

## THE BOOK OF MICAH

### Message:

The covenant violations of God's people will be judged but He will also restore His people and rule them as their Shepherd.

### Author:

According to the superscription, the author of the book is Micah of Moresheth. The name, probably a shortened form of the name Micaiah, meaning "Who is like Yahweh?"<sup>1</sup> Moresheth is probably equated to Moresheth-gath, a village located in the Shephelah region of Judah (25 miles southwest of Jerusalem). Moresheth was strategically located on a key route into the hill country of Judah.<sup>2</sup> The prophet Micah is also referred to in Jeremiah 26:18–19.

### Recipients:

Micah states that his vision concerned Samaria and Jerusalem (1:1). However, the primary emphasis appears to be on Judah. Note how the prophet addresses Samaria in the third person (1:6–7) whereas the cities of Judah are addressed in the more direct second person "you" (1:11, 13–16). The prophet also associates his prophecies with the reigns of Judean (Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah), not Israelite kings (1:1). The fact that Micah was from Judah would also support the idea that Judah was the primary target.

### Dating:

Micah lived and ministered around the eighth century.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the contents of Micah are generally assumed to be the eighth century. This date is established by the reigns of the kings mentioned (Jotham [750–735 B.C.], Ahaz<sup>4</sup> [735–715 B.C.], and Hezekiah<sup>5</sup> [715–686 B.C.]). This would then place Micah's ministry somewhere between 750–686. One can narrow this range a bit by drawing certain inferences from the content of the book. The prophesied destruction of Samaria in 1:6 suggests a date prior to Samaria's destruction in 722 B.C.<sup>6</sup> The reference to Micah

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<sup>1</sup> Micah or Micaiah was a relatively common name since at least nine different individuals bear this name in the OT.

<sup>2</sup> The strategic importance of the city can be seen in the fact that Rehoboam fortified the town in 922–915 B.C. (2 Chr 11:5–12).

<sup>3</sup> If correct, this would make Micah a contemporary of Isaiah.

<sup>4</sup> Ahaz shared the kingship with Jotham from 744–735 B.C.

<sup>5</sup> Hezekiah shared the kingship with Ahaz from 729–715 B.C.

<sup>6</sup> This is also supported by the similarities between Micah 6:10–11 and Amos 8:5–6.

in Jeremiah 26:18–19 means that at least some of material in the book is from the time of Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). It is possible that 1:8–16 is referring to Sennacherib’s campaign against Judah.<sup>7</sup> If so, this would provide a date of 701 B.C. In conclusion, it seems relatively safe to assert that Micah’s ministry and messages can be dated around 735–700 B.C. This would make Micah a contemporary of Isaiah.

### **Historical Setting:**

Like other eighth century prophets, Micah prophesied during a period of spiritual and moral decline. While Jotham was a relatively good king, Ahaz was an ungodly king who promoted the worship of Molech and child sacrifices (2 Kings 16:1–4; 2 Chr 28:1–4). Not only did Ahaz practice idolatry, but he also failed to trust God to protect the nation, turning instead to pagan nations (i.e. Assyria). Furthermore, Micah’s day was also characterized by a number of covenant violations including failures both spiritual and social. As Smith summarizes, “The transgressions of the people involved two primary aspects: perversion of the worship practices (1:7; 3:5–7, 11; 5:11–13, Eng. 5:12–14) and injustice toward others (2:1–2, 8–9; 3:2–3, 9–11; 7:2–6).”<sup>8</sup> On the international front, Assyria was threatening.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of Micah appears to be fairly straightforward. First, the book was written to identify the specific nature of God’s complaint against His people (both Judah and Israel). Thus, the prophet identifies specific covenant violations (1:2–7; 2:6–11; 3:1–4, 9–12; 6:1–16). Second, Micah was written to warn of impending judgment for the covenant violations. Third, Micah affirms God’s future restoration of His people, complete with a Davidic ruler (5:2; also 2:12; 4:7; 5:6–8; 7:19–20). In general, “Micah has been called the ‘conscience of Israel,’ and certainly the substance of his message was designed to predict the conscience of those who had long since abandoned the integrity of Israel’s faith.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Contributions:**

The contribution of the Book of Micah is at least threefold. First, it provides a point of comparison with the major prophetic Book of Isaiah. One writer calls it an “Isaiah in miniature.”<sup>10</sup> Micah 6:8 contains an important statement regarding humanity’s responsibility before God. This book also contains a significant Messianic prophecy (5:2).

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<sup>7</sup> Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 398.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah - Malachi*, ed. John D. W. Watts, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 192.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce H. Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983).

## A COMPARISON OF HOSEA AND ISAIAH<sup>11</sup>

### *Simliarities*

Both prophesied of an early invasion by Assyria  
 Both spoke of Judah's deliverance, but later captivity in Babylon  
 Both emphasized the futility of mere ritual religion  
 Both prophesied of Messiah's coming; Isaiah spoke of His virgin birth, Micah of His village birth  
 Both prophesied Israel's final deliverance which had to be preceded by repentance

### *Differences*

- Isaiah primarily addressed the aristocracy of urban Jerusalem
- Isaiah dealt largely with the international scene and Judah's false political alliances
- Isaiah extended his judgment to the surrounding nations
- Isaiah centered his messianic vision around the Servant concept, emphasizing atonement and personal salvation
- Micah spoke to the common people of the rural countryside
- Micah focused more on the personal and social sins of injustice that were prevalent in Judah
- Micah limited his condemnations to Judah and Israel
- Micah portrayed Messiah's national deliverance made possible by God's pardoning grace as promised to Abraham

### **Micah in the New Testament:**

Micah is only quoted twice in the New Testament. The more prominent quote is from Micah 5:2 which is quoted in Matthew 2:5–6, identifying Bethlehem as the place of Messiah's birth. The other quotation is Micah 7:6 which appears in Matthew 10:35–36. Although not quoted, Micah also writes several times about the person and work of Messiah in both the First and Second Advents (e.g., 4:1–7; 5:3–5, etc.).

### **Literary Issues:**

The Book of Micah, like most prophetic books, consists primarily of poetry, not prose. Literary artistry in Micah is readily apparent. The book contains a number of literary forms<sup>12</sup> and features. The literary features include, several puns (e.g., 1:10–15), alliteration and assonance (e.g., 2:4, 6, 11; 5:1), and the use of vivid imagery (e.g., 1:3–4, 8; 3:2–3; 4:13; 7:1). Robinson states that Micah is characterized by, "Vividness and emphasis, lightning flashes of indignation at social wrongs, rapid transitions from threatening to mercy, vehement emotion and sympathetic

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<sup>11</sup> Modified and formatted from Stanley A. Ellisen, *Knowing God's Word: Interpretive Charts and Outlines* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 245-46.

<sup>12</sup> For a helpful breakdown of the literary forms see Kenneth and Waylon Bailey Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, ed. Kenneth A. Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 20 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 34.

tenderness, rhetorical force, cadence, and rhythm at times elevated and sublime . . .<sup>13</sup>

### Structure:

The structure of the Book of Micah is somewhat debated.<sup>14</sup> Dillard and Longman have helpfully noted three basic points.<sup>15</sup> (1) The book is not a single oracle, but anthology of Micah's prophetic messages. (2) The structure of the book is not primarily chronological. (3) The book is roughly structured with alternating emphases of threat and hope. Chisholm lays out this alternating pattern as follows.

<i>Panel</i>	<i>Judgment</i>	<i>Salvation</i>
1	1:2–2:11	2:12–13
2	3:1–12	4:1–5:15
3	6:1–7:7	7:8–20

The book itself has three messages (Mic 1:2–2:13; 3:1–5:15; 6:1–7:20), introduced with a call to “hear” or “listen” (שמע). In each case, this call is followed by an identification of specific sins and their negative consequences followed by more positive statements of restoration and salvation. In the first and third sections the oracles take on a legal metaphor (1:2; 6:1–2).

### Outline

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. Cycle One: Prediction of Judgment, Lament, and a Future Remnant (1:2–2:13)
  - A. The Prophesied Judgment (1:2–7)
  - B. The Prophet's Lament (1:8–16)
  - C. The Particular Sins (2:1–11)
  - D. The Preserved Remnant (2:12–13)
- III. Cycle Two: Problematic Leaders and a Future Ruler (3:1–5:15)
  - A. The Failed Leaders (3:1–12)
    - 1. The failure of the political leaders (3:1–4)
    - 2. The failure of the religious leaders (3:5–12)

<sup>13</sup> George I. Robinson, *The 12 Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1926), 104.

<sup>14</sup> D. J. Simundson has identified four typical ways that Micah has been divided: (1) judgment (1–3), mostly salvation (4–5), mix of judgment and hope (6–7); (2) major seams identified by the word “hear” or listen (1–2; 3–5; 6–7); (3) twofold structure based on hear” or listen (1–5; 6–7); (4) guilt and punishment (1–3 with interpolation 2:12–13), future salvation (4–5); post-exilic application (6:1–7:7), liturgical hymn (7:8–20). Daniel J. Simundson, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 291-92

<sup>15</sup> Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, 400.

- B. The Future Leader (4:1–5:15)
1. The greatness of the Leader’s kingdom (4:1–13)
  2. The greatness of the Leader’s coming (5:1–15)
- IV. Cycle Three: Punishment of the Nation and a Future Restoration (6:1–7:20)
- A. The Plea to Listen (6:1–8)
  - B. The Prophesied Judgment (6:9–16)
  - C. The Prophet’s Lament (7:1–7)
  - D. The Promise of Restoration (7:8–20)
    1. A proclamation of trust (7:8–10)
    2. A promise of restoration (7:11–13)
    3. A prayer for God’s rule (7:14–17)
    4. A praise of God’s faithfulness (7:18–20)

*Chart*

Superscription	Cycle One: Prediction of Judgment, Lament, and a Future Remnant 1:2–2:13				Cycle Two: Problematic Leaders and a Future Ruler 3:1–5:15		Cycle Three: Punishment of the Nation and a Future Restoration 6:1–7:20			
	The Prophesied Judgment	The Prophet’s Lament	The Particular Sins	The Preserved Remnant	The Failed Leaders	The Future Leader	The Plea to Listen	The Prophesied Judgment (6:9–16)	The Prophet’s Lament (7:1–7)	The Promise of Restoration (7:8–20)
1	1:2–7	1:8–16	2:1–11	2:12–13	3:1–12	4:1–5:15	6:1–8	6:9–16	7:1–7	7:8–20

**Expositional Outline of Micah:**

- I. **SUPERSCRPTION (1:1)**
  
- II. **CYCLE ONE: PREDICTION OF JUDGMENT, LAMENT AND A FUTURE REMNANT (1:2–2:13)**

- A. The Prophesied Judgment (1:2–7)
- B. The Prophet’s Lament (1:8–16)
- C. The Particular Sins (2:1–11)
- D. The Preserved Remnant (2:12–13)

### **III. CYCLE TWO: PROBLEMATIC LEADERS AND A FUTURE RULER (3:1–5:15)**

- A. The Failed Leaders (3:1–12)
  - 1. The failure of the political leaders (3:1–4) –
  - 2. The failure of the religious leaders (3:5–12) –
- B. The Future Leader (4:1–5:15)
  - 1. The greatness of the Leader’s kingdom (4:1–13) –
  - 2. The greatness of the Leader’s coming (5:1–15) –

### **IV. CYCLE THREE: PUNISHMENT OF THE NATION AND A FUTURE RESTORATION (6:1–7:20)**

- A. The Plea to Listen (6:1–8)

- B. The Prophesied Judgment (6:9–16)
  
- C. The Prophet's Lament (7:1–7)
  
- D. The Promise of Restoration (7:8–20)
  - 1. A proclamation of trust (7:8–10) –
  
  - 2. A promise of restoration (7:11–13) –
  
  - 3. A prayer for God's rule (7:14–17) –
  
  - 4. A praise of God's faithfulness (7:18–20)

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