

Micah

Overview and Summary

Author:

- ⇒ All we know about the author of this book comes from verse one, which says “The word of the Lord which came to Micah of Moresheth.
- ⇒ The name Micah means “Who is like Yahweh?”
- ⇒ Micah is from the small rural town of Moresheth which is around 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 5 miles directly south of Gath.
 - Being a rural town, we might assume that Micah had little to know prophetic training but was called out of his rural life into the role of prophet.
 - Being from a town in Judah, Micah was primarily a prophet to Judah.

Date:

- ⇒ As with other prophets, Micah dates his prophetic ministry by listing the kings who reigned during his ministry. Compared to Amos and Hosea, Micah only uses Judean kings to date himself (Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah).
 - Jotham began his co-reign in Judah around 750BC and after his father died of leprosy he became sole king over Israel until 735BC when he shared the rule with his son Ahaz. Jotham Died in 731BC. Jotham did right in the eyes of the Lord.
 - Ahaz began ruling with his father in 735BC and then died in 715BC. Ahaz did not walk in the ways of the Lord, instead following the pattern of the kings of Israel. Ahaz is said to have sacrificed to idols and offered one of his sons as a living sacrifice. When surrounded by the northern nation of Israel and Syria, Ahaz did not trust in the provision of the Lord, instead choosing to plead for help from Assyria and its king, Tiglath-pileser III.
 - Hezekiah began his coregency with his father in 729BC and reigned. Until 686BC. Hezekiah did right in the eyes of the Lord, undoing the idol worship that his father had begun and restoring worship to Yahweh. The biblical narrative goes so far to say that “there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.”
- ⇒ This means that the potential date for Micah’s ministry is somewhere between 750BC and 686BC. There is no consensus between scholars on the dating of this book. However, because Micah does not mention Judah’s king Uzziah who reigned from 792-740BC, many suggest that a better start date for Micah is 740. Some even suggest that because Micah does not mention the invasion and capture of 46

Judean cities by Assyria's Sennacherib in 701BC, his ministry would have ended before 701BC.

⇒ Granting a date ranging from 750-686BC, Micah would have been a contemporary (and possibly even known) Isaiah, Amos and Hosea.

Audience:

⇒ Micah's prophesy is written to both the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) nations. His ministry came during a very volatile period in both nations.

- While Jotham and Hezekiah were kings who followed after Yahweh, Ahaz began to lead the people of Judah into idolatry. The worship of Yahweh had been compromised and replaced with false worship, even on the temple mount. In 734-732, Israel and Syria surrounded Judah (known as the Syro-Ephraimite War). Ahaz had been counseled by Isaiah (Isa 7:4-11) to trust in the Lord and wait for His deliverance, instead Ahaz sent a message to Tiglath-pileser III pleading for help. In return for their help, Judah would become a vassal to Assyria.
- During this time, Assyria had gained strength and momentum politically and eventually overtook the northern nation of Israel in 722BC by capturing its capital city of Samaria.
- When Hezekiah refused to pay his tribute tax to Assyria, Sennacherib invaded Judah, capturing 46 cities.

⇒ The people in Micah's prophesy are described in the following ways:

- "for in you were found the transgression of Israel," (1:13) (i.e. idolatry).
- "work evil on their beds," (2:1) (i.e. sexually immoral).
- "they covet fields and seize them," (2:2a) (i.e. covetous and thieves).
- "they oppress a man and his house," (2:2b) (i.e. oppressive).

⇒ The leaders of God's people no longer lead the people to the feet of God, but instead they "tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot" (3:2b-3).

How to Interpret Micah:

- ⇒ Micah is set up by a three fold pattern: God lays out the sin of the people, God calls them to repent and if not they will receive judgment, God then promises a restored remnant.
- ⇒ Micah alludes to Christ in 5:2 where it is prophesized that a ruler will rise over Israel who is from the ancient of days. This ruler will be born in the city of Bethlehem.

- ⇒ When reading the passages of restoration, it is important to remember that often the biblical prophets had a near fulfillment and far fulfillment in mind. The near fulfillment would be the restoration of the remnant of Israel out of exile in the Promised Land. This would ultimately occur at the decree of King Darius with the return of the Exile to their homeland. The far fulfillment looks to a future time when God set's up his kingdom on earth and fulfills His covenant promises to Israel and dwells with His people on earth.

Structure & Content:

- ⇒ Scholars debate on the precise division of this book. Some argue that the book itself divides itself grammatically. Micah begins each section with the command to "Hear!" in 1:2, 3:1 and 6:1. Each of these sections includes a failure of the people/leaders followed by a message of salvation. Some even see a chiastic structure at play (A-B-A) which suggests that Micah's main message comes in the middle section which looks to the peaceful rule of the coming Messiah King.
- ⇒ Chapter 1: Micah begins his book setting himself within the history of the nation of Judah but proclaiming his message for both Judah and Israel. As the beginning of the first section, verse two initiates Micah's message by saying "Hear, you peoples, all of you," directing his message to both nations. Micah states that the sins of Israel have reached the gates of Jerusalem and have infected the people of Judah. In verses 6-7 Micah focuses on the idolatry of worship found in Samaria, indicating that the "incurable wound" that has infected Judah is that of idolatry. Such transgressions against the Lord have brought the judgement of the Lord upon the people, which as verse 15a states is a conqueror who will come and ravage Israel (Assyria) and Judah (Babylon).
- ⇒ Chapter 2: Micah begins this chapter by again stating the sins of the people: working evil on their beds, covet and seize lands, oppress a man and his house. Therefore, God plans to bring disaster upon his people who continually work out sin. Whereas doing God's word brings good upon the people, Micah proclaims that now the chosen people of God have "risen up as an enemy." While God is the one who is sending the disaster upon the people, we are told that ultimately it is the uncleanness of the people that will destroy them. Yet chapter two ends on a note of restoration. Verse twelve looks forward to a time after the judgement of God's people, to a time of restoration and renewal, when God will gather His remnant as a shepherd gathers his sheep.
- ⇒ Chapter 3: Once again, we see the beginning of a new section with the statement, "Hear, you heads of Jacob." Chapter three is unique in that it is entirely focused on the leadership of Judah. Whereas Judah's leadership was meant to lead the people to covenant faithfulness to God, now they "hate the good and love the evil." Micah

describes their actions forcefully, the leaders of Judah “tear the skin off the people,” “eat the flesh of my people,” “flay the skin from off them,” “break their bones in pieces,” and “chop them up like meat in a pot.” Prophets, seers and diviners will go silent for the word of the Lord will stop coming to them. Leaders of Jerusalem who “detest justice” and “make crooked all that is straight” will see Jerusalem be made flat at a field.

- ⇒ Chapter 4: In the middle of Micah’s prophesy, we have a chapter filled with the expectation of a future hope for God’s people. The phrase “In that day” is littered throughout this chapter, pointing the hearers of this prophesy to God’s plan for the nation after their exile. The house of the Lord is pictured as sitting upon the highest mountain with all the nations and peoples of the world going up to it to worship the Lord, and from the mountain the Law and the Word of God pour forth. Whereas war was a constant, in that day the methods and weapons of war will be turned into instruments of peace which will permeate the world. God will restore a remnant of His people where He will be their king. While this latter day is still far off, verse 9-13 promise a hope for return from exile. Verse 10b-c says, “for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.”
- ⇒ Chapter 5: Continuing this message of future hope, chapter five promises that there will be a future ruler who will rise out of Bethlehem who will rule over all of Israel. This is the same scripture the wise men used before Herod justifying their coming to Israel to search for the newborn king. Verse 4 tells us that this future king will rule over his people bringing them into a place of security and peace. However, before this new king rules, Judah will go into exile. God promises to dismantle their strongholds, idols, and places of worship, effectively cleansing the land from false worship, and while Judah will be scattered among the nations God will raise up a remnant.
- ⇒ Chapter 6: Micah begins his final section of prophesy with the imagery of a courtroom where Judah is called to plead its case to the mountains. In this courtroom God lays down example after example of his continued faithfulness. Pieces of evidence include, delivering the people from Egypt, giving the people Moses as a prophet, taking the people out of slavery into the Promised Land, the story of Balaam and Balak (even when pressed to curse Israel, Balaam continued to pronounce blessings on Israel), and the people moving from Shittim to Gilgal (east of the Jordan in Shittim before entering the Promised Israel fell into idolatry in Moab, yet God still led them into the land, Gilgal represents the first base of operations for the land conquest). God then shows himself to the court to be trustworthy and loving to the people of Israel, despite their continued failure. Micah proclaims that

the Lord requires the people “to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” His concern is not with sacrifice, but with the self. Israel on the other hand had been full of violence, lies and deceit. Therefore, God has appointed them discipline.

- ⇒ Chapter 7: The day of punishment is upon the people for “the godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net.” Mankind, as in Genesis 6, has chosen evil and therefore God must bring his heavy hand of discipline. And while man looks toward sin and the self, Micah proclaims, “But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” The solution therefore is to look to the Lord. The prophet ends his prophecy with a reminder to God’s people that even though they will experience great pain and exile, God is still good and will bring them back to a renewed covenant relationship. “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers.”

Message:

- ⇒ Micah aims his sights at the leaders of both nations (particularly Judah) and denounces their sin and wayward leadership. While God’s people currently live under the rule of sinful/wicked leaders, Micah presents the hope that in the future God has a plan for a Messianic King who will bring ultimate and lasting peace to the people of God.