

Micah

Micah appears to have begun his ministry around 735 B.C. This would put him after Joel, Amos & Jonah, but just before Hosea. Micah's name means "Who is like Yahweh?" Based on his name, it is likely Micah's parents, during a period of most people living in idolatry, were one of the few Israelite families remaining faithful to the Lord.

This book appears to be a binding together of formally independent prophecies. There are internal signs that Micah himself may have edited the book to put them all together. The book has 3 cycles: chapters 1-2, 3-5 & 6-7. Each cycle begins with the command to listen & moves from doom to hope. Just as we've seen in previous books, God follows every promise of destruction with a promise of restoration.

Though Micah does prophesy regarding both the northern & southern Kingdoms, the focus of the book appears to be on Jerusalem & therefore Judah, the southern kingdom.

Rather than focus on each kingdom separately, Micah summons them both to the same judgement (Mic 1:2-3). God is not merely passing judgement here, He is on the move, coming to fulfill the promises He will make. God's anger & judgement is often described as a burning fire. Now the earth responds to the fire of God's presence as He approaches (Mic 1:4).

In verse 5, Jacob refers to Israel, the northern kingdom. The house (or people) of Israel refers to Judah. This pattern is repeated at the end of the verse (Mic 1:5). God lists the capital cities of both kingdoms as the covenant breakers. High places of pagan religions were typically located on natural heights. High places would have monuments

set up for the false gods they worshipped. Examples of this would be an Asherah pole, to honor the female fertility-goddess, or a massebah, one or more stone pillars set up to honor the male fertility-god. A stone altar would be set up there or nearby & a tent or room would be there to hold cultic vessels as well as for eating sacrificial meals.

In verses 6 & 7, God declares He will destroy Samaria for their sins & idolatry. It took only about 15 years for God's promise to be fulfilled by Sargon II destroying the city. Addressing the root of Israel's sin & of God's anger, God says He will break their idols to pieces. God does this, not only because the idols are tangible symbols of Israel's paganism, but to destroy their false religion & demonstrate that their false gods are not capable of protecting them.

Micah then begins a ritualistic mourning ritual (Mic 1:8). This seems to be a symbolic act, signifying a threatening captivity is in view. This type of mourning is only mentioned at one other place in the bible (Isa 20:1-6).

In verse 9, Micah laments that the sins (thus the punishments) of the northern Kingdom have infected (thus doomed) his own people of the southern Kingdom.

Gath represents Israel's historic enemies (Mic 1:10). Micah is providing the same warning David did (2 Sam 1:17-20). Even when God is punishing His own people, He doesn't want others to mock them or gloat (Oba 12-13). Doing so would contradict the essential obligation of the covenant, to love one another (Mic 7:8).

Micah lists 10 cities of the southern Kingdom to which

disaster is coming (Mic 1:11-16). One of these, Moresheth Gath, is Micah's hometown. The other nine cities comprise a circle of about a nine mile radius around Moresheth Gath.

To this point, Micah has been vague about the sins of Judah. Here, he becomes more specific about them (Mic 2:1-2). The rich & powerful are taking away the possessions of the poor. They do so in the morning, which is significant. In those times, it was the custom for people to appeal to their kings & leaders in the mornings to receive judgements & justice (Psa 37:6) (Jer 21:12). But during the time they should be receiving justice, evil is brought to them instead.

In verse 2, Micah identifies the root of their evil deeds is their coveting. Obviously, this breaks one of the 10 commandments. God had, however, told them how to keep others from coveting their land (Exo 34:24). Seizing people's fields did more than just steal their possessions. It deprived them of their livelihood &, thus, forced them into servitude. God gave each tribe of Israel land for them to work for them all to be free. He was very clear they should not take one another's land (Lev 6:1-7) (Deut 28:15, 25, 33, 36).

In verses 3-5, God announces the disaster He is bringing to the Israelites. Because they have broken God's covenant, He is removing them from the covenant land. The people have received numerous warnings from God, but they have chosen to ignore them (Mic 2:6). The "prophets" of the people ask 2 questions in the first half of verse 7. "Does He do such things" refers to "these things" from verse 6. The first question they ask is misapplying scripture (Exo 34:6). While this sounds comforting, the following verse reveals the disaster that they

should be expecting (Exo 34:7). This type of misapplication deceives so many because, without the full context of the scripture & knowing God's word, it can seem true. This is the same method the devil used with Jesus (Psa 91:11-12) (Luke 4:9-11). Jesus' response to the devil shows us the value in studying all of God's word. In the second half of verse 7, God answers the question of the people's "prophets" with His own question. His true prophets & those who follow Him have nothing to fear. However, those who have turned from His way should expect "such things".

Micah again lists the sins of the corrupt leaders in verses 8 & 9. Because of this sin, the land has been defiled & God is forcing them out (exile) (Mic 2:10). Following this pronouncement of judgement, Micah criticizes them by telling them the only prophet they want is one who lies & tailors their message to line up with their greed.

Verses 12 & 13, following the verses of judgement & doom, bring a promise of restoration. This promise is not for each person or family exiled, but for His remnant He has reserved.

Chapter 3 is a group of 3 prophecies.

Verses 1-4 is the 1st prophecy. Micah begins by addressing the magistrates of Israel (those whose job it was to maintain justice) & calls them lovers of evil. He lists the accusations against them & then pronounces their judgement. Though when trouble comes they may cry out to God, He will not relent from their punishment.

The 2nd prophecy is covered in verses 5-7. This time, Micah is

addressing the prophets. The prophets were supposed to be the moral watchdogs of the theocracy. However, instead of serving God, they were serving their own greed. God's punishment for the prophets is similar to the magistrates: silence. The prophets will cry out to God for a revelation, not to serve God or help their people, but to retain their social status. Though they will cry out, God will not answer them.

In contrast to these false prophets, Micah declares himself right with God & receiving revelations (Mic 3:8).

Verses 9-12 contain the 3rd prophecy. In this prophecy, the magistrates & prophets are grouped together. Their charges are once again laid out & the climax of these 3 prophecies is revealed. The silence of God will result in the removal of their protection & they will be destroyed.

Chapter 4 makes a sudden turn from impending doom to a future of righteousness.

Verses 1-5 are linked with the previous prophecy in 5 ways. (1) The role of Zion has changed. (2) The temple mountain was made less important, but now it is exalted. (3) The wicked leaders of Israel have been replaced by God. (4) Zion had been built with bloodshed & injustice, but God is establishing it as the center for the Lord's teaching. (5) The judges (leaders) of Israel had been self-serving & corrupt, but God will judge with love & justice, bringing peace.

For a few more verses, God continues to reveal details about the restoration of Jerusalem (Mic 4:6-8).

Micah returns to Israel's impending troubles for the remainder of the chapter. God reveals here that there will be a Babylonian

captivity & it is here that the Israelites are to be redeemed.

In verses 11-13, multiple nations have come up against Israel. Here, Zion is referring to their holy site, the temple. The inner rooms of the temple were holy & thus reserved for sacred personnel. By exposing the sanctuary to all & plundering its treasures, they would defile it & attempt to rid the land of that religion. However, God says He will eventually deliver them into the Israelites' hands.

In chapter 5, Micah delivers a prophecy of the Messiah (Mic 5:2). The whole chapter is devoted to the Messiah's coming.

Chapter 6 is written as though God is bringing the Israelites to trial. God mentions the things He has done for Israel & then asks what He has done to cause them to turn away. With their guilt acknowledged, the Israelites are faced with determining the price of restitution. Micah reveals to them that payment is not what God wants, but a change of heart (Mic 6:6-8).

Micah begins speaking in chapter 7 & laments the sins of his people. In verse 7, he transitions to hope for the future.

The remaining verses, 8-20, are broken into 4 stanzas. (1) Verses 8-10: Lady Jerusalem speaks to an unnamed enemy & confesses her faith in the Lord. (2) Verses 11-13: Micah promises that Zion will become a sheepfold offering salvation to the world. (John 10:7-10). (3) Verses 14-17: Micah prays for God to shepherd His people again. God answers that He will, at which Micah reflects that all nations will see & submit to God. (4) Verses 18-20: Micah celebrates God's love & mercy for His people.