

Micah

The Authorship and Dating

The book ascribes Micah the Morashtite as its author (1:1). Jeremiah also validates the existence of Micah in Jer. 26:18. Moresheth, the prophet's hometown, is usually identified as a city about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.¹ Other than his hometown little else is known about this man.² However, Lasor, Hubbard and Bush contemplate the following. "Several lines of evidence mark him as a country man, perhaps a peasant farmer. He attacks the crime and corruption of Jerusalem and Samaria as one not really at home in either capital (1:1, 5-9; 3:1-4, 12). He focuses on the effect of the impending judgment on the villages and towns of his home region (1:10-16). He protests against oppression of the underprivileged reflect his own identification with their lot."³

Concerning the timeframe of his message the prophet himself dates the message from the days of Jotham to the reign of Hezekiah (1:1) that is around 740-700 B.C. Internal evidence also indicates that at least part of his message was written prior to the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. (1:6). Some have suggested that the threat against Judah in 3:12 indicates an already conquered Israel and thus demanding a different dating for the second portion of Micah.⁴ However, this seems to be a premature conclusion as the Northern Kingdom's opportunity for repentance in chapter 6 is apparent.⁵ Therefore, I date this book between the beginning of Jotham's reign in 740 B.C. and the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.

The Recipients

Micah specifically recognized Judah as his primary audience (1:1). Although Judah was the primary audience, the prophet none-the-less spoke concerning the Northern Kingdom (3:1-12). Micah's message is similar to Isaiah at times sharing the same material (Micah 4:1-3; 5:2-4 and Isa 2:2-4; 9:6, 7). Although the two prophets ministered during similar time frames, Isaiah mostly ministered to the court while Micah worked with the common people.⁶

The Purpose

The prophet wrote in order to correct the idolatrous and covetous behavior of both Judah and Israel with hopes that repentance would be expressed before certain captivity.

¹ Bill T. & Bryan T. Beyer Arnold, *Encountering the Old Testament*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). 455.

² John A. Martin, "Micah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck(Grand Rapids: Victor Books, 1985).

³ David Allan Hubbard William Sanford LaSor, Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Second ed.(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). 271.

⁴ Ibid. 271.

⁵ Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994)., 361.

⁶ Paul N. Benware, *The Essential Bible Survey of the Old Testament*(Chicago: Moody, 2003). 220.

The Message

Micah's message has three rounds of oracles marked by "hear ye" (1:1; 3:1; 6:1). Each oracle has a warning section as well as a blessing section.

In the first oracle, Micah announced stern warnings of judgment (1:1-2:11). He accused both Jerusalem and Samaria of Baal worship promising certain vindication (1:1-16). Judgment would come not only due to their idolatry but also for their covetousness and social sins (2:1-11). The prophet promised, however, that the ultimate goal of such judgment was not destruction but restoration (2:12-13).

In the second section, Micah again began with a scathing rebuke. This time his message is to the leaders (3:1-7). Micah describes them as ravenous beasts consuming the weak and needy among them. He states: "who eat also the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh for the caldron" (3:3). Micah indicates that their false prophecies will bring only silence from heaven and shame upon their own heads (3:6). In a second round of accusations against the leadership, Micah accuses the priesthood of perverting justice with the Holy city (3:8-11). As a result, Jerusalem would be "plowed as a field" and become "heaps" (3:12). Although Micah delivered an adamant announcement concerning Jerusalem and Israel's sin, he provided a contrastingly bright future for the entire nation (4:1-5:15). He prophesied of coming justice and peace (4:1-7) beyond the bondage (4:9-13). He further stated that the exaltation would come through the lowly Bethlehem (5:1-6) yielding spiritual cleansing (5:7-15).

In keeping with his first two oracles, Micah began his third with God's call to repentance (6:1-7:6). He called on Israel to remember his faithfulness (6:1-5) and to perform expected righteousness (6:6-8). Micah called on them to abandon their thievery (6:10-11) as well as their deceitfulness (6:12). If they failed to repent, Micah indicated that they themselves would suffer great loss (6:13-16). Micah's lamentation in 7:1-6 served to intensify the immanence of the message. In keeping with his custom the prophet closed with a promise of coming blessing upon Israel as God brought judgment on their enemies (7:8-18) and mercy toward His people (7:19-20).

Theme

Personal Righteousness

Outline of Micah

- I. First Oracle: Impending Judgment and future Restoration 1-2:13**
 - A. Announcements of Judgment 1:1-2:11
 - 1. Judgment will come upon Israel 1:1-7
 - 2. Judgment will come through Assyria 1:8-16
 - 3. Judgment will come upon the Covetous 2:1-5
 - 4. Judgment will come for Social Sins 2:6-11
 - B. Promise of Restoration 2:12-13
- II. Second Oracles: Judgment of Israel's leaders and future Restoration 3:1-5:15**
 - A. Warnings of Judgment 3:1-12
 - 1. Judgment of civil and religious Leaders 3:1-8
 - 2. An Indictment of Israel's Leaders 3:9-12
 - B. Promise of Restoration 4:1-5:15
 - 1. Exaltation will establish Justice and Peace 4:1-7
 - 2. Exaltation will take place after Bondage 4:9-13
 - 3. Exaltation will come through Bethlehem 5:1-6
 - 4. Exaltation will cleanse all Idolatry 5:7-15
- III. Third Oracle: God's Case for Judgment and Future Restoration 6:1-7:20**
 - A. God's Case for Judgment 6:1-7:6
 - 1. The Lord's Faithfulness in the face of their Rebellion 6:1-5
 - 2. The Lord's Expected Righteousness 6:6-8
 - 3. The Lord's Sentence of Judgment 6:9-16
 - 4. The Prophet's Lamentation Concerning the Nation 7:1-6
 - B. Promise of Restoration 7:7-7:20
 - 1. The Lord's Vengeance Upon Israel's Enemies 7:8-18
 - 2. The Lord's Forgiveness and Mercy toward Israel 7:19-20

Questions Concerning Micah

1. What is the date and setting of Micah?
2. What is the purpose of Micah?
3. What is the theme of Micah?
4. Discuss the parallels of the use of “tread” (ASV) in 1:3 and 7:19 as it may relate to the structure of the book.
5. Describe the author’s purpose of mentioning Gath in 1:10.
6. Describe the social sins found in 2:6-11 as well as 6:9-16.
7. Describe the sins of the leaders in 3:1-12.
8. Discuss Micah 5:2 and its referent within the New Testament.
9. What are the referents in 5:5?
10. Name and describe the various sins of idolatry found in Micah.

Bibliography

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