

MICAH

Message: Micah indicts Judah and its leaders, political and religious, for egregious covenant disloyalty (6:8), and shows that while the nation stands condemned for their social injustices and oppression of the poor, Yahweh promises hope and blessing through the coming Messiah, the Davidic King, who would be born in the little town of Bethlehem (5:1-2).

QuickTime™ and a
GIF decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Title

The Hebrew title of this book, *mikah*, “Micah” is a shortened form of *mikayahu*, “Micaiah,” meaning “Who is like Yahweh?” Micah’s name speaks of the incomparability of Yahweh; that is, Micah’s name, “Who is like Yahweh?” is used as a rhetorical question that demands the obvious answer that ***there is none like Yahweh***.¹ We see within this rhetorical name Yahweh’s bold rebuke of His people’s covenant violation in their practice of idolatry. “*How could a people that were redeemed to serve the living God turn away from Him to serve the fraudulent and perverted worship systems practiced by their [pagan] neighbors?*”²

Author

Little is known about the prophet apart from what can be gleaned from his book. Micah identifies his hometown as Moresheth, a town probably to be identified with Moresheth-gath, which stood about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem (near the Philistine city of Gath) in the Shephelah of Judah (1:1; cf. 1:14). Moresheth-gath was an important Judean town in Micah’s day because it guarded a key travel route into the hill country of Judah south of Jerusalem. Because of the town’s defensive location, it was fortified as a guard-post by King Rehoboam between 922-915 B.C. (2 Chr. 11:5-12). It was later one of the towns captured by Sennacherib in his campaign against Judah in 701 B.C. (Mic. 1:14).

Date

Micah prophesied “during the reigns of three Judean kings: Jotham [750-732 B.C.], Ahaz [732-715 B.C.], and Hezekiah [715-686 B.C.], kings of Judah” (1:1). Micah’s ministry is assigned generally to a time between 735-700 B.C.

Micah’s Contemporaries. Micah ministered with Isaiah in the Southern Kingdom of Judah ([740-686 B.C.]; Isa. 1:1), as well as with Amos and Hosea who prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

¹Ronald B. Allen, “Notes on the Book of Micah” (unpublished class notes in 304 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1998), 2.

²Ibid.

Theological Purpose

As in all the prophetic books, Micah reminds the people of their many violations of the Mosaic Covenant, which served as the standard by which God measured His people. God had said that if the people would obey, they would enjoy blessing, but if they chose to disobey, they would experience cursings (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). Micah accosts the people with Yahweh's lawsuit (Hebrew בַּיִר, *rib*, a judicial case). Even though His people had broken the covenant and judgment was inevitable, He also promised ultimate restoration in view of God's promises to the patriarchs. The nations' future blessings will be realized through the rule of the coming "Breaker" who will re-gather the remnant of Israel and rule over them as the true Shepherd and King over God's flock (2:12-13).

Structure and Style of Micah

The structure of Micah is based on three prophetic messages that comprise three major sections of the book. Each of Micah's messages begins with a call to justice as if in a court, in fact, the entire structure is based upon lawsuit imagery (Hebrew בַּיִר, *rib*) that was common in Micah's day. The structure of Micah's three sections (see the following chart) can be based on a summons to "hear" or "listen", the addressee, and "the pattern of judgment (and lament) and hope (for a righteous remnant)." The theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah's three messages, but there is also mention of the restoration of a righteous remnant (2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18). God promises to eventually restore His covenant people Israel to a position of world prominence under their coming Messiah.

Structural Diagram of Micah

#1 Hear/listen (1:2)

- judgment* "Hear, O peoples, all of you . . . that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you . . ." (1:2-7; 2:1-5)
- lament* (1:8-16; 2:6-11)
- hope* (2:12-13)—*a remnant* (2:12)

#2 Hear/listen (3:1)

- judgment* (3:1-4; 3:5-12)
- [no lament]
- hope* (4:1-5:15)—*a remnant* (4:7; 5:7-8)

#3 Hear/listen (6:1)

- judgment* "Stand up, plead your case . . . for the LORD has a case against His people . . ." (6:1-5; 6:9-16)
- [Micah's confession of the LORD's righteous requirements (6:6-8)]
- lament* (7:1-6)
- hope* (7:7-20)—*a remnant* (7:18)

The Predictions of Christ in Micah. “No prophet of the Old Testament exceeds Micah in the proportion of predictions respecting Israel’s future and the advent of the Messiah and His Kingdom.”³ Micah records one of the most important of all Old Testament prophecies about the birthplace and eternity of Messiah (5:1-2).

GREAT MESSIANIC PREDICTIONS IN MICAH	
<i>Prediction</i>	<i>Description</i>
Christ's First Advent and Rejection	The Smitten Judge (5:1) who was struck upon the cheek as the height of insult (1 Kings 22:24) is the Bethlehem-born yet preexistent and eternal One (5:2) of the Davidic line. Ephrath was an early suburb of Bethlehem and ancestral home of King David and Jesus (Gen 35:19).
Israel's Condition Between the Advents	Israel is to be set aside because of rejection of her Messiah. “She who travails” is Israel in tribulation, travailing to bring forth a last-day believing remnant (the remnant of Christ’s brethren; 5 :3; Matthew 25:31-46).
Christ's Second Advent and Acceptance	The rejected One becomes the Shepherd of Israel (5:4) and the peace of Israel (Isa 9:7) when He dispenses the peace He has purchased for His restored people (Eph. 2:14, 15). He also attains peace by defeating the northern invader of the end-time (5:6).
The Remnant's Future Blessings	The remnant dwells securely (5:4) as a witness (5:7) and avenger of wrongs (5:8, 9) in the administration of the kingdom at the second advent of Messiah.
The Establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom	Jerusalem is to be the capital of the restored Davidic Kingdom (4:1-3; Isa 2:2-4). The messianic kingdom is to be characterized by justice, peace, security, and loyalty to the Lord (4:3-5). Israel is to be gathered into the kingdom (4:6-8). The intervening Babylonian exile typifies the final regathering (4:9, 10).
Christ's Future Kingdom Rule	Armageddon is the prelude to the kingdom (4:11-13; Rev 16:13-16). Jerusalem’s victory is assured as she threshes the sheaves (the hostile nations gathered against her). Christ’s kingdom rule as supreme King and Lord (Rev 19:16) is denoted by “the Lord of the whole earth.” It is His by virtue of both creation and redemption (Zech 4:14; 6:5; Rev 4:11).

³Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 217.

Outline

Superscription 1:1

I. A Message of Destruction For Israel (Samaria) and Judah 1:2–2:13

- A. The Revelation of the Coming Judgment 1:2-16
 - 1. Introduction: The LORD's summons to judgment 1:2 *"Court Case #1"*
 - 2. The description of the judgment on Samaria/Israel 1:3-7
 - a. The coming of the Judge 1:3-4
 - b. The causes of the judgment 1:5
 - c. The calamity associated with the judgment 1:6-7
 - 3. The lamentation over the judgment on Jerusalem/Judah 1:8-16
 - a. The lament of Micah 1:8
 - b. The destruction of the cities described 1:9-15
 - c. The exhortation to mourn 1:16

- B. The Reasons for the Coming Judgment: Social Injustices 2:1-11
 - 1. Corruption in Micah's society: Denunciation of the greed and violence 2:1-11
 - a. The exploitation of the poor 2:1-5
 - 1) Covetousness described 2:1-2
 - 2) Covetousness judged 2:3-5
 - b. The repudiation of God's prophet 2:6-11
 - 1) The people rejected Micah's message 2:6-7
 - a) The repudiation of Micah's message 2:6
 - b) The reason for rejecting Micah's message 2:7-10
 - i. The reply of Micah: God's words are received by the upright 2:7
 - ii. The repudiation of the people's sins of greed and violence 2:8-10
 - 2) The people received false prophet's message 2:11
 - 2. Comfort/hope in the midst of judgment 2:12-13
 - a. The promise of Israel's future re-gathering 2:12
 - b. The prophecy of Israel's coming King: The Breaker 2:13

II. A Message of Doom and Deliverance 3:1–5:15

A. Doom: The Coming Judgment 3:1-12

1. Introduction: The LORD's summons to judgment 3:1 **"Court Case #2"**
2. Judgment on Jacob/Israel's leaders 3:2-4
3. Judgment on false prophets 3:5-8
4. Judgment on Zion/Jerusalem 3:9-12
 - a. On the wicked rulers 3:9-12
 - b. On the city and temple mount 3:12

B. Deliverance: The Coming Kingdom and King 4:1–5:15

1. The coming Kingdom 4:1–5:1
 - a. The future exaltation of Zion 4:1-5
 - b. The future restoration of the righteous remnant 4:6-8
 - c. The future tribulation prior to the establishment of the kingdom 4:9–5:1

[Note: each of the following three sections is introduced by the word "now."]

- 1) **Now**, Judah bewail your captivity 4:9-10
 - a) The captivity in Babylon 4:9-10a
 - b) The rescue and return from Babylon 4:10b
 - 2) **Now**, Judah your enemies gloat but later you shall defeat your enemies 4:11-13
 - a) Present gloating of many nations over Judah's demise 4:11
 - b) Future gathering of many nations to be defeated by Judah 4:12-13
 - 3) **Now**, Judah your king (Hezekiah) will be humiliated by Babylon 5:1
2. The coming King 5:2-15
 - a. The messianic King's future coming to Bethlehem 5:2-5a
 - 1) His first coming 5:2-3
 - a) His birthplace: Bethlehem of Judah 5:2a
 - b) His birthright: Ruler in Israel 5:2b
 - c) His being: Divine, eternal One 5:2c-3
 - 2) His second coming 5:4-5a
 - a) He will shepherd God's flock 5:4a-4b
 - b) He will settle Israel 5:4c
 - c) He will secure world wide peace 5:5a
 - b. The messianic King's future judgment on the enemies of the people of God, and the cleansing of His people from their continual sin 5:5b-15
 - 1) He will deliver His brethren from the Assyrians 5:5b-6

- 2) He will delight in and bless the remnant of Jacob 5:7-9
- 3) He will destroy Israel's remaining enemies 5:10-15

III. A Message of Denunciation 6:1-7:10

A. God's Lawsuit Against Israel 6:1-16 "*Court Case #3*"

1. The LORD's accusation (Hebrew *byr*, *rib*) 6:1-5
 - a. Summons for the people to plead their case 6:1
 - b. Summons for creation to bear witness 6:2
 - c. Specific charges against the people 6:3-5
 - 1) The LORD's questioning of His people 6:3
 - 2) The LORD's review of His past faithfulness 6:4-5
2. The LORD's assertion of the basic elements of true piety 6:6-8
 - a. Reply of the people concerning sacrifice 6:6
 - b. Reassertion of Yahweh of the basic elements of true piety 6:7-8
 - 1) God does not delight in sacrifice (cf. Deut 10:12) 6:7
 - 2) God does delight in justice, obedience, and humility 6:8
3. The LORD's assertion of His people's guilt and approaching judgment 6:9-16
 - a. Declaration of the people's wickedness: Causes of judgment 6:9-12
 - 1) Announcement of judgment 6:9
 - 2) Accusations against the people 6:10-12
 - a) Dishonesty 6:10-11
 - b) Violence 6:12a
 - c) Deceit 6:12b
 - b. Declaration of approaching judgment: Course of Judgment 6:13-16
 - 1) Desolation 6:13
 - 2) Hunger 6:14
 - 3) Leanness 6:15
 - 4) Destruction 6:16

B. Micah Laments Over Israel's Wickedness, but Hopes in God's Deliverance 7:1-20

1. Israel's present wickedness will be judged 7:1-6
 - a. The prophet laments Israel's total corruption 7:1
 - b. The people's moral degeneration as a society: Universal in extent 7:2-4a
 - c. The people's coming judgment 7:4b
 - d. The people's moral degeneration as individuals: Unnatural and Perverse 7:5-6
2. Israel's promised deliverance will come 7:7-10
 - a. Micah's confidence in God's ultimate deliverance 7:7-10
 - b. Micah's confidence in God's ultimate blessing of His people 7:11-13
 - 1) The future restoration of Israel 7:11-12
 - 2) The future destruction of Israel's enemies 7:13
3. Israel's promised Deliverer will rule 7:14-20
 - a. Micah prays for God to send the Good Shepherd 7:14-15

- b. Nations will respond in fear and submission to God 7:16-17
- c. Micah praises God for pardoning iniquity and blessing His people 7:18-20

Argument

The Book of Micah presents an impassioned and artistic interplay between Yahweh's divine oracles of impending judgment and His gracious promise of future blessing on Israel and Judah.⁴ As mentioned in the Introduction, the Book of Micah, apart from the introductory Superscription (1:1) may be divided into three balanced units (2:1–2:13; 3:1–5:15; 6:1–7:20), each of which is clearly introduced by the words, “Hear now” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Each of these three sections are based on three prophetic messages from Micah delivered to both Israel and Judah concerning judgment and the future promise of restoration and blessing.⁵

Following the introductory Superscription (1:1), Micah presents A Message of Destruction For Israel (Samaria) and Judah (1:2–2:13). The revelation of the coming judgment (1:2-16) is presented as the LORD's summons to judgment ([“*Court Case #1*”] 1:2). The prophet describes the coming judgment on Samaria/Israel (1:3-7), and then laments over the judgment to come upon Jerusalem/Judah (1:8-16). Micah next details the reasons for the coming judgment as stemming directly from the social injustices and complete corruption being practiced in Micah's society (2:1-11). However, Micah concludes by providing a wonderful message of comfort in the midst of judgment (2:12-13). He promises Israel's future re-gathering (2:12), and prophesies her coming King: The Breaker, Messiah (2:13).

The second message is one of Doom and Deliverance (3:1–5:15). The message of doom (3:1-12) concerns the LORD's second summons of His sinful people to coming judgment [“*Court Case #2*”] (3:1). The Lord pronounces coming judgment on Jacob/ Israel's leaders (3:2-4), false prophets (3:5-8), and on the wicked rulers of Zion/Jerusalem (3:9-12). Micah then shifts his message to focus on Israel's future deliverance and coming kingdom and King (4:1–5:15). Following a period of future tribulation, the LORD promises to exalt Zion and restore a righteous remnant (4:1-10). The enemies that had gloated over Judah's defeat (4:11) will be gathered together to be defeated by Judah (4:12–5:1). Micah next describes the first and second coming of Israel's King (5:2-15). The messianic King, the divine eternal One, will be born in Bethlehem of Judah, and go forth to be Ruler in Israel (5:2-5a). At His second coming He will shepherd God's flock, settle Israel, and secure world-wide peace (5:4-5a). In addition, He will bring judgment on the enemies of the people of God, and cleanse His people from their continual sin and bless them (5:5b-15).

Micah's third message once again begins with the LORD's denunciation of the people's sins and ends with the promise of future restoration and blessing for the righteous remnant of God (6:1–7:10). Micah presents the third of God's lawsuits (Hebrew בַּיֵר, *rib*) against

⁴Ronald B. Allen, “Notes on the Book of Micah,” 1.

⁵As mentioned above (see under Style and Structure), each of Micah's messages begins with a call to justice as if in a court, in fact, the entire structure is based upon lawsuit imagery (Hebrew, *rib*) that was common in Micah's day. The structure of Micah's three sections (see the earlier chart) can be based on a summons to “hear” or “listen”, the addressee, and “the pattern of judgment (and lament) and hope (for a righteous remnant).” The theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah's three messages, but there is also mention of the future restoration of a righteous remnant (2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18).

Israel [**“Court Case #3”**] (6:1-16). Yahweh calls the people to present their case, and summons creation to witness against His sinful people, who were guilty of numerous and repeated covenant violations (6:2-5). Micah next reminds the people of the LORD’s basic requirements for the practice of true piety; while God does not delight in sacrifice, He does delight in justice, obedience, and humility (6:6-8). The prophet proceeds by reviewing his people’s wickedness and guilt, and announcing their approaching judgment (6:9-16).

Micah laments over Israel’s wickedness, but hopes in God’s gracious deliverance (7:1-20). Even though Israel’s present wickedness will be judged (7:1-6), Micah voices his confidence in God’s ultimate deliverance of His people (7:7-10), as well as His ultimate blessing of His people (7:11-13). In conclusion, Micah prophesies that Israel’s promised Deliverer, Messiah, will someday rule (7:14-20). Micah, in describing the marvelous character of God, presents a play on the meaning of his own name by raising the question, “Who is a God like Thee.” Micah prays for God to send the Good Shepherd to shepherd His flock, who, when He comes will show forth great signs (7:14-15), prophesies that nations will come to God in fear and submission (7:16-17), and praises God for pardoning iniquity and blessing His people (7:18-20). He praises God for His loving and gracious character, and for His conduct in pardoning sin and fulfilling His covenant.