

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Micah the Prophet

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 15

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IN BRIEF

Saint Micah the Prophet

Sixth of the twelve minor prophets, defender of the poor, who foretold the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.

Feast day	January 15, August 14
Born	8th century BC, Moresheth, Judah
Era	7th century BC

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Micah, Prophet of Justice and Mercy

Novena to Saint Micah the Prophet

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Micah the Prophet

Saint Micah is one of the twelve "minor prophets" of the Bible and the author of the book that bears his name. A countryman of Judah in the 8th century before Christ and a contemporary of Isaiah, he spoke out forcefully against the injustice of the powerful in Jerusalem. Christians owe him two unforgettable texts: the announcement that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, quoted in the Gospel of Christmas, and a summary of all true religion in three phrases, "to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." The former Roman Martyrology commemorated him on January 15; the Eastern Churches celebrate him on August 14.

Who was Saint Micah?

His name, *Mikhah* in Hebrew, means "Who is like the Lord?" The first verse of his book introduces him as "Micah of Moresheth," a small town in the lowlands of Judah, southwest of Jerusalem. It places his preaching under Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, that is, in the second half of the 8th century before Christ.

He should not be confused with another prophet of a similar name, Micaiah son of Imlah, who lived a century earlier in the northern kingdom and appears in the First Book of Kings.

Unlike Isaiah, a man of the city with access to the royal court, Micah was a man of the countryside. He saw at close range how small landowners were stripped of their fields by the great men of Jerusalem, and he spoke in their name.



The prophet Micah.

Key dates in the life of Micah

No precise date of his life is known. His preaching can only be placed within the great events of his time:

- **c. 740-700 BC**: Reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judah, the period of his preaching.
- **722 BC**: The Assyrians take Samaria, ending the northern kingdom of Israel, as Micah had foretold.
- **701 BC**: The Assyrian king Sennacherib invades Judah.

The prophet of justice

Micah takes on those who "covet fields and seize them," judges who take bribes, priests who teach for pay and false prophets who announce peace to whoever feeds them. He dares to say something unheard of: because of these crimes, Zion will be plowed like a field and Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins.

This prophecy left a deep mark. A century later, when the prophet Jeremiah was threatened with death for announcing the ruin of the Temple, some elders recalled that Micah of Moresheth had said the same thing under Hezekiah, and that the king, instead of killing him, had turned back to God (Jeremiah 26:18-19).

"My people, what have I done to you?"

In chapter 6, Micah stages a trial between God and his people. God himself speaks: "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!" The Church took up these words in the *Reproaches* (the Improperia), sung during the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday.

Then comes the answer to the question of what a person should offer to God. Not thousands of rams, not rivers of oil, but this: "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Few verses of the Old Testament are quoted as often.

Bethlehem and the hope of the Messiah

Micah does not only announce misfortune. He sees a time coming when the nations will go up to the mountain of the Lord, when swords will be beaten into plowshares and everyone will sit in peace under their own vine and fig tree. The same oracle is also found in the Book of Isaiah.

He also announces a ruler of a new kind, coming not from Jerusalem but from a humble village: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel" (Micah 5:2, numbered 5:1 in some Bibles).

Christians recognized in this verse the announcement of the birth of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, it is the scribes of Jerusalem who quote it to tell the Magi where the Messiah is to be born. The passage is read at Mass on the

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

The book ends with a meditation on mercy that plays on the prophet's own name: "Who is a God like you, who removes guilt? [...] You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins" (Micah 7:18-19).



The prophet Micah in cathedral art.

Why is Saint Micah honored as a saint?

Micah has no official patronage, but the Church has always counted the prophets of the Old Testament among the holy men who prepared the coming of Christ. The Eastern Churches celebrate him on August 14, and the former Roman Martyrology recalled him on January 15, together with the prophet Habakkuk. According to the historian Sozomen, his remains were discovered in Judea in the 4th century.

Micah reminds us that we cannot honor God while crushing the poor. His faith is demanding and concrete: justice in business, kindness in relationships, humility before God. It is also full of hope: God keeps his promises, and he delights in forgiving. Catholics can pray with him for social justice, for those who hold power and for conversion of heart.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Micah in art

Like most prophets, Micah is shown as a bearded old man in a wide cloak, holding a **scroll** or a banner (phylactery) on which a verse of his book is sometimes written, often his prophecy about Bethlehem. Icons show him unrolling his scroll; in medieval cathedrals he appears in stained glass and sculpture among the prophets who announced Christ. Some images place the little town of Bethlehem in the background.



Bethlehem, the town from which Micah said the Messiah would come.

Where to pray to Saint Micah

There is no major shrine dedicated to Micah. The best place to meet him is the Bible itself: his book has only seven short chapters. Pilgrims to the Holy Land remember his prophecy at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In the liturgy, his words return every Advent and every Good Friday. To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Micah and the novena to Saint Micah.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Micah, Prophet of Justice and Mercy

The most beautiful prayers linked to the prophet Micah are his own words, which the Church still proclaims during Advent and Holy Week. You will find them below with their biblical references, followed by an original prayer to Saint Micah for justice, mercy and humility.

Three passages from the Book of Micah to meditate on

> *"You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."*

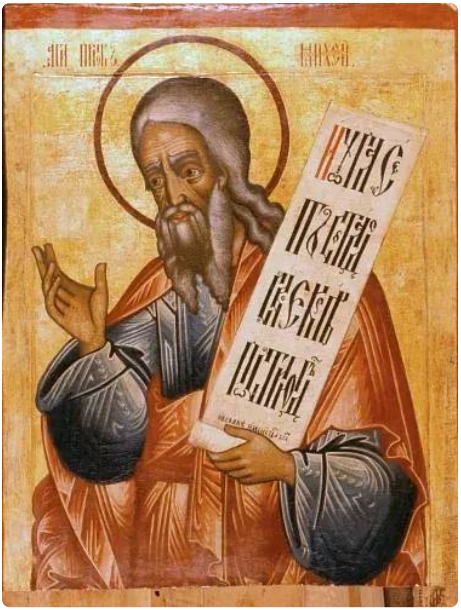
Source: Book of Micah, chapter 6, verse 8.

> *"O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!"*

Source: Book of Micah, chapter 6, verse 3, taken up in the Reproaches sung during the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday.

> *"Who is a God like you, who removes guilt and pardons sin? [...] He delights in mercy. Again he will have compassion on us, he will tread down our guilt. You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins."*

Source: Book of Micah, chapter 7, verses 18-19.



The prophet Micah, icon.

Prayer to Saint Micah

Saint Micah, prophet of justice, you took up the defense of the little ones stripped of their fields: open my eyes to the injustices I would rather not see, and give me the courage to refuse them.

You summed up the will of God in a few words: teach me to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God, without thinking myself better than others.

You announced that the Savior would come from Bethlehem, the least of the clans of Judah: teach me to recognize God in what is small and hidden.

You sang of the God who forgives and casts our sins into the depths of the sea: help me to receive his forgiveness and to forgive in my turn. I entrust to you my intention (name it in silence). Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

The former Roman Martyrology commemorated Saint Micah on January 15, together with the prophet Habakkuk; the Eastern Churches celebrate him on August 14. His words are especially fitting:

- during Advent, when the Church reads his prophecy about Bethlehem;
- on Good Friday, when the Reproaches echo his words;
- when you face a choice between what is easy and what is just;
- for those who hold power, judges, employers and public officials;
- before going to confession, trusting in the God who delights in mercy.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Micah, and read the life of Saint Micah.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Micah the Prophet

This novena to Saint Micah is an original composition by Saintspedia, built on the words of the Book of Micah. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on January 15, the day on which the former Roman Martyrology commemorated him, begin it on January 7. It is also well suited to Advent, when the Church reads his prophecy about Bethlehem: for example, from December 16 to 24, as a preparation for Christmas.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. If you can, open your Bible and read a few verses of the Book of Micah: it has only seven short chapters. The small act proposed for each day helps the word bear fruit in your life. If you miss a day, simply continue.

Day 1: Who is like the Lord?

Micah's name is a question: "Who is like the Lord?" His whole life answers it. No power, no wealth, no idol can take God's place. We know very little about the man himself, and that is fitting: the prophet steps aside so that the word may be heard.

Prayer: Lord, there is no one like you. Free me from everything that takes your place in my heart. Amen.

Today: Name one thing that too easily takes first place in your life, and offer it to God.

Day 2: A man of the countryside

Micah came from Moresheth, a small town in the lowlands of Judah. He was not a man of the court but of the fields. God often chooses voices from the margins to speak to the center.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to listen to the voices I am tempted to ignore, because they come from below. Amen.

Today: Listen carefully to someone whose opinion usually counts for little around you.

Day 3: The fields of the poor

Micah denounced those who "covet fields and seize them," who took from small families the land that fed them. Injustice is not an abstract idea: it has faces and names.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the injustices around me, and give me the courage not to look away. Amen.

Today: Learn about a situation of injustice near you, and pray for those who suffer from it.

Day 4: Leaders who serve

Micah rebuked judges who took bribes, priests who taught for pay and prophets who said only what pleased those who fed them. Authority is given to serve, never to enrich oneself.

Prayer: Lord, give us honest leaders, fair judges and faithful pastors. Make me honest in the small responsibilities you have given me. Amen.

Today: Pray for a public official, a judge or a bishop by name.

Day 5: A word that converts a king

Micah announced that Jerusalem would fall because of its crimes. King Hezekiah did not kill him: he listened and turned back to God. A century later, this memory saved the life of the prophet Jeremiah. A word received humbly can change history.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart that can hear a hard truth without hardening. Amen.

Today: Accept a criticism you have received, and look for what is true in it.

Day 6: "My people, what have I done to you?"

In Micah's book, God speaks like a wounded friend: "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!" The Church sings these words on Good Friday before the Cross. God is not a distant judge; he waits for our answer.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for the times I have wearied of you. Today I want to answer your love. Amen.

Today: Spend five minutes in silence before a crucifix.

Day 7: Justice, mercy, humility

"Only to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah sums up what God asks in a single sentence. It is simple to say and takes a lifetime to live.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with you, today and every day. Amen.

Today: Write Micah 6:8 on a card and keep it where you will see it.

Day 8: Bethlehem, the least of the clans

Micah announced that the ruler of Israel would come from Bethlehem, a small village. God does not choose what is impressive. Jesus was born there, in poverty, as Matthew's Gospel recalls by quoting Micah.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, help me to recognize you in what is small, poor and hidden. Amen.

Today: Do a hidden act of kindness that no one will know about.

Day 9: A God who delights in mercy

Micah's book ends in wonder: "Who is a God like you, who removes guilt? [...] You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins." The last word does not belong to sin, but to forgiveness.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Micah, cast my sins into the depths of the sea and make me merciful in turn. Amen.

Today: Go to confession if you can, or forgive someone in your heart.

Closing prayer

Saint Micah, prophet of justice and hope, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for the poor who are stripped of their rights, for those who hold power, and for me, that I may do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with my God. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Micah and pray the prayer to Saint Micah.

CREDITS

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