

Micah

Micah prophesied during a period of intense social injustice in Judah. False prophets preached for riches, not for righteousness. Princes thrived on cruelty, violence, and corruption. Priests ministered more for greed than for God. Landlords stole from the poor and evicted widows. Judges lusted after bribes. Businessmen used deceitful scales and weights. Sin had infiltrated every segment of society. A word from God was mandatory.

Micah enumerates the sins of the nation, sins which will ultimately lead to destruction and captivity. But amid the darkness there is hope. A Divine Deliverer will appear and righteousness will prevail. Though justice is now trampled underfoot, it will one day triumph.

INTRODUCTION

Micah, called from his rustic home to be a prophet, leaves his familiar surroundings to deliver a stern message of judgment to the princes and people of Jerusalem. Burdened by the abusive treatment of the poor by the rich and influential, the prophet turns his verbal rebukes upon any who would use their social or political power for personal gain.

One-third of Micah's book exposes the sins of his countrymen, another third pictures the punishment God is about to send, and the final third holds out the hope of restoration once the discipline has ended. Through it all, God's righteous demands upon His people are clear: "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8).

The name *Michayahu* ("Who Is Like God?") is shortened to *Michaia*. In chapter 7, verse 18, Micah hints at his own name with the phrase "Who is a God like You?"

AUTHOR

Micah's hometown of Moresheth Gath (1:14) was located about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem on the border of Judah and Philistia, near Gath. Like Amos, Micah was from the country. His family and occupation are unknown, but Moresheth was in a productive agricultural belt. Micah was not as aware of the political situation as Isaiah or Daniel, but he showed a profound concern for the sufferings of the people. His clear sense of prophetic calling is seen in chapter 3, verse 8: "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."

DATE & SETTING

The first verse indicates that Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham (739–731 b.c.), Ahaz (731–715 b.c.), and Hezekiah (715–686 b.c.); all kings of Judah. Although Micah deals primarily with Judah, he also addresses the northern kingdom of Israel and predicts the fall of Samaria (1:6). Much of his ministry, therefore, took place before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 b.c. His strong denunciations of idolatry and immorality also suggest that his ministry largely preceded the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah. Thus, Micah's prophecies ranged from about 735 to 710 b.c. He was a contemporary of Hosea in the northern kingdom, and of Isaiah in the court of Jerusalem.

During the ministry of Micah, the kingdom of Israel continued to crumble inwardly and outwardly until its collapse in 722 b.c. The Assyrian Empire under Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 b.c.), Shalmeneser V (727–722 b.c.), Sargon II (722–705 b.c.), and Sennacherib (705–681 b.c.) reached the zenith of its power and became a constant threat to Judah. Babylon was still under Assyrian domination, and Micah's prediction of future Babylonian captivity for Judah (4:10) must have seemed farfetched.