

Who was Micaiah in the Bible?

Micaiah was a common Hebrew name in the Bible. It means “Who is Like Yahweh?” Several people in the Old Testament bore the name Micaiah, the most prominent being Micaiah the prophet and son of Imlah.

The account of Micaiah the prophet in 1 Kings 22:1-38 (and in the parallel passage, 2 Chronicles 18:1-27) calls attention to the conflict surrounding prophecy in ancient Israel. When Ahab ruled over Israel and Jehoshaphat over Judah, the two kings decided to come together to attack the city of Ramoth-Gilead to retake it from the Arameans. Before going to battle, they consulted with more than 400 royally appointed counselors of Israel. These were apostate prophets who had no regard for correctly delivering the word of the Lord. To please King Ahab and obtain his favor, these prophets only served to tell the king what he wanted to hear.

The counselors brought before Ahab all prophesied victory in battle, but King Jehoshaphat remained suspicious. He wanted to hear from an independent prophet who would be faithful to the word of the Lord. Ahab offered to seek the counsel of Micaiah but warned Jehoshaphat that he hated this prophet. The reason? Micaiah always predicted evil for Ahab. An evil king is bound to receive bad news from God, so, if Micaiah was true to his calling, he could do nothing but deliver “evil” messages to Ahab. So Ahab hated him.

At Jehoshaphat’s insistence, Micaiah was summoned, and the messenger sent to bring the prophet pleaded with Micaiah to fit in with the crowd for once: “Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably,” he said (1 Kings 22:13). The honorable Micaiah said in reply, “As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me” (verse

14).

Standing before the two kings, Micaiah at first mockingly told Ahab what he wanted to hear, forecasting good news of victory over the Arameans. But Ahab, knowing Micaiah's sarcasm, made him swear to tell the truth, and Micaiah told the wicked king what God really had to say. The prophet's report was devastating: "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace'" (1 Kings 22:17).

Micaiah went on to tell King Ahab that a deceiving spirit had misled the other prophets to predict victory so that Ahab would die in the battle. So angry was Zedekiah, the leader of the royal prophets, that he struck Micaiah on the cheek and publicly mocked his prophecy. In response, Micaiah prophesied Zedekiah's eventual destruction (2 Chronicles 18:24). King Ahab had Micaiah put in prison until he returned from battle. As he was being led away, Micaiah issued a final, urgent warning: "If you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me. . . . Mark my words, all you people!" (1 Kings 22:28). The kings did not believe him, but Micaiah had spoken the truth of God. King Ahab was killed in the fighting, just as Micaiah had predicted.

Nothing more is said of the prophet Micaiah in the Bible. His courage in the face of intense political and professional pressure stands as a model for us. His truth-telling led to persecution, but his words came to pass, being as they were a message from God. Micaiah, a man of integrity, is surely one of the prophets spoken of in the Bible's "Hall of Faith": "Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. . . . They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them" (Hebrews 11:36-38).

Other people in the Bible named Micaiah are mentioned only briefly. The first was the father of Achbor, one of the court officials sent by King Josiah to the prophetess Huldah to inquire about the book of the law that the high priest Hilkiah had found in the temple (2 Kings 22:12). The next was Micaiah, the mother of King Abijah of Judah and daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chronicles 13:2, ESV). Alternate spellings for Micaiah here are Maakah (NIV) and Maacah (NLT).

A fourth Micaiah was one of the official princes sent by King Jehoshaphat to teach the law of the Lord in the towns of Judah (2 Chronicles 17:7). In Nehemiah 12:35, the son of Zichri was called Micaiah. He was one of the priestly trumpeters in the procession at the dedication of the temple wall. And in Nehemiah 12:41 another Micaiah is named among the priests who blew trumpets at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. Finally, Micaiah the son of Gemariah and friend of Jeremiah recounted the words of the Lord to the Jewish officials during the reign of King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:11-13).