

MICAH

What is it about?

God will punish His idolatrous & evil people via Assyria's invasion & Babylonian captivity, but God will preserve & restore a remnant of His people through the coming Shepherd-King.

Audience, Author, Date

- Author: Micah of Moresheth.
- Audience: Israel & Judah
- Date: mid/late 700 BC

Themes

- The character of the Lord & the sins of his people demand judgment.
- A Shepherd-King gathers & delivers a remnant.
- Covenant faithfulness consists not merely in ritual but in the proper expression of love: justice, mercy, & faithfulness.
- The Lord is the focus of worship.
- The liberating light of grace flowing from the Lord's steadfast love overcomes the sentence due to sin.
- God's saving acts in the past are interpretive analogies for his saving acts in the future.
- Condemnation of idolatry, sorcery, deceit, fraudulent dealings, oppression of the poor, & the disregard of justice & truth.
- Judgment & restoration of the covenant relationship between God & His people.

Introduction

Context

Micah's ministry was after Jonah & extended over 20 years during the reigns of Jotham (750-735BC), Ahaz (735-715BC) & Hezekiah (715-686 BC), a time of Assyrian expansion & dominance. The northern kingdom of Israel (capital Samaria) fell to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser in 722BC. Nineveh was part of Assyria.

Ahaz of Judah allied with Assyria, practicing syncretism (Baal worship mixed with Yahweh worship) (2 Ki 16:7-18). Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, revolted, & Judah was overrun by Assyria, though Jerusalem was spared (2 Ki 18:17-19:37).

Although Micah predicted the destruction of Samaria/Israel, his ministry was primarily focused on Judah. At this time, a shocking contrast had developed between the extremely rich & the oppressed poor due to the exploitation of Israel's middle class (2:8-9) by greedy landlords (2:1-5). The oppressors were supported by Israel's corrupt political & religious leaders (Ch. 3), causing the whole nation to become morally corrupt & ripe for judgment (6:9-16; 7:1-7).

Consequently, God raised up Assyria as His wrathful rod against His sinful people (Isa. 10:5-11). As Micah predicted (1:2-7), Samaria fell to the Assyrians. Judah then felt the force of divine judgment when the Assyrians (Sennacherib) marched through Shephelah (Judah's foothills) & up to Jerusalem's gate, as Micah had also foretold (1:8-16).

Literary Features

- Micah uses a series of oracles (prophetic pronouncements) delivered in a variety of historical & political contexts.
- While Micah uses a variety of forms such as disputation (2:6-11) and lament (1:8-16), the 2 leading prophetic forms in Micah are the oracle of judgment (2:1-4) and the oracle of salvation or redemption (5:2-5).
- The oracles of judgment are satirical: they have one or more objects of attack, a vehicle in which the attack is embodied, a stated or implied norm by which the criticism is conducted, & a tone that is either biting or laughing.
- Much of the content is embodied in poetical language, requiring the reader to unpack the meanings of images and figures of speech such as wordplay, metaphor, and simile.

Key Ideas

- An indictment of injustice
- The throne of David to be filled by a deliverer born in Bethlehem.
- Right behavior, not manipulating rituals, as the proper response to God's anger.
- The coming deliverance from the Assyrian threat.

Worth Memorizing

- 6:8: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Christo-Centricity

- The first main section ends with the Shepherd of Israel gathering his sheep into the protective fold & leading them out at their triumphant King (2:12-13).
- The Shepherd-King arrives & the remnant is restored (5:1-15)
- Micah 5:2 is cited of Jesus in Matt. 2:6: The chief priests & scribes tell Herod the Christ is to be born in Bethlehem.
- Salvation oracles look forward to the Messiah & to the victory over evil that he will achieve (2:12-13; 4:1-5, 6-8; 5:2-6, 7-9, 10-15).
- God is faithful & fulfills His covenant promises through Christ (7:18-20; Gal. 3-4)

Genre of Literature:

- The overall genre is prophecy; oracles in poetic form.
- Other literary forms: lament (1:8-16; 7:1-7), disputation speech (2:6-11; 3:5-8), covenant lawsuit (6:1-8), prayer (7:14-17), hymns of praise (7:18-20), judgment speeches (2:1-5; 3:1-4, 9-12), & oracles.

Outline

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. The Announcement of Judgment on Israel & Judah (1:2-2:13)
 - I. God's punishment of Samaria & Judah (1:2-16)
 - II. Abuses and abusers of Yahweh's land (2:1-11)
 - III. The divine promise to gather Jacob (2:12-13)
- III. The Present Injustice & the Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem (3:1-5:15)
 - I. Present leaders denounced (3:1-12)
 - II. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations — promised (4:1-7)
 - III. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations — accomplished (4:8-5:15)
- IV. The Lord's Indictment & Restoration of His People (6:1-7:20)
 - I. Israel accused: covenant violation (6:1-8)
 - II. Crisis in relationship (6:9-7:7)
 - III. Zion's repentance & renewed faith in Yahweh's help (7:8-13)
 - IV. Restoration of the relationship between Israel & Yahweh (7:14-20)

The Ethics of Micah:

Micah speaks against the oppression of the peasants & defends their rights, as they are being forced off their ancestral lots & into debt slavery. He condemns the rich who pervert justice by accepting bribes & falsifying weights, & pronounces judgment for their idolatry & exploitation of the poor. Micah's audience is called to love & embody kindness, not just do morally good acts. Ethical failure will bring judgment. Micah severely criticizes prophets who supported state policies, preached "peace," & were paid to do so, deceiving the people with what they wanted to hear.