

## 6. Micah

### I. Background and Context

- A. Micah's prophetic call is unusual in at least two ways:
  - 1. because he is identified not by his lineage, but by his location, Moresheth, southwest of Jerusalem in the "lowland" Shephelah region.
  - 2. because his authority is not explicitly tied to the "Word of the Lord," but instead by the "Spirit of the Lord" (3.8).
- B. Micah's name means "Who is like Yahweh?" which is very similar to the end of the book, "Who is a God like you?" (7.18).
- C. Micah prophesied during the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (cf. 3.12, Jer. 26.18). The exclusion of King Uzziah suggests that Micah prophesied somewhat later than Hosea, and overlapping with the early part of Isaiah's prophecies.
- D. The purpose of Micah's prophecies is to pronounce an indictment against Samaria and Jerusalem (1.2-7), and to introduce Assyria (5.5-6) and Babylon (4.10) as instruments of God's justice.
- E. Micah is distinct from other prophets in that he alternates between judgment and salvation, rather than establishing one clear section for each. The sections dealing with judgment mingle descriptions of evil practices with the portrayal of God's punishment. The oracles of salvation point to Christ, the promised Messiah as a definite moment of history, as well as the end of history not yet come.

### II. Outline

- A. Superscription (1.1)
- B. JUDGMENT: The Announcement of Judgment on Israel and Judah (1.2-2.13)
  - 1. God's punishment of Samaria and Judah (1.2-16)
    - a) Judgment on Samaria (1.2-7)
    - b) Judgment on Judah (1.8-16)
  - 2. Abuses and abusers of Yahweh's land (2.1-11)
    - a) Indictment and future punishment (2.1-5)
    - b) Rejection of the prophetic word (2.6-11)
  - 3. SALVATION: The divine promise to gather Jacob (2.12-13)
- C. JUDGMENT: The Present Injustice and Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem (3.1-5.15)
  - 1. Present leaders denounced (3.1-12)
    - a) Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3.1-4)
    - b) Judgment against the prophets (3.5-8)
    - c) Judgment against the heads of Jacob (3.9-12)
  - 2. SALVATION: Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—promised (4.1-7)
    - a) Nations approach Zion in peace (4.1-5)
    - b) Divine promise to gather Zion (4.6-7)
  - 3. Jerusalem's restoration among the nations—accomplished (4.8-5.15)
    - a) Restoration of Zion's dominion (4.8)
    - b) Nations approach Zion for battle (4.9-13)
    - c) The Shepherd-King arrives and the remnant is restored (5.1-15)
- D. JUDGMENT: The Lord's Indictment and Restoration of His People (6.1-7.20)
  - 1. Israel accused: covenant violation (6.1-8)
    - a) The prophetic summons (6.1-2)

- b) Divine interrogation and saving acts (6.3-5)
- c) People's response and prophetic reply (6.6-8)
- 2. Crisis in relationship (6.9-7.7)
  - a) Divine indictment of treachery (6.9-12)
  - b) Divine sentence for treachery (6.13-6)
  - c) Consequences of disobedience: social upheaval (7.1-7)
- 3. SALVATION: Zion's repentance and renewed faith in Yahweh's help (7.8-13)
- 4. Restoration of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh (7.14-20)

### III. Key Passages

#### A. Judgment against Samaria and Jerusalem; Salvation for a Remnant (Read 1.2-9)

- 1. There is a certainty ("The LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down," v. 3) and a righteousness ("Let the LORD God be a witness against you," v. 2) to God's coming judgment against Israel and Judah. Here, Micah notes that the coming judgment is a consequence of the sins of Judah and Israel (v. 5).
- 2. In particular, Samaria and Jerusalem are singled out as the reasons why their respective kingdoms transgressed. It is Samaria and Jerusalem, the "royal cities, most populous cities, most pompous cities" where "men lived in wealth and pleasure" and the places "that had the greatest influence upon the country"<sup>1</sup> where men forgot God and led entire nations astray.
- 3. Micah mourns this coming judgment (v. 8) and indicates that the judgment is coming not solely on Israel (though it does first in 722 B.C.), but will also come upon Judah (when Sennacherib would reach the gates of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.).
- 4. In the midst of this pronouncement of judgment, Micah breaks out in a proclamation of mercy. Though both Israel and Judah would fall, God would gather them again (this would begin to be fulfilled in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah; read 2.12-13).

#### B. Judgment on Rulers and Prophets; Salvation for Zion (3.1-12)

- 1. In this chapter, as in chapter 1, Micah singles out the work of the leaders of Israel and Judah in leading the people astray.
- 2. Political leaders are first singled out in vv. 1-4 for neglecting justice (v. 1), hating good and loving evil (v. 2). Prophets, too, are judged for speaking to the people not out of faithfulness to God's word, but based on the provision of the people (v. 5).
- 3. Micah is distinguished from these false prophets as one "filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD," not speaking peace to the people but "to declare to Jacob his transgression" (v. 8).
- 4. Chapter 3 leaves us with a picture of desolation of God's holy places (3.12). Chapter 4 sees those places restored (Read 4.1-2) and points to a ruler to be born in Bethlehem (Read 5.2-4).

#### C. Approaching God the Most High; Receiving Steadfast Love from the God of Salvation

- 1. The people are undone and left to wonder how they can approach God. They vainly offer "that which is rich and costly" and "that which is very dear to them"<sup>2</sup> (6.7), failing to remember that "to obey is better than to sacrifice" (cf. 1 Sam. 15.22, Mic. 6.8).
- 2. The book ends like the prophet's name: "Micah" – "Who is a God like you?" (7.18-20).

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2014, www.biblestudytools.com.

<sup>2</sup> Henry.