

# MICAH

—prophet to Judah, second half of eighth century B.C.

## 1. Date

1:1, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; Jer. 26:18-19 links to Hezekiah (Mic. 3:12)

Jotham, 750-731, sole ruler 739-735

Ahaz, 735-715, sole ruler 731-715

Hezekiah, 715-686, sole ruler 715-695

thus minimum range of 731-715 BC, probably longer, since active during reigns of both Jotham and Hezekiah

Unlike Isaiah who mentions the invasion of Sennacherib in 701, there are no historical allusions to this event in Micah—only prophecies of Sennacherib's coming (esp. ch. 1)

Other internal date indicators:

5:10, horses and chariots gotten by Uzziah, implies reign of Jotham (cf. 2 Chron. 26:11-15)

6:7,16, human sacrifice; Omri & Ahab, implies reign of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3)

4:1-3, similarity to Isa. 2:2-4; and 4:5, similarity to Isa. 2:5; same ideas, not word for word; = links to contemporary ministry of Isaiah (Note: Moresheth Gath was not far from Isaiah's home-town)

Conclusion: ministered over a long period, before and after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC. May have been silent during that immediate time, since that event not stressed.

## 2. The prophet Micah (meaning "Who Is Like Yah?" cf. 7:18)

7:18 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?

Isaiah's earlier contemporary; these two prophets of the latter VIII will share similar themes and imagery.

While Isaiah will minister more to the royal court in Jerusalem, Micah's ministry was more to all the inhabitants of Judah.

1:1, same name (shorter form) as another Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:8; cf. Jer.26:18 where Jeremiah refers to this writing prophet (Mic. 3:12) by the longer name "Micaiah"

1:1, lived in Moresheth of Gath, in the Shephelah (*McMillan Bible Atlas*, #143)

3:8, filled with the Holy Spirit (as opposed to the false prophets)

### 3. Historical background

Major event: growing power of Assyria, and their conquest of Samaria (*McM Bible Atlas*, 144,145)

Critical time for Judah; not to be swallowed up into the Assyrian empire, and yet not to make other alliances which would compromise her

#### Assyria's progress:

- 1) ca. 745 BC, receive tribute from Israelite king Menahem
- 2) 732 BC, Ahaz sends bribe to Assyria to defeat Pekah and Rezin; Tiglath-pileser III invades Galilee
- 3) 722 BC, Shalmaneser V destroys Samaria; brother Sargon II carries out deportation
- 4) 712 BC, additional Assyrian invasion to bring restless Palestine into line
- 5) ca. 704 BC, Hezekiah rebels against new Assyrian king Sennacherib, son of Sargon II, by withholding tribute
- 6) 702 BC, Sennacherib deposes Babylonian revolutionary Merodach-baladan
- 7) 701 BC, Sennacherib invades Judah and does great damage; however, Hezekiah is not captured (2 Kings 18-19; Isa. 36-37)

great bloodshed  
over 200,000 Jews carried away captive  
trapped Hezekiah in Jerusalem (*ANET* 287-88)

Time of Sennacherib's losing 185,000 troops may be this invasion that he chronicles, or else a related one (2 Kings 18:17-19; 19:9).

- 8) 671 BC, Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib, conquers Egypt
- 9) phps. ca. 650 BC, Ashurbanipal temporarily imprisons Manasseh after brief revolt

#### Temporary threat to Judah from Israel and Syria

especially ca. 732 BC; see (2) above

#### Beginnings of Babylon growth:

- 1) Merodach-baladan, late 8th century, early 7th century; often rebels against Sargon and Sennacherib
- 2) 689 BC, Sennacherib destroys Babylon

- 3) Esarhaddon rebuilds Babylon
- 4) ca. 650, Shamash-shum-ukin of Babylon, brother of Ashurbanipal, revolts, perhaps joined by Manasseh; is defeated by Assurbanapal
- 5) 626 BC, Nabopolassar achieves Babylonian independence
- 6) 612 BC, Babylonians help to destroy Nineveh
- 7) 609 BC, Josiah killed by Egyptians trying to help Babylon
- 8) 605 BC, Battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar begins captivity of Judah

#### 4. Emphases of Micah

- 1) present corruption (3:8) and coming judgment (3:12)
- 2) Israel's glorious future (4:1-8)
- 3) God's sovereignty (1:3,4) and His ethical standards (6:8) as opposed to pragmatic religion
- 4) Predictions

“No prophet of the OT exceeds Micah in the proportion of predictions respecting Israel's future and the advent of the Messiah and His kingdom” (Freeman, *Introduction to OT Prophets*, 217).

\*\* The book is about 70% predictive, mainly long-term prophecies; only Zephaniah has a greater proportion of prediction (89%), most being short-term.

#### 5. Outline of Micah

It is possible to divide Micah into three oracles, each starting with the word “Hear” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Each section portrays the nation's

- present corruption
- impending judgment
- glorious restoration

Dorsey's chiastic outline captures these themes (p. 299):

- A Coming defeat and destruction (1.1-16)
  - B Corruption of the people (2.1-13)
    - C Corruption of leaders (3.1-12)
      - D Center: Glorious future restoration under Yahweh's rule (4.1 – 5.15)
    - C' Corruption of leaders (6.1-16)
  - B' Corruption of the people (7.1-7)
- A' Future reversal of defeat and destruction (7.8-20)

We will use the following more synthetic outline which seems to fit the overall content of the book:

## 1) Sins and judgments of Israel, ch. 1-3

### a) Judgment of the cities, ch. 1

(a lament over impending, unavoidable judgment)

vv. 2,3, judgment of Palestine paradigms the judgment on the rest of the world

“1:2 Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. 3 For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down And tread on the high places of the earth. 4 The mountains will melt under Him...,”

v. 6, fall of Samaria

vv. 8-9, sorrow for Judah, Jerusalem

vv. 8-16, Sennacherib’s approaching destruction (McM. #154)

note puns on the names of the cities in vv. 10-15 (translations in Farrar, *Minor Prophets*, 130-31; Moffat in Robinson, 104-05). All of these towns are named among the 46 cities Sennacharib says he destroyed.

Most are puns of sense; some of sound:

Gath — “tell” (same pun in II Sam. 1:20)

Beth-le-aphrah = “house of dust”

Shaphir = “fair, beautiful”

Zaanan = “going forth, departure”

Beth-ezel = “house at one’s side”

Maroth = “bitterness”

Lachish -> לַחִישׁ *la-rekesh*, “chariot”

Moresbeth-gath = “betrothed” (Keil); farewell gift from father to daughter

Achzib = “deceptive, disappointing”

Mareshah = “possession”

Adullam = “retreat, refuge”

## b) Sin and judgment of Judah, ch. 2-3

2:1-11, sin of Judah

vv. 1,2 – unchecked depravity

vv. 6,11 – intolerance of the truth; cf. John 8:45

2:12-13, preview of restoration

See Pusey's citation (II:37) of a midrash on the "Breaker of battles;" 2:13.

Cf. Eph. 2:14; Eph. 4:8 ("...led captivity captive...")

13 The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With the LORD at their head."

3:1-8, Judah's sin, and Micah's mission against the false prophets

3:9-12, judgment on Jerusalem

v. 12 quoted in Jer. 26:18-19, a canonical reference that saved Jeremiah's life

Jer. 26:17 Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying:

18 "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest." ' "

19 "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD's favor? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves."

Note the implication for early recognition of Micah's canonicity

Note how classic amils like Laetsch wrest the context of 3:12-4:1:

73:1-12 = "Israel Led into Sin and Destruction"

74:1 ff. = "Glorification of the Church"

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## 2) Israel's deliverer from Bethlehem, ch. 4-5

4:1-8, coming kingdom in "the last days"

vv. 3-7 ctr. Joel 3:10

4:5, suggestion of no total kingdom control, hence rule of rod of iron; cf. Rev. 2:26,27, Ps. 2:8,9

4:10, Babylonian captivity when not yet seen as a threat

4:11-13, war against Jerusalem leads to victory; perhaps Armageddon (cf. Zech. 13,14), although J.B. Payne thinks not; rather, he says it is intertestamental conflict leading up to the birth of Messiah in 5:2

- “many” not “all”
- this passage may lead into first advent of 5:2

ch. 5, the Messiah and the conquering remnant

v. 2, note the expression ,*l6oi ym2m1 mime `olam*, “from ancient days,” *`olam* taking its meaning from the context

5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth...;”

v. 3, perhaps a refr. to Mary in the canonical flow of Gen. 3:15, Is. 7:14, 9:6, etc. Note imagery of Mic. 4:9,10

### 3) Yahweh’s controversy with Israel, ch. 6 - 7:6

6:1-5, God’s previous blessings

This passage introduces a lawsuit against God’s people (vss. 1-5); the sentence is passed in vv. 13-15

6:6-8, Key verse of Micah on “true religion”

6:6 “With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

6:9 - 7:3,6, sins aggravated

7:6 is cited by Jesus in Mt. 10:35

7:6 "For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household."

#### **4) Israel's glorious future, 7:7-20**

vv. 7-10 = return out of future Babylonian exile

v. 13, desolation (after 70 A.D.?)

v. 15, new epoch of miracles

v. 18, a personal word play on the prophet's name

v. 19, forgiveness of sin

18 "Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea."

The word "subdue" is found in God's charge to man in Gen 1:28, and it sometimes is translated "tread upon" in the sense of conquest (Psa 47:3). Compare the Gen 3:15 promise of the woman's seed crushing the head of the serpent.

v. 20, Abrahamic covenant fulfilled

20 "You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old."