nacherib from before the walls of Jerusalem Isaiah passes from the scene and we hear nothing more from him.

198. Who was Micah?

He was a countryman from one of the villages southwest of Jerusalem. The city of Gath had been a Philistine stronghold back in the days of Saul and David, and had given its name to an entire section of the country. The little village of Moresheth was one of a number of small settlements in the district, which explains the fact that Micah describes it as "Moresheth-gath." Nothing remains today of any of the villages, but they are known to have been situated about midway between Jerusalem and Gaza. Located on the top of low-lying hills, they skirted the great caravan routes along which the Assyrians marched as they went down to plunder Egypt. The people of these villages were as a consequence greatly interested in the international situation, for if war came to Judah the region of Gath would be first to feel the blows.

Micah's father is not mentioned, which indicates that he belonged to the poorer class; and it is reasonable to assume that he was one of those dispossessed who had suffered much under the administration of the wealthy landlords of Jerusalem. At least he did not belong to the aristocracy, and certainly he did not belong in any city. Like Amos, Micah was a man of the people, and with all the fury of an impassioned soul he struck out against the evils and injustices under which they suffered.

199. When did he preach?

It is impossible to fix the date precisely, for he mentions no king, event, or circumstance which will serve as a basis for reckoning. The first verse of his book suggests the general period; further evidence in the book leads to the conclusion that he began preaching about 725 B.C., during the last year of Ahaz; and a single reference to the sacrifices of children (Micah 6:6-8) would give reason to believe that the period was that of Manasseh, who succeeded Hezekiah, coming to the throne in 696 B.C.

200. Where did Micah preach?

The only town named is that of his home community, but because the Hebrews made frequent trips to the Temple in Jerusalem it is safe to assume that Micah was a more or less frequent visitor there. Jeremiah, a hundred years later, hints that he had been there (Jeremiah 26:17-19), and it is not unreasonable to assume that he had preached in the capital. Generally speaking, however, Micah is thought of as a country preacher in contrast to Isaiah, whose ministry occurred in Jerusalem.

201. What were the political conditions of the times?

The long-threatened Assyrian invasion was actually in progress, and to the vandalism of the invaders along the seacoast Micah must have been

a witness. In 732 B.C. the city of Damascus, capital of Syria, fell to Tiglath Pileser, and the last barrier to the invasion of the Hebrew kingdoms was removed. In his lifetime Micah saw Israel in the throes of civil war, invaded by Assyria, compelled to pay tribute, reduced to complete vassalage, and finally destroyed as a nation. As a helpless onlooker from the low hills of Judah he had watched her come to her pitiful end, with the gloomy predictions of Amos and Hosea fulfilled before his eyes. In the meantime (732 B.C.) tribute was being extorted from Judah; and Micah, as a poor countryman upon whom the burden fell heaviest, was painfully familiar with all the suffering which attended this process. His sermons were preached during one of the most heartbreaking periods in Hebrew history, at a time when a terrible doom hung over all the world.

202. Why did the tax burden fall heaviest on countrymen?

The tribute was assessed against the nation, but the demand for each year's payment was made upon the government at Jerusalem. It mattered little to Assyria how the money was collected, so long as it was forthcoming. The rich nobles and officials in Jerusalem simply passed the burden on, requiring the country districts to furnish quotas. When these quotas had been paid it was discovered that enough had been collected to meet the bill, and the city landowners were left untouched. All this was well known throughout the kingdom, but the people were helpless to defend themselves. It was against this system that all the eighth-century prophets protested.

203. What were the religious conditions of the times?

The conditions described as prevailing in Isaiah's time were those of Micah's time, for they were contemporaries.

204. Did Isaiah and Micah work together?

It is interesting to note that Micah 4:1-3 also appears in Isaiah 2:2-4, but no one knows which borrowed from the other or whether both borrowed from some unknown prophet. That Micah was familiar with some of Isaiah's ideas also seems to be true (compare Micah 2:1-5 with Isaiah 5:8-10 and Micah 3:3 with Isaiah 3:15), but aside from this fragmentary evidence we have no way of knowing that they co-operated in any way.

205. Was Micah known to Amos or Hosea?

Both Micah and Amos were Judeans from the same general area, but Amos preached in Israel. Though it is possible that Micah had heard about Amos we have no hint anywhere in the Bible that this was true. There is, however, some similarity between Micah 2:6 and Amos 2:12 and 7:13. There seems to have been no contact whatever between Micah and Hosea.