

MICAH

Introduction

Author. His name is the shortened form of the older Micayahu meaning "Who is like Yahweh?" His home town was Moresheth which may be the same as Moresheth-gath (1:14), a rural town located about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. This town overlooks the coastal highway in the plain, which connected Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Date. Micah's introduction (1:1) states that he prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Thus the outside parameters of his ministry could possibly be from 739 to 686, a span of some fifty years. Judging merely from the information of the book (no mention of the fall of Samaria etc.) however, it appears as though Micah was silent for long periods of time and did not prophesy continually. His mention of the future destruction of Samaria (1:6) indicates a beginning of his ministry before 722, and the list of towns in 1:8-16 may refer to Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C.

Historical Background. Although the prosperous times of Uzziah were drawing to a close under the growing Assyrian threat many were still living in the twilight of past affluence. One of Micah's major thrusts concerns social injustices created by the extremes of wealth and poverty on the part of the people.

Structure.

Major Divisions. The beginnings of the three major divisions are marked out by the imperative "Hear" (1:2; 3:1; 6:1), resulting in the division of chapters 1-2 (I), 3-5 (II), and 6-7 (III). Each division opens with an oracle of doom (1:2--2:11; 3:1-12; 6:1--7:6) and closes with an oracle of hope (2:12-13; 4:1--5:15; 7:7-20).

Four Pericopes. In divisions I and III there may be four balancing pericopes:

	I.	III.
1. a covenant lawsuit	1:2-7	6:1-8
2. a lament	1:8-16	7:1-6
3. an explanation for the impending catastrophe	2:1-11	6:9-16
4. an oracle of hope	2:12-13	7:7-20

Chiasm. There may be an intended chiasm in the central portion of the book (cf. outline). If such is the case it would tend to center the attention on the establishment of the ideal theocracy under God's Davidic representative.

Message Statement. *The Davidic kingdom which is about to soon end will reach even greater heights through the coming Messianic deliverer.*

Argument

- 1A INDICTMENT, LAMENT AND PROMISE 1:1--2:13
Micah begins his book with terminology (riv) and structure (summons of witnesses, indictment, judgment) reminiscent of a covenant lawsuit. Israel is being tried in a legal court for her breach of her covenantal obligations with Yahweh. Much of Micah's message involves a cataloguing of these sins as evidence against her. Because of her sin, Yahweh has no choice but to judge the nation. But in spite of this inevitable result, God will have mercy on the nation and will fulfill his promises to her as given in the covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

This message of inevitable doom (1:1-7) elicits a response of lament from the prophet in 1:8-16. He first laments the fate of the capital city and then lists ten cities which are warned of coming judgment. This list amounts to an itinerary of judgment in which Micah apparently makes a word play on the names of the towns. For example the city "Shaphir" whose name means "beautiful city" will "go away in nakedness" (1:11a). The time element of this oracle probably concerns the invasion of 701 B.C. by Sennacherib when he allegedly captured or destroyed 46 cities of Judah.

By means of a woe oracle Micah specifies the reason for the judgment (2:1-11). The sins of the people are listed first and seem to concentrate on social relationships (2:1-5). Micah then records a heated encounter between certain false prophets and himself (2:6-11). Micah ends this section on a positive note however. In spite of these sins, God will be gracious and shepherd his flock (2:12-13).

- 2A BLESSING WILL FOLLOW JUDGMENT 3:1--5:15
In 3:1-12, Micah once again pronounces coming doom on the nation. The leadership and false prophets are again the focus of attention. The leaders have taken advantage of the people and have failed to execute justice for them. The prophets prophesy peace for those who pay them and war against those who fail to pay. For these sins calamity will come upon them and the city over which they rule.

Although Israel has failed in her role as a light to the nations Micah states in 4:1-8 that one day she will fulfill that role and be the channel of world wide blessing.

The next section is marked by the word "now" in 4:9 and 5:1. At the beginning and the end of the section reference is made to the king. The human king is not able to deliver, but one day a king will come (5:2-3) and he will deliver the nation from all her enemies (5:4-6). The Assyrian is probably used prototypically of all Israel's enemies.

Once again Micah describes the future role of Israel as a channel of blessing to Gentiles (5:7-9). In order to achieve that status, however, she will have to undergo severe judgmental cleansing. Micah concludes this section with a description of that cleansing. Everything that has caused Israel's trust in Yahweh to wane will be removed: horses, fortifications, fortunetellers, idolatry (5:10-14). This judgement will assure a fresh start for the kingdom. The nation (5:1-14) and the nations (5:15) will be pure.

3A INDICTMENT, LAMENT AND PROMISE 6:1--7:20

In the third and final section Micah begins as he did in the first section with a lawsuit (6:1-5). Micah gives the correct response to God's query (6: 6-8). He then hands down a final major indictment against the nation (6:9-16). The focus once again is upon social injustice and particularly economic injustice. This provokes another lament from the prophet (7: 1-6). He grieves that the godly will be as scarce as grapes after the harvesters have picked them.

The book closes however with a final message of hope. Micah first expresses his hope in the Lord in spite of the present situation (7:7-13). He then appears to address a prayer to God that he would "shepherd His flock" common messianic terminology to be sure but terms which probably allude to the context here concerning the Messiah (5:4-6). Finally, Micah consoles himself with a description of God's person and promises. He pardons iniquity, is merciful, compassionate and faithful to his promise to Abraham (7:18-20).

Outline

1A	INDICTMENT, LAMENT AND PROMISE	1:1--2:13
1B	<u>Judgment to Come and the Reason Why</u>	1:1--2:11
1C	God's lawsuit against Israel	1:1-7
2C	Micah's lament over Judah's incurable disease	1:8-16
1D	Micah's lament over Jerusalem	1:8-10a
2D	Micah's lament over ten cities of Judah	1:10b-16
3C	The reason for judgment specified	2:1-11
1D	The sins of the people	2:1-5
1E	Their actions	2:1-2
2E	Their sentence	2:3-5
2D	The sins of the false prophets	2:6-11
2B	<u>A Promise Of Hope</u>	2:12-13
2A	BLESSING WILL FOLLOW JUDGMENT	3:1--5:15
1B	<u>God's Punishment of Jerusalem</u>	3:1-12
2B	<u>The Future Roles of Israel and Jerusalem</u>	4:1-8
3B	<u>Jerusalem's Distress Because of No King</u>	4:9-10
4B	<u>Jerusalem's Triumph Because of the Ideal King</u>	4:11--5:6
5B	<u>The Future Roles of the Remnant</u>	5:7-9
6B	<u>God's Punishment Israel</u>	5:10-15
3A	INDICTMENT, LAMENT AND PROMISE	6:1--7:20
1B	<u>Messages of Reproof and Lament</u>	6:1--7:7
1C	God's case against Israel	6:1-8
1D	Summons to witnesses	6:1-2
2D	Statement of the case	6:3
3D	Recital of the benevolent acts of the Suzerain	6:4-5
4D	Micah's vicarious response for the nation	6:6-8
2C	The reason for judgment specified: commercial injustice	6:9-16
3C	Micah's lament of the nation's sins	7:1-6
2B	<u>A Promise of Hope</u>	7:7-20
1C	Micah's confidence in the Lord	7:7-13
2C	Micah's prayer that God would shepherd	

flock
3C The basis for the hope: the person and
promises of Yah weh

7:14-17

7:18-20