

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #8: The Minor Prophets
Session #11: Micah, Chapters 1 & 2
Tuesday, March 28, 2017

Facts about Micah

- The name Micah is a shortened form of Michael, which is an exclamatory statement meaning, “Who is like God!”
- Little is known about the prophet Micah beyond what can be learned from the book itself and from Jeremiah 26:18. Micah was from the town of Moresheth (1:1), probably Moresheth Gath (1:14) in southern Judah. The prophecy attests to Micah’s deep sensitivity to the social ills of his day, especially as they affected the small towns and villages of his homeland.
- Micah lived at the end of the eighth century B.C.E., about the same time as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. He is considered to be the fourth of this powerful quartet of prophets who appeared at about the same time.
- The earliest words from Micah seem to come just before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.E. (1:2-7). Other parts of Micah appear to be written in the time of the Babylonian exile (after 586 B.C.E.) and later as some of the exiles returned home.
- Micah wrote a good bit of what is contained in his book, but some passages, especially those that seem to be addressed to people who have already suffered a disaster, most likely come from a much later time. If Micah himself wrote out his messages, the date for the earliest written form of his work would be ca. 700 BCE. If one of his disciples arranged his messages in their present form, the date would be the early seventh century BCE. If a later editor collected and arranged his messages, the date would still need to be early enough in the seventh century to allow time for his prophecy of Jerusalem’s fall (3:12) to become familiar enough to be quoted in Jeremiah 26:18 around 608 BCE.

Summary of Micah

Micah is one of the eighth-century prophets—a contemporary of Isaiah and a little later than Hosea and Amos. Like these other prophets, Micah speaks against false worship and for social justice. He proclaims harsh judgments against his own people (the nation of Judah) and is particularly offended by the leaders in business, government, and religion. Micah comes from a small town outside Jerusalem and addresses the centers of power from the perspective of an outsider, particularly as he describes the coming Messiah. He even boldly predicts the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem. The book also provides words of hope beyond the judgment. Although a native of the Southern Kingdom, Micah did not espouse the David-Zion tradition, with its belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem. Instead, he favored the Moses-Sinai tradition of the Northern Kingdom, with its emphasis on the exodus and Moses.

Major Theological Themes

- 1) Acquiring God's favor.
- 2) Chosen people.
- 3) Context for hope.
- 4) False prophets.
- 5) God's control of all events.
- 6) Justice of God.
- 7) Leaders have special responsibility.

Outline of Micah

- A. Title (1:1)
- B. First Cycle: Judgment and Restoration of Israel and Judah (1:2 – 2:13)
 1. Judgment on Israel and Judah (1:2 – 2:11)
 - a) The predicted destruction (1:2-7)
 - b) Lamentation over the destruction (1:8-16)
 - c) Woe to oppressive land-grabbers (2:1-5)
 - d) Condemnation of the wealthy wicked and their false prophets (2:6-11)
 2. Restoration of a Remnant (2:12-13)
- C. Second Cycle: Indictment of Judah's Leaders, but Future Hope for God's People (Chapters 3-5)
 1. Indictment of Judah's Leaders (Chapter 3)
 - a) Guilty civil leaders (3:1-4)
 - b) False prophets of peace and Micah's response (3:5-8)
 - c) Corrupt leaders and Zion's fall (3:9-12)
 2. Future Hope for God's People (Chapters 4-5)
 - a) The coming kingdom (4:1-5)
 - b) Restoration of a remnant and Zion (4:6-8)
 - c) From distress to deliverance (4:9-10)
 - d) From siege to victory (4:11-13)
 - e) From helpless ruler to ideal king (5:1-4)
 - f) The ideal king delivers his people (5:5-6)
 - g) The remnant among the nations (5:7-9)
 - h) Obliteration of military might and pagan worship (5:10-15)
- D. Third Cycle: God's Charges against His People and the Ultimate Triumph of His Kingdom (Chapters 6-7)
 1. God's Charges against His People (6:1 – 7:7)
 - a) A divine covenant lawsuit (6:1-8)
 - b) Further charges and the sentence (6:9-16)
 - c) A lament over a decadent society (7:1-7)

2. The Ultimate Triumph of God's Kingdom (7:8-20)
 - a) An expression of trust (7:8-10)
 - b) A promise of restoration (7:11-13)
 - c) A prayer, the Lord's answer, and the response (7:14-17)
 - d) A hymn of praise to God (7:18-20)

Notes for Chapters 1 & 2

- 1:1 – This superscription is believed to have been added by an editor who compiled the collection of Micah's oracles and situates the book in time and place.
 - King Omri (ca. 876-869 BCE) established Samaria as the capital of the Northern Kingdom, about 40 miles north of Jerusalem, in a region that was fertile, defensible, and close to trade routes.
 - After David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites (1000-961 BCE), it became the political and religious capital of a united Israel. It remained as the capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judah after Israel seceded in 920 BCE.
- Jacob = Northern Kingdom. "High places" were artificially constructed elevations on which religious rites—both Canaanite and Israelite—were practiced.
- This first oracle can be dated to before 722 BC, when Samaria fell to the Assyrians.
- "barefoot and naked" signifies mourning
- 1:10-16 – The towns listed lay along the path of the Assyrian king Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE. (2 Kings, Chaps. 18-19; Isaiah, Chaps. 36-37) There is a pun in every verse. (compare with *The Message*)
- 2:1-5 – Micah criticizes the practice of land barons who foreclose on family farms through manipulation of the courts.

Resources

Notes on Micah in www.enterthebible.org.

Notes on Micah in <http://www.biblestudytools.com/micah>

Notes from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), 2010

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

Notes from The CEB Women's Bible, 2016

