

# INTRODUCTION TO 33<sup>RD</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## MICAH (737 - 714 B.C)(5<sup>th</sup>)

A. The writer, recipients and date of the book of Micah.	1
B. The division of the book of Micah.	1
C. The main messages of the book of Micah.	1

### **A. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF MICAH.**

Micah is the sixth of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name ‘Micah’ or more completely ‘Micaiah’<sup>1</sup> means “*Who is like God*” (7:18). He lived in the region Southwest from Jerusalem bordering Philistia. He must be distinguished from another prophet called Micah mentioned in 1 Kings 22:8. Micah prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah and directed his prophecies mainly to Judah, but also to Samaria (cf. 1:5-6). Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1).

According to chapter 1:6, he began his prophesying before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and according to Jeremiah 26:18, he still prophesied during the days of Hezekiah. Thus, Micah prophesied from about **737 to after 727 or 714 B.C.** He was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah, who also worked in Judah, and the prophet Hosea, who worked in Israel. Micah lived during the time when Judah was continually attacked by Israel and Syria, and by the Philistines and Edomites<sup>2</sup> and during the rise of the Assyrian Empire under Tiglath-Pilezer.

### **B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF MICAH.**

The book of Micah may be given the title, “**God’s controversy with Israel and Judah.**”

It has three parts:

#### **1. Micah 1-2. God’s controversy with the capitals Samaria and Jerusalem.**

Their idolatry and injustice will be punished (1:1 to 2:11). The remnant will be blessed: Their King will go ahead of them (2:12-13).

#### **2. Micah 3 to 5. God’s controversy with the leaders of Israel and Judah.**

Their oppression, lies and greed for money will be punished (chapter 3). The remnant, rescued from Babylon, will be blessed: Their Ruler will shepherd them and will be their peace (chapter 4-5. 5:2-5).

#### **3. Micah 6-7. God’s controversy with the people of Israel and Judah.**

Their empty religious ritualism, injustice, violence and hatred for one another will be judged (6:1 to 7:7). Those who have the Lord as their Light will be blessed (7:8-9): God will forgive their sins and hurl all their iniquities into the depths of the sea (7:18-19)(7:8-20).

### **C. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF MICAH.**

The prophet Micah generally has a message of judgement and salvation. Each section begins with an accusation and a judgement of sin and ends with a promise of salvation.

#### **1. Micah proclaims judgement.**

God calls all the people living on earth to listen to his accusation and judgement of Israel and Judah (1:2).

- In chapter 1 and 2, God accuses and judges particularly *the capitals Samaria and Jerusalem*. He accuses and judges them for their idolatry and their injustice.
- In chapter 3 to 5, God accuses and judges particularly *the leaders and prophets of Israel and Judah*. God condemns the leaders who strip the skin from their own people and chop their own people in pieces simply to profit themselves (3:2-3). God condemns the false prophets who prophesy lies and falsely proclaim peace when disaster is about to come (3:5). God condemns the judges for taking bribes, the priests for teaching for a price and the prophets for telling fortunes for money (3:11).
- And in chapter 6 to 7, God accuses and judges particularly *the people of Israel and Judah*. He condemns them for their empty ritualism of bringing many sacrifices, instead of doing what God required of them. Micah 6:8 says, “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” He accuses and judges the people for following the traditions of the evil kings, Ahab and Omri, namely, idolatry, witchcraft and immorality (6:16)<sup>3</sup>. He accuses and judges the people because they sweep the godly people away from their midst, they murder and trap one another and their hands are skilled in doing evil (7:2-3).

#### **2. Micah proclaims salvation.**

The Messiah is the One who breaks open the way.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 26:18

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 16:5f.; Isaiah 7:1f

<sup>3</sup> Immorality includes: “The sexual immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers - all who will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

In chapter 2:12-13, God promises that he will gather *the remnant* of the whole of Israel together and that he will lead them as a Shepherd and King. He promises that there will come One who breaks open the way through the gate of the sheep and that he will go up in front of God's saved remnant<sup>4</sup>. This is a reference to the Coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

This was partly fulfilled when after the exile to Assyria and Babylon, God led the remnant of Israel back to the land. It continued to be fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus Christ, when God began to gather a new people for himself.

#### The Messiah as the Ruler who shepherds his sheep.

In chapter 4 and 5, God promises that he will gather and redeem the remnant of his people from Babylon (4:6,10). Then out of Bethlehem, God will give them a Ruler "whose origins are from of old, from ancient times". This is an expression that indicates that the Messiah existed before the creation, thus, forever<sup>5</sup>. He will be born of a woman and his birth will be the beginning of the great Messianic Age.

The survivors of Judah are called 'the brothers of the Messiah', because the Messiah comes from the tribe of Judah. They will be joined by the survivors of the ten tribes of Israel<sup>6</sup>. *Also the prophet Micah pictures the Messianic Age only in terms of the nation of Israel and its institutionalised forms. But in the light of the New Testament revelation, this prophecy says that in Jesus Christ all the people of God from all nations in the world will be gathered and united to jointly enjoy salvation, fellowship with God and all the other blessings in Christ (5:3).*

This Ruler will *stand* and shepherd his flock (5:4). The Messiah King is pictured, not as sitting on a throne, but as *standing among his people*, lovingly involved in their everyday life<sup>7</sup>. This Ruler will protect his flock with the strength and majesty of the Lord. When the Lord is called "this Ruler's God", then the Messiah is here pictured in his human nature as the Mediator between man and God.

This Ruler's greatness will reach to the ends of the earth (5:4). According to Luke 1:32-33, the angel Gabriel said concerning Jesus Christ, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end"<sup>8</sup>.

And finally, this Ruler will be their peace (5:5). The word *peace* summarises everything connected to salvation, because it speaks of peace between God and man, of peace between man and other men, of peace between the people of different nations and of peace experienced within. In the light of the New Testament revelation, according to Ephesians 2:14, Jesus Christ is our peace. And in the light of Romans 5:1-11 believers have peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, with the Coming of this Messiah Ruler, the Messianic Age will begin and chapter 4:1-2 will go into fulfilment: "The word of God will go out from Jerusalem" means that the gospel message will go out from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world<sup>9</sup>. People from all nations will come to this gospel message. They will learn God's ways and walk in God's paths.

And finally, the Messianic Age will come to a close and chapter 4:3-4 will go into fulfilment: "God will judge between many peoples. ... They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." This is a description of the Final Judgement Day. And after that, "every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid." This is a description of the new heaven and the new earth after the Final Judgement. *Like all the Old Testament prophets, Micah described the end-time events in terms of the nation of Israel only, because he did not yet know the 'mystery' which was revealed to the apostles.* According to that mystery the Gentile Christians would become heirs of this future glory together and on equal footing with the Jewish Christians<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John 10:1-16

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 90:2

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 3:18; Hosea 1:11

<sup>7</sup> In Revelation 1:12-17 One like a son of man (that is Jesus Christ) stands in the midst of the seven lampstands. He is present and active among all the churches in the world.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:10

<sup>9</sup> Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:29

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 3:2-6