

Aquifer Open Study Notes (Book Intros)

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Micah

God's judgment was coming against false prophets, against Israel's wayward leaders, and against the rich who oppressed the poor. God's indictment against his people resulted in their ruin, but after ruin would come restoration. Through Micah, God's Spirit provided a strong word of hope for Israel's future. The Lord promised to rescue the remnant of Israel—they would return to their land as God's renewed people. God promised to subdue their enemies and send his ruler from Bethlehem. Micah exclaims simply but powerfully that there is no God like the Lord.

Setting

Micah delivered his prophecies during the reigns of the southern kings Jotham (750–732 BC), Ahaz (743–715 BC), and Hezekiah (728–686 BC), all of whom had relatively long reigns. At that time, both Israel and Judah were characterized by moral and religious corruption, social oppression, political intrigue, economic injustice, personal vice, deception, and treachery.

Jotham was a moderately good king, but he did not remove the high places where illicit worship of idols competed with proper worship of God at the Temple in Jerusalem. Since the Lord was not entirely pleased with Jotham's reign, he raised up King Rezin of Aram (whose capital was Damascus) and King Pekah of Israel to oppress Judah ([2 Kgs 15:32–38](#)).

Ahaz, Jotham's son, followed the evil ways of the northern kings of Israel. He engaged in forbidden practices, including child sacrifice, pagan incense burning, and fertility worship ([2 Kgs 16:1–4](#)). When the Edomites and Philistines moved into the areas of southern Palestine conquered by Rezin and Pekah ([2 Kgs 16:5–6; 2 Chr 28:18](#)), Ahaz made an alliance with the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) by paying gold from the Temple and the royal treasuries as tribute money to the Assyrians ([2 Kgs 16:7–9](#)). Ahaz corrupted Judah's worship by bringing pagan altars into Jerusalem ([2 Kgs 16:10–13](#)), and he inhibited worship of the Lord ([2 Kgs 16:14–20](#)).

In contrast to his father Ahaz, Hezekiah was a righteous king. He witnessed the fall of Samaria (722 BC) to the Assyrians under Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC) and Sargon II (721–705 BC). During his reign, in 701 BC, God delivered Jerusalem from destruction at the hands of King Sennacherib of Assyria (704–681 BC), but Sennacherib still devastated some forty-six cities in Israel and Judah ([2 Kgs 18:1–19:37](#)). God also healed Hezekiah from a serious disease. But then Hezekiah unwisely received envoys from the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan, who sought an alliance with Hezekiah against Assyria ([2 Kgs 20:12–21](#)).

During the early years of this period, before the destruction of Samaria, the northern kings of Israel were Pekah (752–732 BC) and Hoshea (732–722 BC). Under both kings, Israel strayed further in the ways of Jereboam I, who had caused Israel to turn from God ([2 Kgs 15:28](#)). During Pekah's reign, parts

of northern Israel were taken into captivity ([2 Kgs 15:29](#)). Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea, who reigned until the fall of Samaria in 722 BC ([2 Kgs 15:30–31; 17:6](#)).

As Micah had warned, the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed and its people were taken into exile. Hoshea had revolted against Assyria and had appealed to Egypt for help, but when Shalmaneser V heard of Hoshea's treachery, he besieged Samaria, captured it, and destroyed it in 722 BC after a three-year siege. Hoshea was imprisoned, the Israelites were dispersed among Assyrian provinces and vassal kingdoms ([2 Kgs 17:5–6](#)), and people from various nations were brought into the devastated land of Israel to live ([2 Kgs 17:24–41](#)). Israel's false worship led to its destruction and rejection by the Lord.

Summary

Following the superscription ([1:1](#)), each of three sections begins by calling Israel to “listen” ([1:2-2:13](#); [3:1-5:15](#); [6:1-7:6](#)). Judgment poured from the Lord through Micah’s prophecies against Samaria, Jerusalem, the wealthy, the corrupt, the false prophets, the oppressive leaders, and other nations. The people of Israel failed to follow God’s ways and did not respond to the messages he had given them. The Lord’s indictment was ironclad: Israel would be ruined and go into exile.

Micah’s message of judgment is interspersed with words of hope, however (see [2:12-13](#); [4:1-8, 13](#); [5:2-15](#); [7:7-20](#)). In the end, judgment would be replaced by the Lord’s grace, unfailing love, faithfulness, forgiveness, pardon, and compassion. Israel would be restored and renewed, and God would fulfill his promises to Abraham and Jacob.

Authorship and Date

Micah was a native of Moresheth, a town about twenty-one miles (thirty-five kilometers) southwest of Jerusalem. Passages such as [4:6–8](#) and [7:8–20](#) suggest to some that a later editor completed the present form of the book in the early postexilic era (538–458 BC). This conclusion is not necessary, however. The prophet Micah is not the only preexilic prophet to prophesy a return (see [Isa 52:4–12](#); [Hos 11:10–11](#); [Amos 9:11–15](#)).

Micah used figurative language to describe events, which makes it hard to determine the exact circumstances taking place when he prophesied and wrote. Some of Micah's prophecies were probably given before the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC (see [Mic 1:1, 6; 6:16](#)). The Assyrian march into Israel and Judah in 701 BC is reflected in [1:10–15](#). Micah's prediction concerning the fall of Jerusalem ([3:12](#)) was given during the reign of Hezekiah (728–686 BC) and is referred to much later by Jeremiah ([Jer 26:16–19](#)). Micah's ministry thus seems to have coincided closely with that of Isaiah; the similarity of [Isaiah 2:2–5](#) and [Micah 4:1–4](#) supports this conclusion.

Meaning and Message

Micah's message is clear: God's plans for his people will prevail, and the nations will come to know God through his people Israel and his chosen ruler ([5:2](#)). The Lord's faithful promises to Abraham and Jacob will be realized.

Much like Isaiah, Micah proclaimed that Israel's hope would not be in escaping judgment, but it would be mediated to them *through* judgment. The people had become so corrupt that their only hope for an extended future was through the fires of judgment. That was a very hard concept for the people of Israel to grasp.

God's goal is to have a special people of unparalleled moral and spiritual integrity and excellence. God will accept nothing less, but only his actions on behalf of his people can create righteousness in them (see [2 Pet 3:13](#)). Many years after Micah, God would send a "ruler of Israel," born in Bethlehem, to lead his flock and bring peace to his people (see [Mic 5:2-5](#)).