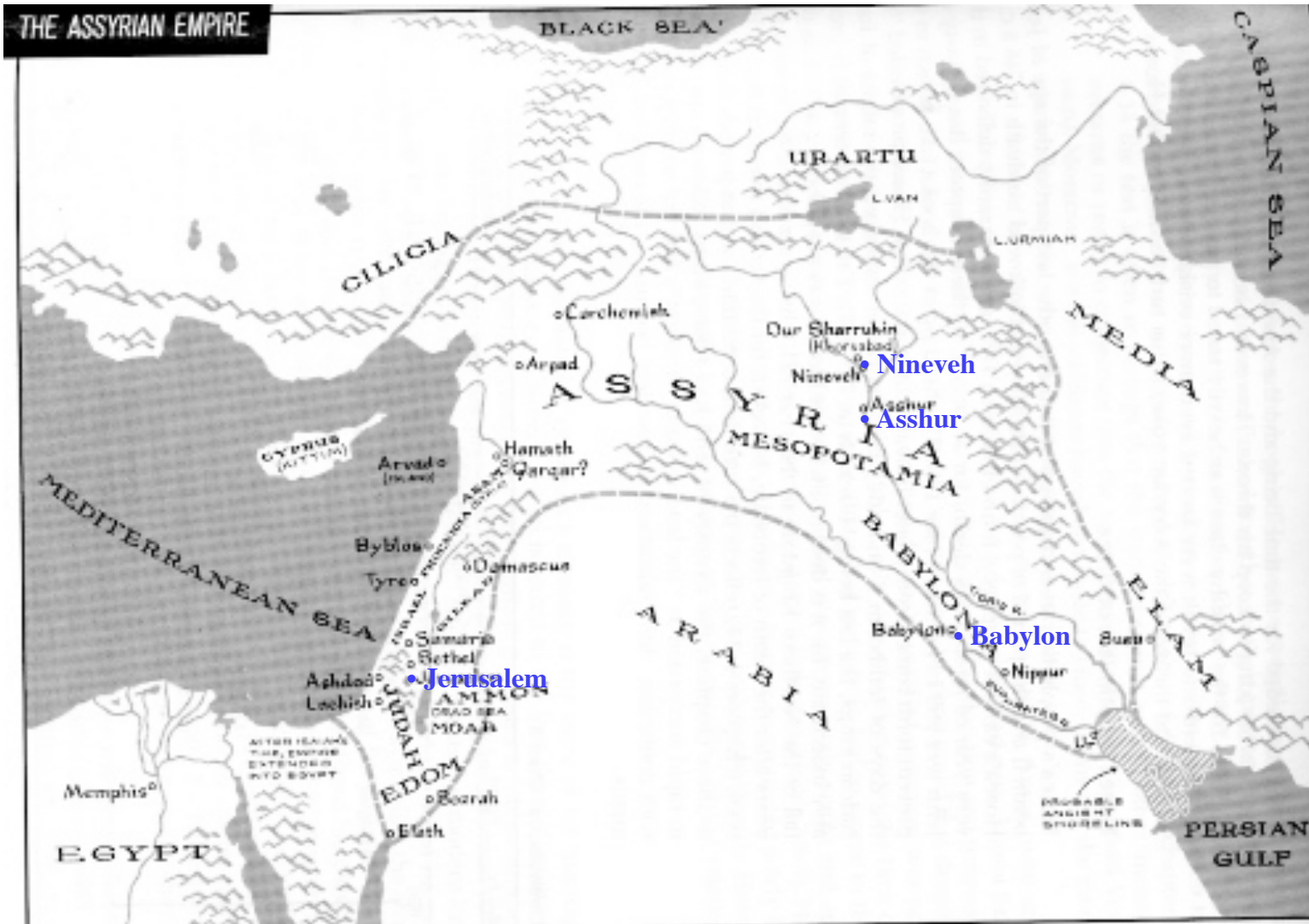


Gustave Doré 1870

Micah 740-725

Like his contemporary Isaiah, Micah lived through the prosperous years towards the end of Uzziah's reign, and then the years when Judah was forced to defend itself against Israel and Syria who were determined to force Judah into an anti-Assyrian alliance. Micah experienced a call from YHWH to prophesy; that is to say, to communicate to others the insights he received in prayer. His words reveal his concern for public policy and the exercise of justice that is faithful to the covenant Judah has with YHWH.

Assyria in the 2nd half of the 8th century



Tiglath-Pileser III

744-726BC

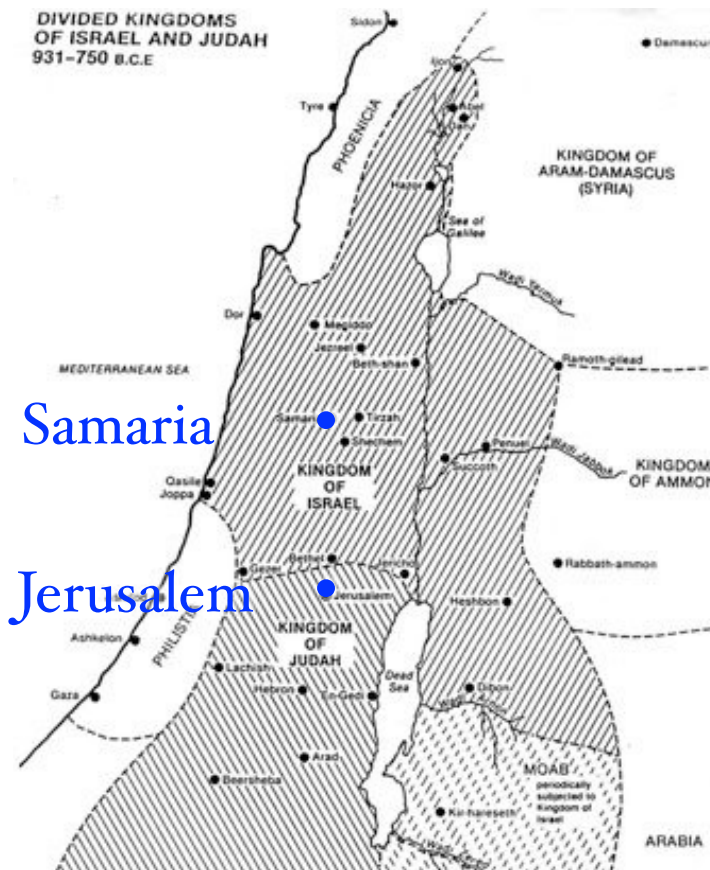
Shalmaneser V

726-722BC

Micah 740-725 (before 721!)

Micah 1:1

The word of YHWH which came to Micah of Moresheth (35km west of Jerusalem?) in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah which he saw in a vision concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.



Jotham 749-734 (regent) 734 (king)

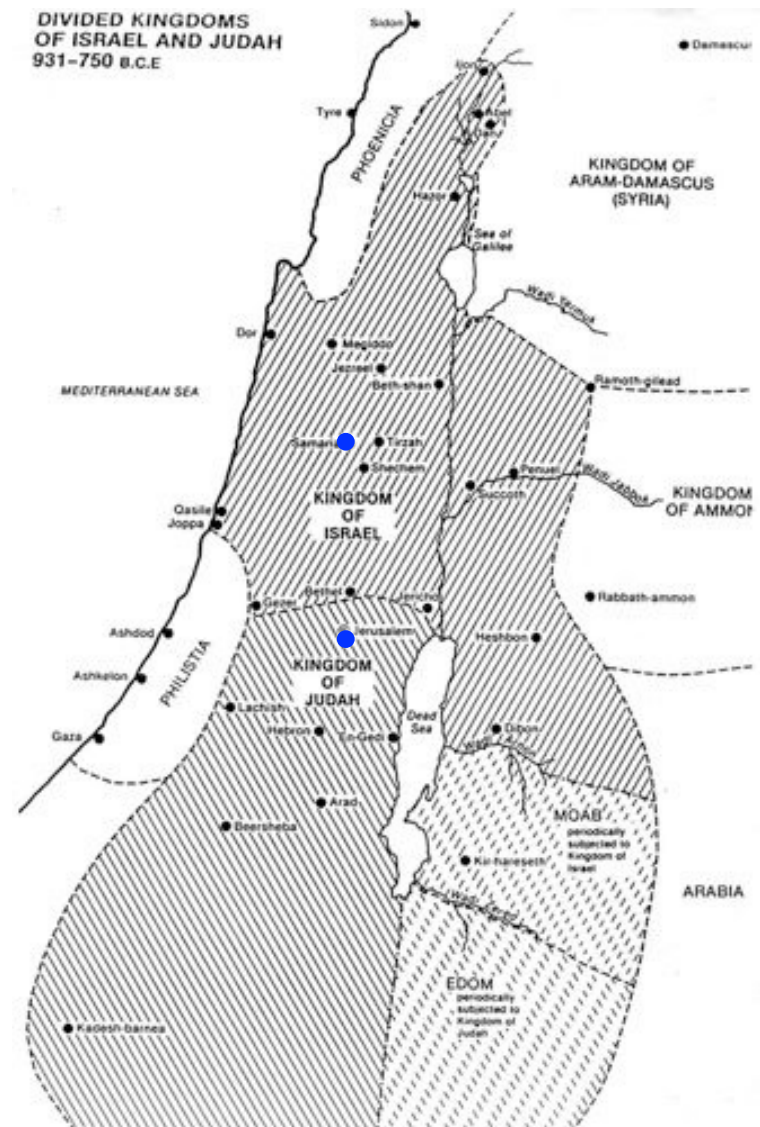
Ahaz 734-727

Hezekiah 727 - 699

Micah 740-725

I. Israel during these years

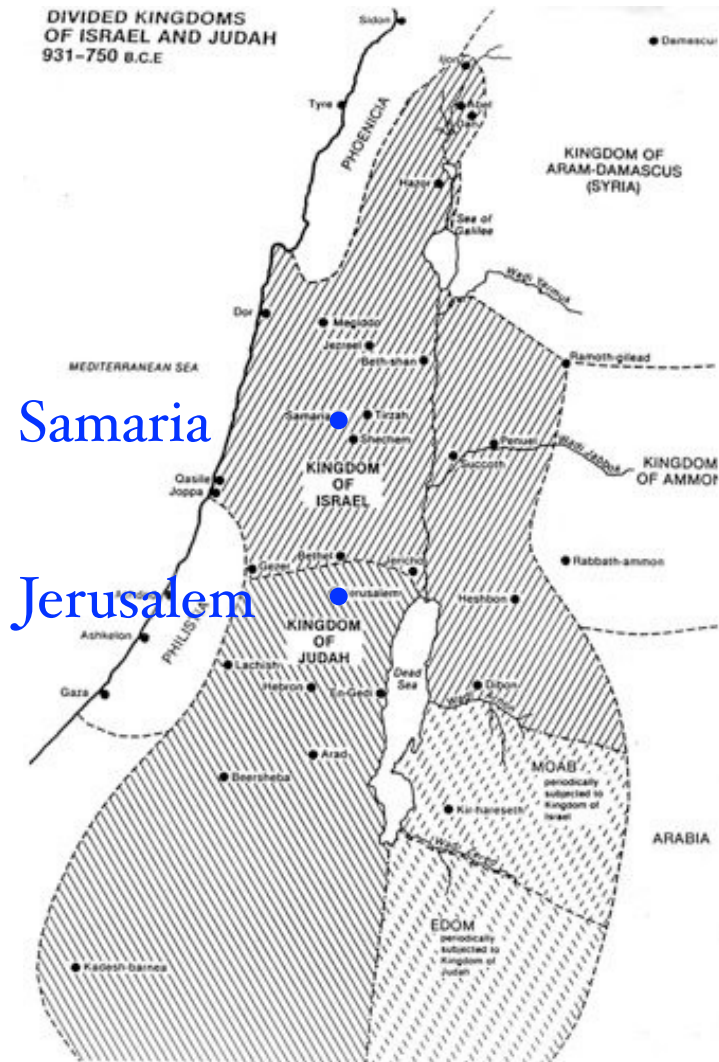
- Pekahiah (736-735) continued the policy of his father, Menahem, of paying tribute to Assyria .
- Pekah (735-730) murdered Pekahiah, refused to pay the tribute and looked for support to Egypt.
- In 734 Tiglath-pileser III conquered Philistia and annexed the area of Israel that bordered the Mediterranean. In 733 he took Gilead on the east of the Jordan, as well as Galilee, including the Valley of Jezreel. [Syria & Israel invade Judah.](#)
- Pekah was assassinated in 730 by Hoshea (730-722) who reverted to paying tribute to Assyria.



Micah 740-725

Jotham (regent 749-734; 734)

- Jerusalem is isolated and influenced to a large extent by foreigners.
- The vassal towns in Judah are collaborating against the capital, and are in the hands of corrupt local administrators.
- There is rampant opportunism and a disintegration of justice.



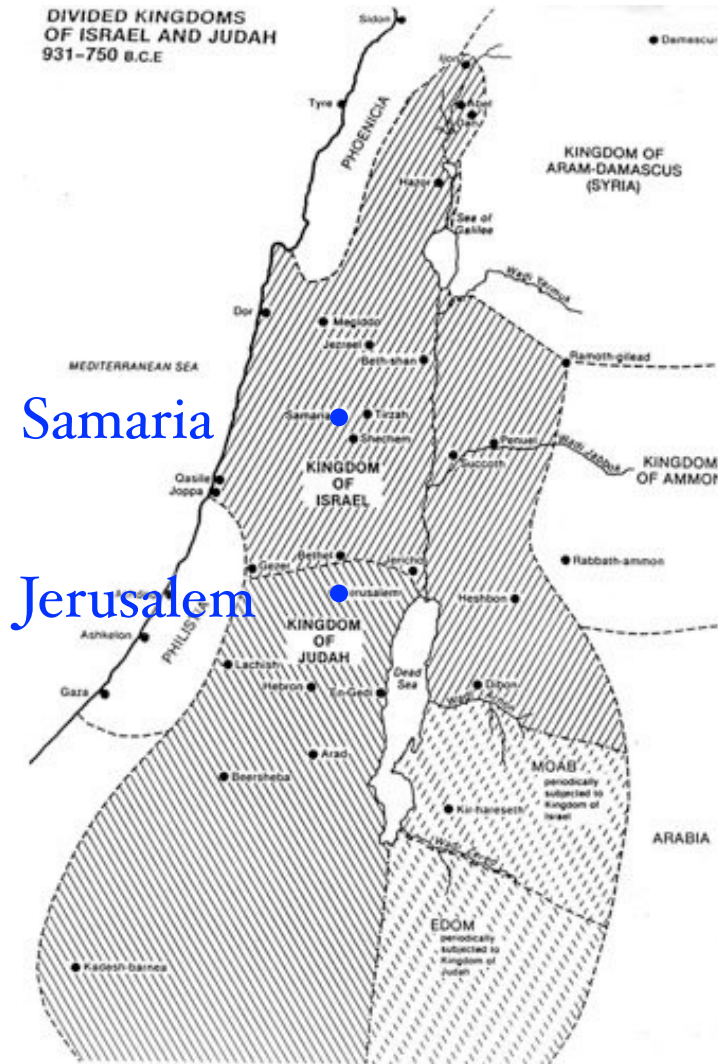
Ahaz (734-727) Assyrian invasion (734-733)

invasion by Syria & Israel (734-732)

2Chronicles 28:5-8

‘YHWH his God gave **Ahaz** into the hand of the king of **Aram**, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of **Israel**, who defeated him with great slaughter. Pekah son of Remaliah killed one hundred twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all of them valiant warriors, because they had abandoned YHWH, the God of their ancestors. And Zichri, a mighty warrior of Ephraim, killed the king’s son Maaseiah,

DIVIDED KINGDOMS
OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH
931-750 B.C.E.



Samaria

Jerusalem

Azrikam the commander of the palace, and Elkanah the next in authority to the king. The people of Israel took captive two hundred thousand of their kin, women, sons, and daughters; they also took much booty from them and brought the booty to Samaria.’

Micah 1:2-5

Hear, you peoples, all of you; listen, O earth, and all that is in you;
that the Lord YHWH may testify against you,
the Lord from his holy temple.

For lo, YHWH is coming out of his place, and will come down
and tread upon the high places of the earth.

Then the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will burst open,
like wax near the fire, like water poured down a steep place.

Cosmic mythical battle : (Sinai theophany, Exodus 19)

All this is for the rebellion of Jacob
and for the sins of the house of Israel.

What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?

And what is the high place of Judah? (2Kings 16:1-4)

Is it not Jerusalem?

Micah 1:6-7 : Punishment

Therefore I will make Samaria a ruin in the open country,
a place for planting vineyards.

I will roll her stones down into the valley,
and uncover her foundations.

All her images shall be smashed,
all her wages shall be burned with fire.

All her idols I will lay waste;
for as the fees of a prostitute she gathered them,
and for the fees of a prostitute they shall go back.

Micah 1:8-16 A lament over Judah

Micah 1:8-9

Over this I will lament and wail; I will go barefoot and naked;
I will make lamentation like the jackals,
and mourning like the ostriches.

For her wound is incurable. It has come as far as Judah.

It has reached to the gate of my people, has reached Jerusalem.

The wound inflicted by Israel upon Judah, when Pekah of Israel subdued Judah in 734 and tried to put a puppet king on the throne in place of the young Ahaz.

Micah 1:10-12

Exult not in Gath. Rather break down and weep! in Beth-le-Aphrah roll yourself in the dust. Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame. The inhabitants of Zaanan do not come forth. Beth-ezel is wailing and shall remove its support from you. For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, yet disaster has come down from YHWH to the gates of **Jerusalem**.

Towns near Moresheth-Gath in the Shephelah (hill country west of Jerusalem).

Micah 1:13

Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish. She was the first fruit of sin to daughter Zion, for in you were found the rebellions of Israel.

‘She’ = the Canaanite goddess Asherah, or the ‘queen of heaven’, Astarte) whose cult came to Jerusalem from Samaria via Lachish (see 2Chronicles 29:19).

Micah 1:14-16

Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-Gath, The houses of Achzib have become a dry watercourse to the kings of Israel. I will again bring the conqueror upon you, inhabitants of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will come to Adullam. Make yourself bald and cut off your hair for your pampered children. Make yourself as bald as the eagle, for they have gone from you into exile.

Micah 2:1-2

‘Woe’ expresses a denouncing of behaviour as well as dismay and grief over what has happened.

Woe to you who devise wickedness and evil deeds on your beds, and then carry them out when the morning dawns, just because you can. You who covet (desire that drives action) fields, and seized them; houses, and take them; who oppressed householder and house, owners and their inheritance.

Isaiah 5:8-9

Woe to you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land! YHWH of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.

Micah 2:3-5

Therefore thus says YHWH: Now, I am devising against this tribe an evil from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. On that day they will take up a taunt song against you, and wail with bitter lamentation, saying, “We are utterly ruined. They are selling the inheritance of my people. They have removed what is mine! Among our captors they parcels out our fields.” Therefore you will have no one to measure out the boundaries by lot in the assembly of YHWH.

Verse 5 speaks of the final result of YHWH’s punishment. We already know that those responsible for seizing land will be evicted from the land they seized. Now we are told that they will have no say in what happens to their own land, as they will be excluded from ‘the assembly of YHWH’.

Micah 2:6

“Do not prophesy!”— such is their [Micah’s rival ‘prophets] prophecy.
They will not preach of such things!
He [God] will not withdraw, causing us shame! [They are so sure!]

We hear Micah’s rivals telling him not to preach (compare Amos 2:12). They preach, but they ‘will not preach the kind of things we have just heard Micah preaching in verses 1-5. They ‘know’ that YHWH will not withdraw and bring shame upon Israel.

Micah is confronting rival prophets for their role in the injustices that were going on. This is not something new. From 1Kings 22 we know of a clash between Micaiah and Zedekiah. From Jeremiah 28 we know of Jeremiah’s clash with Hananiah. Isaiah (28) and Hosea (4:5; 9:8) were opposed by other ‘prophets’.

Micah 2:7-9

The house of Jacob says:

Is YHWH's patience exhausted? Is this how He acts?

Surely he speaks of good and the upright walk with Him!

[Micah's response] But you rise up against my people as enemies!

you strip off the robe from the labourer.

You take the garments off the captives in war!

The women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses.

from their young children you take away my glory forever.

Micah 2:10-11

“Arise”, you say “and go away; for this is no place to rest. For an unclean thing you do damage, grievous damage! If someone comes along pretending to be a ‘man of the spirit’ and telling lies (but what he really means is “I will prophesy for you for wine and strong drink”), such a one would be the prophet for this people!

Micah is trying to get rid of the false prophets. They are a source of corruption. He exposes what they are really up to. ‘This people’, that is, those who are involved in the injustices Micah is denouncing, are happy to have these phoney prophets, who say what they want to hear, as long as the bribe is right.

Micah 2:12-13

I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob,
I will gather the survivors of Israel;
I will set them together like sheep in Bozrah, [Edom; wine harvest]
like a flock in its fold; it will resound with people.

The one who breaks out went up before them;
they broke through and passed through the gate, going out by it.
Their king went through ahead of them, YHWH at their head.

YHWH is faithful

and will lead his people home as their conquering King

Micah 3:1-4

Listen, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Should you not know justice, you haters of good and lovers of evil! You have eaten the flesh of my people, and have flayed their skin off them; their bones are broken, and they are chopped up like meat in a kettle, like flesh in a caldron. When you cry out to YHWH, he will not answer. He will hide his face from you at that time, because you act wickedly.

The leaders had the responsibility of seeing that justice was done in the community. They should have known YHWH's judgment and should have seen that it was carried out. Instead, their basic attitude is summarised by Micah as 'hating good and loving evil'. They feed off the poor. There will be no let up in their punishment. YHWH, who hears the cry of the poor, has paid no attention to their cry and refuses to be present to them.

Micah 3:5-7

Thus says YHWH: Woe to you prophets who lead my people astray,
who put the bite on with your fangs, who cry “Peace”,
but declare war against those who put nothing into your mouths.
Therefore it will be night for you, not vision,
and dark for you, not enlightenment.
The sun will go down on the prophets,
and the day will be black over them;
the seers will be disgraced, and the diviners confounded;
they will all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God.

Micah’s threat is that the prophets who claim to have visions and to be able to divine the will of God will be discredited. Their claimed ‘visions’ and their ‘divining’ will not shed light, ‘for there is no answer from God’.

Micah 3:8

As for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of YHWH,
with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his rebellion and to Israel his sin.

Micah claims an authenticity that the prophets lack. The key difference is that he is committed to the truth, and cannot be bought. He is not afraid to name rebellion and sin, whatever the consequence for himself. Unlike the false prophets who have allied themselves with those who wield power in the institution, he is 'filled with power', the power of 'the spirit of YHWH'.

Micah 3:9-12

Hear this, you rulers of the House of Jacob and chiefs of the House of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrongdoing!

Ahaz was involved in a lot of building in Jerusalem. 2Chronicles 28:3 recounts him following a dreadful practice of neighbouring lands in sacrificing his sons. Is this the 'blood' Micah is speaking of in verse 10? Or is the blood the lives of those whose property has been unjustly confiscated?

Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for payment.
its prophets give oracles for money. Yet all the while they lean upon YHWH and say, "Surely YHWH is with us! No harm shall come upon us."
Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the temple mount a haunt for wild animals.

We have come to the end of what has been called ‘the Book of Doom’(Micah 1-3). In 1:1 we were told that the word of YHWH given to Micah was ‘concerning Samaria and Jerusalem’.

The judgment upon Samaria came first (1:5-7). 3:12 speaks of the judgment of Jerusalem. The judgment against Samaria was partly fulfilled by the successful siege begun by Shalmaneser V in 724, and completed by Sargon in 721. However, the city was captured, not destroyed as one would expect from Micah’s words. This suggests that Micah’s oracles predated 724.

His threats against Jerusalem were not fulfilled. Jeremiah 26:18 attributes this to the fact that Hezekiah heeded Micah’s words and so Jerusalem was given a reprieve by YHWH.