

An Introduction to the Book of Micah

I. TITLE OF THE BOOK:

A. Hebrew: In Hebrew the book is titled hkym after the prophet to whom it was given. It seems that the name Micah has been shortened from the longer Why*k*m! meaning “Who is like Yahweh?”¹

B. Greek: In Greek the book is titled MICAIAS again after the prophet to whom it was given

II. AUTHOR:

A. The author, Micah, was of the town called Moresheth which may be the same town mentioned in 1:14, Moresheth-gath. If so, Micah came from a little town not far from Jerusalem (25 miles SW of Jerusalem near the Philistine city of Gath)

HEATER writes, “Isaiah was apparently a more urbane prophet, personally acquainted with kings and leaders. Micah, like Amos, may not have been part of the official prophets’ guild. His trips to Jerusalem as a ‘country’ prophet no doubt confirmed what he had heard from a distance. He shared with Isaiah, however, an unswerving commitment to the covenant of Yahweh and an abhorrence of the sin so prevalent in his day”²

B. Micah lived during the times of the kings of Judah--Jotham (750-732/35), Ahaz (735-713/16), and Hezekiah (716-687)

C. Micah’s contemporaries were:³

1. Isaiah--who prophesied during the times of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah

2. Amos--who prophesied during the time of Uzziah (and Jeroboam II in Israel)

3. Hosea--who prophesied during the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (and Jeroboam II in Israel)

D. For a good discussion of unity under one author (Micah) see Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 131-33.

III. DATE: Eighth Century B.C. probably before the fall of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. to Sennacherib's march to Judah in 701 B.C.

A. That Micah mentions the "decrees of Omri" (c. 885-874 B.C.), the "works of the dynasty of Ahab" (c. 874-853; [Mic 6:16](#)), and Assyria indicates that at least part of Micah's ministry was before the fall of Samaria in 722/21 B.C.

B. The similarities between [Micah 6:10-11](#) and [Amos 8:5-6](#) supports a time which would have been before the fall of Samaria⁴

C. If 1:10-16 is describing the march of Sennacherib from Lachish to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. we may have a terminus boundary for the book

D. Probably Micah's references to the fall of Judah and Jerusalem by "Babylon" ([Micah 3:12](#); [4:10](#)) were typico-prophetic⁵ (cf. [Jer 26:18](#) where Jeremiah affirms that Micah predicted the fall of Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.)⁶

IV. HISTORICAL SETTING:

A. Micah was a contemporary with Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea for at least for part of his ministry

B. Tiglath-pileser had conquered all of northern Syria by 740 (the date of Uzziah's death)

1. He conquered the Aramean city-state of Hamath

2. He forced all small kingdoms, including Israel under Menahem to pay tribute ([2 Kings 15:19f](#)) and Judah under "Azariah" (Uzziah)⁷

3. He entered Palestine in 734 B.C., set up a base of operations at the River of Egypt. Many small states rebelled against him including Israel in the Syro-Ephraimite war (733 B.C.).

4. Judah would not participate in the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. The coalition attempted to overthrow the Davidic dynasty to appoint a king who would join the coalition ([2 Kings 15:37](#); [16:5](#); [Isa. 7:1](#))

5. Isaiah exhorted Ahaz to trust in the YHWH; he refused and turned to Assyria ([Isa. 7](#); [2 Kings 16:7-9](#))

6. Tiglath-pileser invaded Israel and almost came to Judah's borders ([Isa. 15:29](#))

a. Israel's king--Hosea paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser (732)

b. Tiglath-pileser died (727) and Hosea (who overtook Pekah in Israel) refused (in alliance with So of Egypt) to pay tribute to Shalmaneser V as he had to Tiglath-pileser ([2 Kings 17:4](#)).

C. Assyria (Shalmaneser or his successor Sargon II) moved against Israel and after a three year siege, took the capital of Samaria (721) and carried the people into captivity

D. Assyria expanded unto the northern boundary of Judah. Judah was also left alone when many of the city states of Palestine and Syria along with Egypt rebelled against Assyria and were put down in 720 B.C.

E. Judah (under Hezekiah) joined an uprising along with Egypt, Edom, and Moab against Assyria (713-711)

F. Sargon (of Assyria) took Ashdod and Gath leaving Judah vulnerable

G. Sargon died in 705 leading to revolt by many including Judah under Hezekiah along with Babylon ([2 Kings 20:12-19](#); [Isa. 39:1-4](#))

H. Sennacherib (of Assyria) retaliated in 701 defeating Sidon, receiving tribute from Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, subjugating Ashkelon and Ekron, and surrounding Hezekiah⁸ and forcing him to pay tribute to Sennacherib ([2 Kings 18:13-16](#))

V. AUDIENCES: Micah wrote to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah/Jerusalem; nevertheless, the southern nation of Judah was his primary audience

VI. PURPOSES:

A. To warn the northern kingdom, Israel, of impending judgment because of its covenant disloyalty

B. To warn the southern kingdom, Judah, of impending judgment because of its covenant disloyalty

C. To confirm for Judah that they were just as guilty as was Israel, so they would be judged like Israel

D. To emphasize God's justice and love in disciplining the nation

E. To affirm God's future restoration of His people (not the major purpose)

F. To present "God as the sovereign Lord of the earth who controls the destinies of nations, including His covenant people Israel"⁹

¹ Homer Heater, Jr., Notes on the Book of Micah, unpublished class notes in seminar in the preexilic Old Testament prophets [Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1990], 33.

Micah, or Micaiah, was a common name in the OT (cf. [Judges 17--18](#); [1 Chron 5:5](#); [9:15](#); [23:20](#); [2 Chron 34:20](#); [1 Ki 22:8](#); [Neh 10:11](#)).

² Homer Heater, Jr., Notes on the Book of Micah, unpublished class notes in seminar in the preexilic Old Testament prophets [Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1990], 33.

³ Homer Heater, Jr., Notes on the Book of Micah, unpublished class notes in seminar in the preexilic Old Testament prophets [Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1990], 33.

⁴ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary, XXXII:5.

⁵ Chisholm's discussion is helpful here: several explanations for the reference to Babylon (4:10) may be offered. One could label this line a later gloss without necessitating a late date for the entire context. However, if 4:10 is a gloss, why were 5:5-6 and 7:12, which view Assyria as Judah's enemy and place of exile, not altered by the proposed editor for the sake of consistency? Another possibility is that Micah, like Isaiah (cf. 39:6-7), foresaw a distant Babylonian exile beyond the Assyrian crisis of his own day. However, if so, why did he picture Assyria as Judah's eschatological enemy (cf. 5:5-6) and view it as the place where Zion's people would be exiled (7:12)? A third possibility is that Micah, in mentioning Babylon, was referring (from his perspective at least) to the Assyrians, who conquered Babylon and regarded it as an important religious center. Micah may have chosen the name 'Babylon' for its symbolic value or because of its association with Nimrod (cf. [Gen. 10:10](#)), whom the prophet names in 5:6 in conjunction with Assyria. Since [Genesis 10:8-12](#) identifies Nimrod as the founder of both Assyria and Babylon, the two were probably closely related in Israelite thought (Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 133).

⁶ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary, XXXII:5.

⁷ LaSor, *et al*, p. 367--cannot find this in *ANET*, p. 283f.

⁸ Cf. *ANET*, p. 288.

⁹ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 160.

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