

THE SINS OF SAMARIA

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The Book of Micah begins with a pronouncement of God's coming judgment on Israel and the reasons why. Micah 1:5-7 says, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. *What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of a harlot, and they shall return to the hire of a harlot.*" Samaria was the capital city of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Graven images and idols were Samaria's sins (Micah 1:7). There were three kings who were most responsible for leading Israel into these sins.

Jeroboam I

Jeroboam I was the first king of the divided Northern Kingdom (with Solomon's son Rehoboam reigning over Judah and Benjamin). Jeroboam introduced many of the sins of into his kingdom that persisted to the time of the prophet Micah. Jeroboam made two golden calves and told Israel that they were Israel's gods. Jeroboam put one in Dan and the other in Bethel, two principal cities located at the extreme ends of his dominion. Jeroboam also made his own priests who were not of Levi and placed them in Bethel to serve before an altar he put there, and made his own feasts (1 Kings 12:28-33). Every single king of Israel that followed Jeroboam I continued to walk in these sins (1 Kings 13:33-34; 15:25-26,33-34; 16:7,13,18-19,25-26,30-31; 51-52; 2 Kings 1:1-3; 10:31, 13:1-2,10-11; 14:23-24; 15:8-9,17-18,23-24,27-28). Even into Micah's days and beyond, until Israel was destroyed, Jeroboam's evil influence plagued Israel. God destroyed Israel primarily because of this man's sins (1 Kings 14:15-16; 2 Kings 17:21-23).

Omri

Omri also introduced more sins into Samaria. Actually, Omri is the one who bought the hill which he named Samaria from a man named Shemer. Omri

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(continued)

built a city on the hill and that became the capital of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 16:23-24). Omri walked in Jeroboam's sins, but also introduced much more evil into Samaria. In 1 Kings 16:25-26, God says that Omri did more evil than all that were before him, which even includes Jeroboam: "*But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.*" In the days of Micah the prophet, the Lord spoke about the evil in Samaria and called them Omri's "statutes." Micah 6:16 says, "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people." Omri's evil influence in Israel was still being felt many generations after he was gone.

Ahab

The other man mentioned in Micah 6:16 was Omri's son Ahab. King Ahab also introduced many more sins into Samaria. In fact, Ahab was the most evil king that Israel ever had. Jeroboam I was a wicked king and then Omri was the worst up to that point, but then "*Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him*" (1 Kings 16:30). That statement is never made about any who followed Ahab, and thus Ahab ranks as the most wicked of the 19 kings that Israel had following Solomon when the kingdom was divided. "*And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*" (2 Kings 16:31-33). Not only did Ahab continue to walk in Jeroboam's sins, but Ahab did far more. He established Baal worship in Israel due to the influence of his wife Jezebel. He built a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria itself which is part of the sins of Samaria which God condemned through Micah the prophet. Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel for a time (2 Kings 10:28), but even in Micah's time, the Lord said that in Samaria "*the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels*" (Micah 6:16). The evil influence of Ahab devastated Israel until it was destroyed. God ultimately destroyed the ten tribes of Israel for all the sins they committed, sins primarily introduced into the land by three wicked men (2 Kings 17:15-18).