

Minor Prophets: Micah

Background

- Micah is from the town of Moresheth, a community in Judah between Jerusalem and Gath and slightly to the south. Moresheth means “possession of” in Hebrew. It is later referred to as Moresheth-Gath in verse 14 of Chapter 1, making some speculate that it was under the control of Gath. Gath means “winepress”, so it may not have anything to do with the town Goliath was from, but just be a descriptive name such as “winepress owner”.
- Jeremiah 26:18 quotes Micah.
- Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah. This puts his prophesy in the years between 750 and 686 B.C. He would have seen the fall of the northern kingdom and the growing threat of invaders in the Judah.
 - Jotham reigned from 750-735 B.C. He was a good king, but he did not remove the high places.
 - Ahaz reigned from 732-716 B.C. He operated as co-regent with his father for a period. He did evil in the sight of the LORD. He made an alliance with Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, becoming a vassal king of Assyria. He borrowed religious customs from Assyria, going so far as to offer at least one son to the god Moloch. Isaiah was a constant prophetic thorn in his side.
 - Hezekiah reigned from 715-686 B.C. He was a good king. During his reign the northern kingdom was taken by Sargon in 722 B.C. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib took major cities in Judah and according to the Bible and Assyrian records surrounded Jerusalem, but did not take it. He did send gold and silver from the temple in an attempt to bribe Assyria to leave. It didn't work. In the end, the angel of the LORD destroys 185,000 Assyrians. During this time Hezekiah welcomed envoys from Babylon and showed them all he owned and everything in his realm. Isaiah tells him that all of it will be taken later by Babylon.
- His prophesy was concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
- Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. Isaiah served the king of Jerusalem. Micah was from common stock and had a concern for the poor and downtrodden. They have parallel passages.

What Does Micah Say?

First Cycle: Judgment and Deliverance: (Chs. 1-2)

- Both Samaria and Jerusalem are condemned for their idolatry.
- Micah prophesies that Samaria's wound is incurable and will approach the gate of Jerusalem. This is a direct reference to Assyria.
- Verses 10-15 are a lament with an inclusio referencing David and a pun for each town named.
 - “Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all...” comes from 2 Samuel 1:20 when David laments Saul and Jonathan's deaths. Essentially Micah is saying that doom is coming, don't say it too loud, we don't want our enemies to rejoice at our calamity.
 - Beth-le-aphrah: house of dust paired with a call to “roll in dust.”
 - Shaphir: beautiful or fair is paired against “nakedness and shame”. Shame (bu-Shah) in the Hebrew has a similar sound to the word Shafir.
 - Zaanan: sounds like the Hebrew for “come out”. They are told not to “come out”.
 - Beth-ezel: means the house next door, near, neighbors or join together. Ezel is similar to the Hebrew word for “withdraw”. Ironically the house next door is taking away its support (standing ground) from its neighbor.
 - Maroth: sounds like the word for “bitter” (marah). They wait for good, but will be bitterly disappointed, because the LORD is bringing disaster to the gate of Jerusalem.
 - Lachish: sounds like the word for horses (rekeh). Lachish, ironically, means invincible. The idea is that the inhabitants of horse town are to harness their horses so they can flee. Lachish the second most important city after Jerusalem. It would have had many chariots and horses.

- Micah says that Lachish was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion (Jerusalem).
Apparently, idolatry crept in from the northern tribes to Lachish and then to Jerusalem.
 - Moreseth-gath: the name sounds like the word for “betrothed/engaged.” Lachish is told to give parting gifts/dowry as you would at a wedding when your daughter goes away.
 - Achzib: the word sounds like the Hebrew for “deceptive.” It shall be deceitful to the kings of Israel.
 - Mareshah: the word sounds like the Hebrew for “conqueror”, which is what the LORD will bring.
 - The glory of Israel, referring to leaders/men of rank, will need to flee like David did to Adullam.
This was David’s stronghold in 2 Samuel 23:13, and 5:17, where he hid from the Philistines.
 - Vs. 16 They are told to mourn for their children who will be in exile.
- In Chapter 2:1-11, Micah addresses very specific sins of the land of Judah.
 - They are devising evil things while they lay in bed and then proceed to carry it out. Specifically, Micah addresses this being played out in oppressing their fellow country-men by taking their land away. There is a reference here to Ahab and Jezebel.
 - As a result He will give their land to an apostate people.
 - They will not listen to Micah and tell him to stop preaching. Micah responds with sarcasm and says that they would listen if he prophesied lies and promised wine and beer.
- Chapter 2:12-13 give a glimmer of hope for the future.
 - A remnant will be gathered and brought back.
 - Remez is a Hebrew way of teaching. It means hint. It is a way of referring to something without mentioning all of it and the application in the immediate context is found in what has been left out. Most likely Matthew 11:12 is a Remez, in which Jesus uses Micah to teach the people that they the kingdom of heaven is at hand and has been since the John the Baptist came on the scene.
 - Matthew 11:12 can be more literally translated as ‘And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven is being breached (by the Breach Maker) and the breachers are possessing it.’
 - This remnant is following the breach maker. They possess the kingdom of heaven, according to Matthew.
 - They follow the king who goes before them. He is the LORD.

Second Cycle: Degradation and Exaltation (Chs. 3-5)

- Micah condemns the leaders of both north and south for loving evil and hating good. They metaphorically devour the people like cannibals.
- He condemns the prophets who speak lies, and says that they will have no more words from God. This is contrasted with Micah who is filled with power from God.
- Yahweh promises that because of the leaders’, priests’, and prophets’ sin Zion will be plowed under as a field and become a heap of ruins with only trees left on it. This came true in 135 A.D. when Roman emperor Hadrian crushed the last Israelite rebellion.
- Micah now shifts to a message of hope again. He describes the latter days.
 - The mountain of the house of the LORD will be the highest (i.e. most important).
 - The nations will go to it and learn His ways.
 - There will be worldwide peace.
 - Instead of war, all will sit under their own vines and fig trees (important as symbols of prosperity).
 - All the outcasts, afflicted and lame will be gathered to become the remnant and a strong nation.
 - Jerusalem will again be home to the king.
- Micah shifts to the present with the word “Now...”
 - He describes the struggles of the nations with a metaphor of childbirth that results in exile to Babylon.

- Again Micah begins with “Now...”
 - The nations gather with glee at God’s judgment on Israel like sheaves on a threshing floor. He then turns the metaphor to Israel rising and threshing the nations.
- Micah uses a final “Now...”
 - Siege is coming and it will, ironically, strike the king (judge of Israel) with a rod (scepter).
- “BUT...” someone from the home of David, Bethlehem Ephrathah, is coming.
 - He is “from of old,” which most likely refers to His genealogy going back to David. The books from Matthew and Luke both go to great lengths to show this.
 - He is going to give “them” (Israel) up until the time when “she who is in labor gives birth” (most likely refers back to 4:10).
 - He shall shepherd his flock and there will be peace.
 - The Assyrians will be conquered.
 - The remnant will be delivered and be irresistible to the nations. It will not be a military victory. It will be without physical means. The LORD will make it happen.

Third Cycle: Hope in Darkness (Chs. 6-7)

- Micah describes a court case in which the mountains are called as witnesses against Israel.
 - God brings back history of Israel’s past sins. They haven’t changed.
- Micah asks what the LORD requires to remediate these sins.
 - Despite Israel’s perception, the LORD requires that they “do justice, love kindness” and a “humble walk.”
- The LORD declares his judgment: destruction is coming because they have sinned according to the ways of the wicked kinds like Omri and Ahab.
- Ch 7 Micah speaks and paints a dire picture of the nation. All love evil, good is bad, no one is trustworthy.
- Micah contrasts this with himself. He will look to the LORD and wait for the LORD. As a result he will be heard.
- Even though his enemy will rejoice over and mock him, God will vindicate him.
- Vs. 11 transitions to the future with “in that day.”
 - Walls will be rebuilt, exiles will return and the Shepherd will rule them and the nations will fear Him.
- Micah ends with a doxology, painting a future hope of God not only pardoning and passing over sin, but destroying it, by trampling it underfoot and casting it into the sea.

What Does It Mean?

- Judgment is coming on Israel now... but a breachmaker is coming who is from Bethlehem Ephrathah. He is from of old, from the line of Judah, Perez and David. He will shepherd his people and destroy their sins so that they can do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with their God.

How it Applies

- Looking at the connections to Jesus, we can stand back in awe and wonder at the amazing over arching story of the Bible. God is in control of History and the small details of His Word.
- We look back on Micah from the position of being among those who have been freed by the Breach Maker. He has “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Do we *do justice, and love kindness and walk humbly with our God?*
- Can we say with Micah that we “look to the LORD” and “wait for the God of [our] salvation?”