

Micah

Introduction

A. Author

1. The name “Micah” is a shortened form of “Micaiah.” His name means “Who is like God?”
2. Micah was a citizen of the Southern Kingdom, having been born in Moresheth near Gath, about 20 miles west of Jerusalem. This city is named nowhere else in the Scriptures. His father’s name is not given, indicating to some scholars that he was of humble origin. His preaching ministry was especially focused on the suffering of the common people and peasants in agricultural areas who were exploited by the rich and unscrupulous nobility.
3. He seems to have spent his lifetime in the provincial areas rather than the capital city of Jerusalem. His writing seems to reflect less of knowledge of international politics than his contemporary, Isaiah (or, that inspiration provided a different political context for their writing). Yet, chapter 6 is devoted to the decline of the Northern Kingdom.
4. He may have identified himself by his hometown to distinguish himself from Micaiah, son of Imlah, who withstood Ahab and his hired prophets (1 Kgs. 22:8). His name has at least five spelling variations. Six other Micaiahs are found in the OT, but none are identified with the author.
5. No prophetic call is ever recorded. Micah, unlike Amos and Hosea, left us no account of his call to prophesy or of other personal experiences. We know practically nothing of him as a person.
6. An earlier prophet – Eliezer, son of Dodavahu – came from the same village (2 Chr. 20:37). Eliezer had prophesied against Jehoshaphat indicating that Judah’s commercial fleet had been destroyed because the king of Judah had formed an alliance with Ahaziah of Israel. Some scholars believe that Micah was a descendant of Eliezer. Amos may have also provided some stimulus for him as he lived only 17 miles away. Amos concluded his ministry some fifteen years before Micah began to preach.

B. Date

1. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah and prophesied primarily during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Micah and Isaiah share a common concept (Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3).
2. Since Israel is addressed in Micah 6 as if she were still capable of escaping divine judgment through repentance, it is fair to deduce that he began his ministry before Israel’s fall in 722 B.C.

3. The condition of corruption and immorality in Judah as depicted by Micah corresponds with what is known of the reign of Ahaz (742-728 B.C.) or at least the earliest years of Hezekiah's reign as co-regent with Ahaz (728-725 B.C.). His career actually began earlier because 1:1 speaks of his prophesying in the reign of Jotham (751-736 B.C.). There is no evidence as to when his preaching ministry ceased. We do know, based on Jer. 26:18-19, that his warnings during the reign of Hezekiah were taken seriously and contributed to Hezekiah's great reform efforts.

C. Mission

1. His immediate purpose was to correct injustice in Judah through censure and threats of judgment. The ultimate purpose was to announce God's future rule through a coming Messianic Ruler.
2. Together with Amos and Hosea in the north and Isaiah in Judah, Micah formed a quartet of prophetic spokesmen who produced in the eighth century B.C. what Smith refers to as "the golden age of Hebrew prophecy."
3. Micah's sermons were for the most part delivered on trips to Jerusalem. There is no evidence that Micah and Isaiah knew each other. Their messages present a contrast. Isaiah's message was primarily one of faith while Micah's was of works. Some see this as an OT situation paralleling that of Paul and James.
4. International events had a profound impact on Micah. The Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser III launched a campaign in 745 B.C. The Aramean city of Damascus fell to him in 732 B.C. Both Israel and Judah were now vulnerable. Before Micah began to preach the Assyrians had made several thrusts toward Palestine and Egypt.
5. In the eighth century B.C. Judah was near its zenith regarding national prosperity. Morals, however, were low. Government officials were dishonest. The so-called prophets were nothing but windbags. Religion was shallow and morally corrupt.
6. Micah saw four major enemies or evil-doers:
 - a. Land-grabbers who lay awake at night scheming against the poor (2:1-2)... women and children were driven away from their homes (2:9)...some could even fall prey to their own relatives (7:5-7).
 - b. Rulers who hated good and loved evil (3:1-4) – Rather than provide justice for the poor, they took bribes and favored the rich (7:3) – Micah compared them to butchers, cannibals or wild beasts.
 - c. The false prophet motivated by money (3:11) – One could pay the prophet and he would tell you what you wanted to hear; but neglect him and he would work against you (3:5).

- d. The priest who taught for hire (3:11), all the while thinking God was in their midst.

D. Message (from Smith's commentary)

The Structure of Micah				
First Doom-Hope Cycle			Second Doom-Hope Cycle	
Imminent Judgment Declared	Present Corruption Condemned	Ultimate Blessing Promised	Present Repentance Pleaded	Sustaining Hope Displayed
1:2-2:5	2:6-3:12	Chaps. 4-5	6:1-7:6	7:7-20
Message to the Nations		Message to the Rulers	Message to Israel	
Ch. 1-2		Ch. 3-5	Ch. 6-7	

E. Micah and Prophecy

1. Two graphic Messianic prophecies:

- a. His birthplace (5:2-5) – His prophecy of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Christ was the very passage from which the chief priests and scribes read when Herod, on behalf of the wise men, asked where the new king was to be born (Mt. 2:1-6).
- b. The kingdom (4:1-3) – This passage is closely related to Isa. 2:1-4, indicating that the events leading to the establishment of the kingdom/church would begin in Jerusalem.

2. Micah quoted elsewhere:

- a. Jer. 26:11-18 – Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem almost 100 years after Micah did and the corrupt priests and prophets in Jerusalem called for his death. The elders of the people cautioned against this plan by indicating that Micah had said the same thing earlier and, instead of killing him, Hezekiah asked God to spare the city. They read from Micah 3:12 on that occasion at which time Jeremiah's life was spared.
- b. Jesus twice used Micah 7:6 in warning His disciples of the difficulties they would face (Mt. 10:35-36; Lk. 12:52-53).

F. Micah and the Future

1. The remnant – even when delivering severe threats he saw a remnant that would survive (2:12; 5:7-8).
2. The “new exodus” – He saw a return comparable to the exodus with God leading the way (Ex. 13:21; Mic. 2:12-13; 7:14-17).
3. The law would go forth from Zion (4:1ff.).
4. The Messiah was to be born in Jerusalem (5:2; cf. 1 Sam. 17:12).
5. Mercy after judgment (7:18-20)

G. Background

1. Political

- a. Through unusual leadership in successful wars and in the revival of commerce and agriculture Uzziah brought a sense of prosperity to Judah.
- b. This prosperity brought with it social evils and spiritual decline. Uzziah was succeeded by his son Jotham (740-736 B.C.). He was a good man who followed his father's policies. Ahaz, an evil king, ruled next (736-716 B.C.). He was succeeded by Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.), and was one of Judah's great kings.
- c. During the reign of Ahaz Judah was threatened by a coalition of Israel and Syria. The two kings, Pekah and Rezin (Isa. 7) were angry because Ahaz refused to join the alliance against Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria. Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser III for help, a move that resulted in heavy tributes.
- d. During the days of Hezekiah, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), who had succeeded Tiglath-Pileser III, was extremely cruel and invaded Judah in 712-711 B.C. Upon Sargon II's death, Sennacherib became the ruler of Assyria. He invaded Judah in 702-701 B.C. to secure his western provinces. This involved the great scene of deliverance in which Sennacherib is quoted as saying, “I had him shut up as a bird in a cage.” God miraculously delivered them from the Assyrians, killing 185,000 in the night (2 Kgs. 19:35).
- e. Isaiah and Micah prophesied during these difficult days. Smith: “By the providence of God enough spiritual ‘salt’ was found to save the land and the people from ruthless destruction by Assyria.”

2. Social

- a. This was a dark time for Judah both socially and morally. Rulers sold the rights of men allowing others to take control of their land. The wealthy coveted the lands (2:1-2) and robbed the poor (2:8).
- b. Corrupt business ethics were practiced (6:11). The people were under the powerful control of false prophets who prophesied for reward (2:11; 3:6, 11).
- c. The corrupt concept of Jehovah held by the people was little different from the heathen concept of their gods (3:11b).

3. Religious

- a. Great religious reforms were initiated by Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29-31). The priests sanctified themselves and cleansed the temple. The altars that had been erected to heathen deities were destroyed and true worship was restored. The brazen serpent erected by Moses that has been used for idolatrous practices was also destroyed.
- b. Apparently Micah was not impressed with these reforms. Religion had become a matter of form and ceremonial observances were thought to meet all religious requirements. The reform was therefore not from the heart. Things were not as bad as they were in Israel, but the early reform fervor did not result in permanent results.

Micah

Outline (Smith)

Chapter One

- A. A summons to the nations (1:2)
- B. The intervention of Yahweh (1:3-5)
 - 1. Announcement of His coming (vs. 3)
 - 2. Effects of His coming (vs. 4)
 - 3. Reason for His coming (vs. 5)
- C. The fate of Samaria (1:6-7)
 - 1. Fate of the city (vs. 6)
 - 2. Fate of false religions (vs. 7)
- D. Lament over approaching judgment (1:8-9)
 - 1. Description of the lament (vs. 8)
 - 2. Explanation of the lament (vs. 9)
- E. Devastation caused by judgment (1:10-16)
 - 1. Anonymous exhortation (vs. 10a)
 - 2. Towns north of Jerusalem (vs. 10b-12)
 - 3. Towns south of Jerusalem (vs. 13-15)
 - 4. Anonymous exhortation (vs. 16)

Chapter Two

- A. The indictment (2:1-2)
- B. The punishment (2:3-5)
- C. Refutation of false prophets (2:6-7)
 - 1. Preaching of false prophets (vs. 6)
 - 2. Acceptance of false prophets (vs. 7a)
 - 3. Response to false prophets (vs. 7b)
- D. Social violence (2:8-9)
- E. Expulsion from the Promised Land (2:10-11)
 - 1. Stern message (vs. 10)
 - 2. Unpopular message (vs. 11)

F. A Note of Hope (2:12-13)

1. The Good Shepherd (vs. 12)
2. The Glorious King (vs. 13)

Chapter Three

A. First Pronouncement Against the Rulers (3:1-4)

1. Indictment of corruption (vs. 1-3)
2. Announcement of judgment (vs. 4)

B. Pronouncements Against the Prophets (3:5-8)

1. Indictment of the prophets (vs. 5)
2. Announcement of judgment (vs. 6-7)
3. Micah's credentials (vs. 8)

C. Second Pronouncement Against the Rulers (3:9-12)

1. General indictment (vs. 9-10)
2. Specific indictment (vs. 11)
3. Announcement of judgment (vs. 12)

Chapter Four

A. Zion's Future Glory (4:1-5)

1. Zion exalted (vs. 1)
2. Gentiles converted (vs. 2)
3. Results of Gentiles' conversion (vs. 3-4a)
4. Certainty of hope (vs. 4b-5)

B. Zion's Future Ruler (4:6-8)

1. The action of God (vs. 6)
2. Transformation of the flock (vs. 7)
3. Restoration of the monarchy (vs. 8)

C. Zion's Future Victory (4:9-13)

1. Zion's distress (vs. 9)
2. Zion's destruction (vs. 10a)
3. Zion's deliverance (vs. 10b)

4. Zion's ultimate victory (vs. 11-13)

Chapter Five

A. Zion's Glorious King (5:1-5a)

1. Zion's desperation (vs. 1)
2. The coming ruler (vs. 2-3a)
3. A glorious reign (vs. 3b-5a)

B. Zion's Ultimate Victory (5:5b-15)

1. Defense of Zion (vs. 5b-6)
2. Empowerment of Zion (vs. 7-9)
3. Destruction of support (vs. 10-14)
4. Vengeance on enemies (vs. 15)

Chapter Six

A. Case Against Judah (6:1-8)

1. Opening of court (vs. 1b-2)
2. Plaintiff's question (vs. 3)
3. Plaintiff's case (vs. 4-5)
4. Question of the defendant (vs. 6-7)
5. Declaration of the prophet (vs. 8)

B. A Warning to Judah (6:9-16)

1. Opening exhortation (vs. 9)
2. Prevailing sin (vs. 10-12)
3. Impending doom (vs. 13)
4. Increasing futility (vs. 14-15)
5. Disastrous policies (vs. 16a)
6. Final disasters (vs. 16b)

Chapter Seven

A. Lament Over Judah (7:1-6)

1. Absence of the godly (vs. 1-2a)
2. Corruption in the public sphere (vs. 2b-4)
3. Treachery in the private sphere (vs. 5-6)