



Micah

The prophet Micah prophesied at a similar time to the prophets Isaiah, Amos and Hosea. Whereas Hosea and Amos prophesied in the northern Kingdom of Israel, Micah and Isaiah prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah, though their messages were addressed to both nations. Like the other three, Micah condemned the attitude of the wealthy, particularly the way in which they oppressed the poor with their actions.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 20 mins
Short of time? Just read 1.1-7; 2.6-13; 6.1-8



Genre

Prophecy



Anything tricky?

As often with these kinds of books the trickiest feature is working out how to respond to the reports of God's anger and judgement.



Inspiring quotes

¹ In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, ² and many nations shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
(Micah 4.1-2)

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.
(Micah 5.2)

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
(Micah 6.8)



About the Author

The prophet Micah probably spoke most of the words contained in this book. Some think that an exception to this are the messages of comfort to people after a disaster which may have been added later when the first prophecies were gathered together.

What do we know about him?

Micah was a prophet who came from Moresheth in south-west Judah and prophesied in Jerusalem between around 737-696 bc.



What kind of Book is it?

Prophecy. The unusual feature of Micah is that its subject matter changes abruptly from judgement to hope and back again. This makes it quite hard to read in one go.



Look out for...

Micah criticizes both Israel and Judah (almost equally). Keep an eye open for the criticism and see whether you think that the two nations sin the same way as each other.

Look out for what Micah's major criticisms of the leaders were and ask yourself whether today's leaders risk the same critique.

A theme of the book is being God's chosen people. This seems to come with expectations – look out for what these are as you read.



What could this mean for me?

What do you think living justly means in practice?



About the times

Most of the eighth century bc had been a time of great peace and prosperity. By the end of it, however, it is thought that the prosperity was beginning to tail off. This might explain the problem of oppression that we see in the book of Micah. When there is less wealth than there has been, it is often the case that the rich hold onto this at the expense of the poor.

What were people feeling?

The book of Micah suggests that the rich were feeling complacent and the poor desperate.

Other books set around this time

Isaiah, Hosea, Amos



How is it structured?

- 1.1–2.11 The looming disaster for both Israel and Judah
- 2.12.13 A short word of hope
- 3.1-12 Messages of condemnation against corrupt leaders
- 4.1–5.15 Mixed messages but with a strong strand of hope
- 6.1–7.7 God's lawsuit against Israel
- 7.8-20 A liturgy of repentance



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- Talk about Micah's most famous phrase 'do justice' and 'love kindness' and 'walk humbly with your God'. It sounds good but what does it mean in practice? Talk about what things might fall under each heading (i.e. do justice; love kindness etc.). In the modern church which of these are we best at and which worst?
- It is clear from Micah 3 what he thinks leaders shouldn't do, from that try to work out what he thinks leaders should be and do.
- Micah has a lot of small passages of hope. What do you think he thought hope was – did you find it inspiring?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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