

Park Street Christian Formation: Spring 2020  
 Micah: Prophet Outside the Beltway  
 Contexts: Canonical, Geographical and Historical, Theological and Literary  
 1 March 2020

The messages of Micah are often overshadowed by those of his contemporary, Isaiah. Nevertheless, the pronouncements of this prophet who lived “outside the Jerusalem beltway” are powerful reminders of God’s persistent call to transformed lives.

**Canonical Context:** in the Book of the Twelve

Four of the earlier “minor” prophets addressed circumstances in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah).

**Geographical Context:** contours of the Land and why they matter

- Central hill country: *shephelah* and coastal plain to the west; wilderness and Rift Valley eastward
- Contrasts between the northern and southern regions
- Nature of the *shephelah*: east/west valleys served as invasion routes from the coast
- Micah’s hometown: Moresha/Moreshet-Gath on frontline

**Historical Developments in Geographical Context**

A Very General Timeline

1000	931	860-50	760	722	700	621	586
David/ Solomon	Kingdom Division	Ahab (N) Elijah	Hosea/ Amos	North fell	Hezekiah/ Isaiah/ <b>Micah</b>	Josiah	Judah exile

Kings of Judah and Israel [*italics = new dynasty*]

Date	Israel	Prophet	Judah	Foreign Threat
931	<b><i>Jeroboam</i></b>	Ahijah / “man of God” Shemaiah	Rehoboam	Egypt (Shishak)
	Nadab <b><i>Baasha</i></b> [Elah, Zimri]	Abijah	Asa	Syria (Aram)
	<b><i>Omri</i></b>		Jehoshaphat	
	Ahab	Elijah		
853	Jehoram	Elisha	Ahaziah	
841	<b><i>Jehu</i></b>		Athaliah	
	Jehoahaz		Joash	
	Jehoash		Amaziah	
750	Jeroboam (II) [final kings]	Hosea, Amos Jonah	Uzziah (Azariah) Jotham Ahaz	Assyria
722 [fall of North]		Isaiah <b>Micah</b>	Hezekiah Manasseh Amon	
640		Jeremiah Huldah Zephaniah Habakkuk Joel	Josiah Jehoahaz Jehoiakim Jehoiachin	Egypt/Babylon
587/6 [fall of South]				Zedekiah

## Kingdoms and Capitals

- North more open and vulnerable, especially after Omri moved the capital to Samaria
- Jerusalem, capital of the South, was more protected

Foreign Enemy Number One: Assyria [note placement of Micah in the Book of the Twelve directly after Jonah's message of God's mercy to Nineveh].

## **Literary and Theological Matters**

- Name: Micah – “who is like [the LORD]?”
- Inclusio
  - book begins with Micah's name and the declaration of the Sovereign LORD's holy Presence
  - ends with “who is like you?” [who had hurled the Egyptians into the sea in judgment [cf. 7:15]; and would in the end hurl Israel's iniquities into the sea – 7:18-20]
- Unusual word referring to prophetic activity: “to drip”

Covenant enforcement: role of the prophet

- Lawsuit
- “Hear” “Listen” “plead your case” (6:1-2)

Interweaving judgment (warning) and salvation (hope) oracles

- Judgment oracles against Samaria and the approaches to Jerusalem (1:2-16); against landed oppressors and lying prophets (2:1-11); *followed possibly by salvation of remnant (2:12-13)*
- Judgment oracles condemning vicious and corrupt rulers and false prophets, and predicting the fall of Jerusalem (3:1-12); *followed by radical shift – exaltation and restoration of ruined Jerusalem and Zion and God's remnant (4:1-8)*
- Tumultuous times ahead: a wave of trauma; *followed by the triumph of God's people (4:9-13); promise of Shepherd/King who will deliver the “remnant of Jacob” (5:1-9); promise that God will cut off all idolatrous practices (5:10-15)*
- The LORD's covenant lawsuit: review of history; the nature of true obedience; consequences of the broken covenant (6:1-7:6)
- *Hope through darkness; triumph over enemies; sin vanquished; God's pledge (7:7-20)*

## **Applications for Contemporary Church**

Micah's Targets: