

Introduction to the Commentary

Hermeneutical Considerations

Purpose of the Superscription “The word of YHWH that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.” So reads the superscription to the Micah document with its seven chapters in its Hebrew version in what is now the Book of the Twelve Prophets. It seems to clarify the author’s name, origins, and time, and not least the object of his prophecy. Thus the superscription does what one expects of such an introduction even in modern collected volumes—and the Book of the Twelve is a great collection of different prophetic writings. It distinguishes what is to follow from the other documents and announces the author and topic.¹ In fact, it has been quite common among exegetes to regard the information in this superscription as autobiographical, inasmuch as the Micah document—or the majority of it—was thought to contain the words of that prophet Micah who, in accordance with the time frame thus given, was situated in the eighth century BCE. Since we are relatively well-informed about the last third of that century, not only from biblical texts but also from other ancient Near Eastern sources, it seemed appropriate to associate Micah and his prophecy with the events of that period. This is especially the case regarding the expansion of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the Levant by means of a number of military campaigns (e.g., of the Assyrian king Sennacherib around 701 BCE). In fact, it seems that a number of Micah’s statements (especially Micah 1:8–16*) refer to a severe military threat.² The many social-critical statements in the Micah document likewise suggest that conclusions can be drawn from Micah’s writing regarding social conditions in the Southern Kingdom in the last third of the eighth century BCE.³ Specifically, some of these social-critical statements bear striking similarity to those of the two prophets of the Northern Kingdom, Hosea and Amos, but also to the words of the prophet of the Southern Kingdom, Isaiah—who is regarded as nearly contemporary with Micah. Thus, Micah can be seen as a kind of younger colleague or disciple of Isaiah. His origins in the land—Moresheth of Gath lies in the southwestern hill country of Judah—have led to extensive biographical speculations according to which Micah may have been a kind of village elder responsible for the needs of a formerly free farming population now

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- 1 Extensively on this question: Burkard M. Zapff, “Rückschlüsse aus der Entstehung der Michaschrift auf das Werden des Zwölfprophetenbuches,” in Heinz-Josef Fabry, ed., *The Book of the Twelve. Minor Prophets—Major Theologies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 79–101; Burkard M. Zapff, “Why is Micah Similar to Isaiah?” *ZAW* 129 (2017): 536–54.
 - 2 According to Björn Corzilius, *Michas Rätsel. Eine Untersuchung zur Kompositionsgeschichte des Michabuches*, BZAW 483 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2016), 145, this poem about the cities is probably associated with Sennacherib’s campaign.
 - 3 Thus, e.g., Rainer Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* 1, ATDSup 8/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 257–61.

exploited by a greedy upper class.⁴ Thus the eighth-century Micah became, analogously to his colleagues of the Northern Kingdom Amos and Hosea and in company with the Southern Kingdom prophet Isaiah, the social-critical prophet of the Southern Kingdom in the eighth century BCE and—thus—a voice of YHWH, who desired justice and righteousness. However, which words of the Micah document may actually be ascribed to the historical Micah is a question more and more hotly disputed among scholars, as in the case of the other prophetic books and writings associated with prophetic figures in the eighth century BCE. The position of Bernhard Stade acquired a powerful influence, at least in German-language scholarship. He denied that the whole second part of the Micah document (Micah 4–7) came from the eighth-century prophet.⁵ This is in contradistinction to large parts of English-language scholarship that tried, and still try, to allot those parts of the book to the eighth-century prophet.⁶ A middle position was adopted by those exegetes who wanted to ascribe at least Micah 6–7 to an anonymous prophetic figure, a “Deutero-Micah,” originally dwelling in the Northern Kingdom, whose prophecy was later joined to that of the Southern Kingdom prophet Micah from the eighth century BCE.

The fundamental problem for such an interpretation of the Micah document lies in the evaluation of the superscription, which has been and still is regarded almost as a matter of course as containing reliable historical information. It is striking, though, that the superscription not only delimits the Micah document as a separate entity within the Book of the Twelve, inasmuch as it attributes what follows to a single prophet named Micah from Moresheth, but also places these words in the context of other writings in the Book of the Twelve—especially Hosea and Amos;⁷ in so doing it fulfills the role proper to a superscription within a collected work. Accordingly it seems that Micah is both a younger contemporary of Hosea, the prophet of the Northern Kingdom, and also—at least from a chronological standpoint—a disciple of Amos. At the same time the date of his appearance is almost exactly congruent with that of Isaiah (Isa 1:1), so that Micah is also an exact, though somewhat younger, contemporary of Isaiah. Moreover, the list of kings reveals Deuteronomistic features and seems to be oriented to the royal list in the Deuteronomistic History. In addition, Micah’s preaching—like that of Hosea and Zephaniah—is described as “the word of YHWH,” which reveals another common feature: that is, the superscription of Micah does not only delimit, but also links. Thus a reading of the superscription as purely biographical information is too narrow inasmuch as, by all appearances, we are dealing with a superscription that, at least in its present form, is relatively late. So the question arises whether there will also be traces of the implied correspondence among Micah, Amos, and Hosea in the content of the Micah document’s message. That in turn raises the question whether parts of the Micah document are an echo of the preaching of

4 Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 4. Micha*, BKAT 14.4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), xv.

5 Bernhard Stade, “Bemerkungen über das Buch Micha,” ZAW 1 (1881): 164–65.

6 E.g., Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 8–13.

7 A recent and extensive description of this phenomenon is that of Aaron Scharf, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuches, Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse*, BZAW 260 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 42–46.

Hosea and Amos, so that one may rightly describe them as an expression of the *one* word of YHWH in a particular time and situation.

Correlations
with Hosea,
Amos, and
Isaiah

The present commentary seeks to pursue this line of inquiry by attending to correlations and parallels that tie the Micah document to its predecessors, the writings of Hosea and Amos. This interpretation rests in large part on the observations of recent studies concerning the origins of the Book of the Twelve, which are applied here in fresh ways.⁸ By starting again with the superscription we will be able to consider correspondences to Isaiah. In principle, of course, it is possible that the similarity and relatedness of Micah's preaching to that of Isaiah are due to the Micah's biographical proximity to Isaiah. However, should we find correspondences that reveal *simultaneous* links to the preaching of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, we will need to ask whether this does not represent a conscious dependence in the form of scribal erudition intended to make Micah correspond to the three prophets thus described. Additionally, there are texts in Micah's pronouncements that are only intelligible to those who have already read Hosea and Amos. In such cases the question naturally arises whether the texts in question ever existed in a Micah document independent of a book containing the works of several prophets. On that basis we may ask in turn which texts within the Micah document may have existed *devoid* of the posited contextual relationship and thus might really be attributed to a prophet named Micah in the eighth century BCE. In contrast to a primarily biographical approach that attempts to "rescue" every possible text in the Micah document for the eighth-century prophet (indeed, to what end?) in order to deduce from them the contemporary political and social situation, this commentary will take the opposite approach. Only in the case of texts that are not related to Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah and that, moreover, reveal no exilic or postexilic character will we consider the extent to which they might be attributed to the eighth-century prophet. Some may consider such a procedure hypercritical, but what is at issue here is only the application of a principle that has proved itself in the cases of other prophetic books such as Isaiah or Amos.⁹ As will be demonstrated, this in no way represents a minimizing of the claims of the Micah document's message: on the contrary, it corresponds to the tendency already evident in the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament not so much to individualize the prophetic message as to regard it as a single entity, crowned in the New Testament expressions about the (one) message of all the prophets (cf. Luke 24:25).¹⁰

8 Examples include the studies of James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993); Burkard M. Zapff, *Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Michabuch im Kontext des Dodekapropheten*, BZAW 256 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997); Scharf, *Entstehung*; Jakob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs. Entstehung und Komposition*, BZAW 360 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Corzilius, *Rätsel*.

9 Cf., e.g., Uwe Becker, *Jesaja—von der Botschaft zum Buch*, FRLANT 178 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

10 In fact, this is a tendency that finds its unique focus in the tradition of the Qu'ran, according to which all the prophets before Mohammed basically preached only the single message of the unity and uniqueness of God. The function of that message was "to be a guide for all humankind." Christfried Böttrich, Beate Ego, and Friedmann Eissler, *Elia und andere Propheten in Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 147.

Synchronic Analysis

Textual Basis

The basis for the interpretation of the Micah document offered in this commentary is the Masoretic text of *Codex Lenigradensis* as found in critical form in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) and recently, with an expanded critical apparatus, in the fascicle of the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ) containing the Book of the Twelve Prophets. This text is only “corrected” when it appears necessary because of evident textual corruption or a Masoretic vocalization that seems improbable in light of the overall context.

As a further textual basis alongside the Hebrew text transmitted and interpreted by the Masoretes, we will consider the Greek translation of the Micah document in the Septuagint (G). As a rule, the commentary will refer to the Rahlfs edition with its critical apparatus. The Greek text will not be applied to “correct” possible corruptions of the Hebrew text, but will be considered as an independent entity whose translation offers an interpretation with its own accents and emphases. In addition to our own interpretation, we will refer especially to the commentary on the German translation of G by Utzschneider in the *Septuaginta Deutsch*.¹¹ Consideration and evaluation of G as an independent tradition and interpretation of the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible is not only part of recent scholarship, but it is an ecumenical *desideratum* inasmuch as some churches grant G (also) canonical status.¹² The same is true in principle of the Syriac Bible, the *Peshitta* (S). Here we will use the text of *Codex Ambrosianus* in the critically-edited fascicle containing the Book of the Twelve Prophets and published by the Peshitta Institute of Leiden. However, given the limited length of this commentary we will consider only especially noteworthy Syriac deviations from the Hebrew or Greek text.

Comparison
with the
Septuagint

The Micah Document in the Book of the Twelve Prophets

The fact that the first reference in the Bible to the Twelve Prophets as a complete work with a common message (Sir 49:10),¹³ a conviction that is supported also by ancient text fragments that transmit the Twelve in a single scroll and not as

- 11 Helmut Utzschneider, *Michaia* (Micha). In Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus, *Septuaginta Deutsch. Erläuterung und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament II: Psalmen bis Daniel* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), 2362–80.
- 12 Consider Pope Benedict XVI’s speech in the *Aula Magna* of the University of Regensburg on Tuesday, 12 September 2006: “Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria—the Septuagint—is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation ...” Available at http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html; accessed 5 January 2021.
- 13 “May the bones of the Twelve Prophets send forth new life from where they lie, for they comforted the people of Jacob and delivered them with confident hope.” (NRSV)

separate books, favors the supposition that the Micah document also was meant to be understood and should be regarded not as an individual entity but in the context of the other documents of the *Dodekapropheton*. However, there is a problem in that the ordering of the writings in the Hebrew Bible is clearly different from that attested by G.

Location of
the Micah
document
within the
Book of the
Twelve

Whereas in the Masoretic tradition the Micah document follows that of Jonah, in G it appears immediately after the Hosea and Amos documents. There appear to be at least two reasons for the Masoretic order placing the Micah writing after that of Jonah: 2 Kgs 14:25 refers to a Jonah, the son of Amittai, with whom the prophet in the Jonah document is identified in Jonah 1:1. This Jonah, in turn, is said by 2 Kings to have appeared in the time of Amaziah, king of Judah, that is, in the first third of the eighth century BCE, whereas Micah from Moresheth came much later according to the chronology in Micah 1:1: namely, he proclaimed his prophecy after 756 BCE. Moreover, in its present placement in the Hebrew text the Micah document seems to play a kind of mediating role between the Jonah document with its tendency toward openness to the nations—the repentance and forgiveness of the Ninevites—and the Nahum document with its harsh words of judgment over Nineveh. It seems that Nineveh appears here as a kind of paradigm for the fundamental alternatives before which the nations stand. In fact, the Micah document distinguishes between nations that listen (Micah 1:2) and those that do not listen and are therefore subject to judgment (Micah 5:14). The placement of the Micah writing between those two documents has also left traces that can be demonstrated by redaction criticism in Micah 1:2 and Micah 7:8–20 (see below).

The Septuagint's different placement of the Micah document within the *Dodekapropheton*—namely, in third place after Hosea and Amos—seems also to have its reasons. For one thing, there is the length of the Micah document, which (except for Zechariah) is the longest among the Twelve after Hosea and Amos. Besides, the chronology given in the superscription to the Micah writing names Micah as direct successor to Amos, something that, by no means least importantly (as will be shown), finds an echo in later parts of Micah's message that are only comprehensible to someone who has previously read Hosea and Amos. It may be that this reflects an original ordering of the sequence of writings in the Book of the Twelve as it was developing. The fact that the Jonah document, in G's ordering, appears only *after* Micah (and Joel) may likewise be due to the chronology of the books of Kings. Thus, 1 Kgs 22:8 mentions a Micaiah ben Imlah who appeared in the time of kings Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah, but the Greek version of the Micah document seems to identify that person with the eighth-century prophet Micah from Moresheth, who would accordingly have been active *before* Jonah ben Amittai. Such is indicated even by 1 Kgs 22:28, where the call to the nations to listen (Micah 1:2) is found on the lips of Micaiah ben Imlah. Moreover, by its mention of a spirit that causes lies to be spoken, Micah 2:11 G appears to be alluding to 1 Kgs 22:22 (see below). Finally, it seems that because of the theme of "Nineveh" the Jonah document is close to the Nahum writing, which follows it in G; that suggests a parallelization of the two documents, perhaps with the goal of relativizing the view of the Jonah document (which seems so welcoming to the nations as illustrated by the sparing of Nineveh) by means of YHWH's judgment on Nineveh that, according to Nahum, happens after all.

Whether following the order of the Hebrew or the Greek Bible, the Micah document in any case continues the judgment on the Northern Kingdom that emerged in Hosea and Amos; it now encompasses the Southern Kingdom as well and ends, after the destruction of the sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom, with the devastation of Zion (Micah 3:12). Nevertheless, Micah 4:1–3 juxtaposes this with a renewal of Zion, which will not only replace the most important former sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom at Bethel but will become a new Sinai from which instruction will go forth for the nations as well (see below).

Thus, within the Book of the Twelve, the Micah document constitutes both a preliminary ending to the drama of YHWH's judgment over his people and a turning point and new beginning for YHWH's saving action that, at the same time, is open to the world of the nations. The subsequent writings are thus to be read and understood also in terms of this theological premise when they speak either of the final judgment on the nations (Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) or of the renewal of the community of YHWH in Jerusalem (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) and the salvation that goes forth from it. In that sense the Micah document constitutes a kind of center and node point in the Book of the Twelve Prophets.

The Division of the Micah Document and the Style of its Contents

A survey of the Micah document reveals various markers that can serve as anchors for an outline.¹⁴ These include the “hear, you peoples” in Micah 1:2, which has its counterpart in the reference in Micah 5:14 to the nations that do not listen. Since a second call to listen occurs in Micah 6:1, this time without concrete addressees, we might divide the Micah document into two corresponding sections: (1) Micah 1:2–5:14 and (2) Micah 6:1–7:20. The content of both sections is made up of misdeeds, judgment, and the renewal of Zion, linked by different fates for the nations: judgment by or conversion to YHWH.

A different division emerges if we include the calls to listen in Micah 3:1 (and 3:9). Then the Micah document can be subdivided into three parts: (1) Micah 1:2–2:13; (2) Micah 3:1–5:14; (3) Micah 6:1–7:20.

A primary focus on the level of *content* suggests other possibilities for dividing the Micah document. It appears that judgment sayings are regularly accompanied by words about salvation. Considering that yields a threefold division: (1) Micah 1:2–2:11, calamity // Micah 2:12–13, rescue; (2) Micah 3:1–12, calamity // Micah 4:1–5:14, rescue; (3) Micah 6:1–16; 7:1–7, calamity // Micah 7:8–20, rescue. Likewise the repeated (three times) echoes of the idea of a remnant could be a division marker. Thus Micah 2:12; 4:6; and 7:18 speak of a “remnant” that will be the seed of future salvation.

Finally, we could also regard the striking shift at Micah 3:12–4:1, from the devastation of Zion to its elevation as the center of the earth, as the central

Outline of the Micah document according to formal criteria

Outline of the Micah document according to content criteria

14 Most recently Kenneth H. Cuffey, *The Literary Coherence of the Book of Micah. Remnant, Restoration, and Promise* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), has devoted attention to this question.

division within the Micah document (and in the Book of the Twelve as a whole; cf. the Masoretes' note at the end of Micah 3:12), and this in the sense of a transition from calamity to ultimate salvation.

These different possibilities for dividing the Micah document indicate that it probably was not composed in a single draft; rather, various hands took part in shaping it. In the process it would not have been necessary for certain arrangements, such as the sequence of calamity and rescue and the framing with the call to the nations, to be mutually exclusive. Rather, they could express different aspects, such as the perspective of Zion/Israel toward salvation and the associated and yet differentiated fate of the nations.

Style and
arrangement
of the content

The style and arrangement of the content yield something like the following progression:

Micah 1:2–16 depicts a theophany of YHWH that is directed, according to the superscription in Micah 1:1, at Samaria but that threatens to extend to Judah and Jerusalem as well (cf. Micah 1:9, 12).

Micah 2:1–11, in a first move, names the sinful behavior of the upper class that is causing trouble: they not only exploit the property of the people of the land, who are at their mercy, but forbid any kind of prophetic criticism of their actions and trust in YHWH's apparently unconditional promise of salvation. Such prophets of prosperity are instead portrayed by Micah as leading the people astray; moreover, the people are evidently happy to be so led.

The first promise of salvation in Micah 2:12–13 links to the threat in Micah 2:10, understood as a prediction of the exile; it promises the return of a remnant, referring to YHWH's former saving acts in the context of the exodus.

Micah 3:1–12 intensifies the prophet's accusations and the resulting judgment of YHWH. Now the evildoers of Micah 2 not only despoil those they are exploiting of their property but even deprive them of their very existence. Prophets not only tell the people what they want to hear but exploit their prophetic office to enrich themselves and to damage those who do not submit to them. YHWH's acts of judgment begin with these false prophets from whom Micah, as a true prophet of YHWH, vehemently distances himself. The utterly corrupt actions of Judah's upper class, which desecrates Zion, lead to the devastation of Mount Zion.

As Micah 2:12–13 juxtaposed a prophecy of salvation to the threatening words in Micah 2:10 (understood as a threat of exile), so Micah 4:1–4 follows the devastation of Zion in Micah 3:12 with the elevation of Zion to become the center of the world of all nations. This is followed in Micah 4:6–8 with another promise of salvation in the form of a gathering and restoration of the remnant of Jacob and the enduring rule of YHWH.

That in turn is contrasted, in Micah 4:9–14, with the pitiful present state of Zion, which suffers above all from the absence of a king, or of royal rule, and is oppressed by the nations.

Micah 5 links the return of royal rule in various forms (renewal of individual kingship in Micah 5:1–3; kingship of the remnant of Jacob in the midst of the nations in Micah 5:6–7) to a final purifying judgment of Zion in Micah 5:9–13 and judgment on the nations that are unwilling to listen in Micah 5:14.

Micah 6 sets YHWH's saving acts in the past (Micah 6:1–5) over against Israel's misbehavior (Micah 6:9–16) and formulates YHWH's expectations of each individual in Israel and the nations (Micah 6:6–8).

Finally, in Micah 7:1–17 the starting point is trust in YHWH, which the prophet exemplifies in view of the overall chaos in society. Its acceptance by Zion, which at the same time admits its guilt, leads to the fall of its enemy (called “she”) or the conversion of the nations to YHWH.

The Micah document ends in Micah 7:18–20 with a hymnic conclusion that stresses YHWH’s fidelity and readiness to swear unswerving loyalty. Thus the drama of the Micah document leads to a good ending.

There are, in fact, tendencies in recent scholarship to point out dramatic elements in the Micah document.¹⁵ After what has just been said, one should avoid viewing the Micah document as a solitary unit, but should see it instead as both a preliminary conclusion and a climax to the preceding books of Hosea and Amos and also as a marked point of passage to the writings in the Book of the Twelve that follow. Thus, as a whole, what we are dealing with in the Micah document—in view of the whole collection of books—is an important segment of the great drama involving Zion, Israel, and the nations.¹⁶

Diachronic Analysis

The Origins of the Micah Document

A review of the Micah document reveals a whole series of fractures and inconsistencies in the content. A classic example is Micah 2:12–13, which has been and is read very differently throughout the history of scholarship and also in the interpretation of G. Readings vary between a saving word from the lips of Micah or—in contrast to his preceding words of warning in Micah 2:8–10—a saving word on the lips of his opponents, who speak to the people in imitation of the words in Micah 3:11; or else it is read as a word of warning in continuation of Micah’s proclamation of judgment. Therefore, depending on one’s interpretation, Micah 2:12–13 can be seen either as an integral part of the prophet’s original message or as a later expansion. Likewise, the different possibilities for interpreting the Micah document, listed above, point to a literary history of the book that probably moved through several stages. Since the various sections of this commentary will undertake a detailed literary- and redaction-critical examination of the Micah document it will suffice here to sketch the basic lines of the Micah document’s origins. One important insight from the history of research is that the Micah

15 Cf. especially the commentary by Helmut Utzschneider, *Micha* [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005]) and his monograph, *Michas Reise durch die Zeit. Studien zum Drama als Genre der prophetischen Literatur des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999).

16 For more detail, cf. Burkard M. Zapff, “The Book of Micah—the Theological Center of the Book of the Twelve?” in Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, eds., *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations, Redactional Processes, Historical Insights*, BZAW 433 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 129–46.

document contains a number of texts whose motifs and semantics reveal features associated with exilic and postexilic texts. On the basis of such observations Stade proposed that authentic texts that could be attributed to the eighth-century prophet Micah are to be found only in Micah 1–3 (see above). Micah 3:12 seems to offer a foundation for this observation; there, Micah is unquestionably characterized as a prophet of judgment, and this is evident from a supposedly authentic quotation in Jeremiah 26:18. In contrast, Micah 4 and 5 are exilic or postexilic additions corresponding to texts in the book of Isaiah. Finally, Micah 6–7 are seen as a separate entity that may originally have been independent of the Micah document; it is sometimes attributed to a “Deutero-Micah” from the Northern Kingdom.

However, a closer examination shows that large parts of Micah 1–3 presuppose a reading of the Hosea and Amos documents. In addition, the separation between Micah 3:12 and Micah 4:1–3 is not as radical as one might suppose at first glance. There are also references to Hosea and Amos in Micah 4/5 and 6/7. In turn, Isaian theology is to be found not only in Micah 4 and 5 but also in Micah 1–3 and 7. In Micah, 1–3 these references are also inextricably bound up with references to Hosea and Amos. Finally, as we have said, Micah 1 and 7 reveal a series of correspondences with the preceding Jonah document and the subsequent Nahum document. Only Micah 1:8, 10–16* constitutes a highly independent entity within the Micah document and reveals no contacts with or knowledge of the writings just named. If we take these contacts as the basis for a redaction-critical model we can recognize the following line of development.

Stage I: Starting Point of the Micah Document – The Poem of the Cities

The starting point for the Micah document seems to have been some individual sayings of Micah. These are found primarily in the poem of the cities in Micah 1:8, 10–16*, which evidently describes an Assyrian attack on cities in the hill country with Jerusalem as its goal. At most there is a distant similarity in form and content to Isaiah 10:28–34. In addition, some social-critical sayings, especially in Micah 2 and 3, seem to be traceable to the eighth-century prophet, but in their present form they have either been completely worked into their context and augmented with references to Hosea and Amos and/or associated with similar sayings from Isaiah. These few fragments suggest that there was no Micah document in the strict sense of the word from the eighth century BCE but merely, besides the poem of the cities, a few more or less brief sentences from the historical Micah that have been passed down.

Stage II: The Origins of the Micah Document in the Context of a Book of Several Prophets

In my opinion there was, from the outset, a Micah document that was the basis for the current one, originating in the context of the writings of Hosea and Amos with the goal of extending their message of judgment to the Southern Kingdom but not stopping there. Instead it developed a prospect of salvation for Zion at

the same time. Simultaneously, Micah—based on its dating to the eighth century BCE—was accepted and styled as the work of a contemporary colleague of Isaiah. That, in turn, means that there never was a Micah document lacking Micah 4:1–3, 4 and 5:9–13, the two texts linked by Isaiah 2:2–5, 6–7. Since Micah 6:1–16 testifies also to the connection with Hosea and Amos and the transfer of the sins of the Northern Kingdom to the Southern (according to Micah 1:9), it seems that those chapters were also part of the original content of that Micah document. Evidently it originally contained Micah 1:1, 3–16*; 2:1–11*; 3:1–12; 4–5*; 6:1–16.

A unique editing in Micah 4:8; 5:1–3, linking to Micah 4:4, is devoted to the theme of “kingship” and thus anticipates a human figure who will function as vicar of YHWH’s royal rule.

Stage III: The Micah Document between Jonah and Nahum

Another comprehensive expansion relates the Micah document to those of Jonah and Nahum; it speaks of the return of the Diaspora and describes the future relationship to the nations in royal terminology so that it is only the remnant of Jacob, in collective form, that assumes the place of the ruler in Micah 5:1 (cf. Micah 5:6–7). A judgment on the disobedient nations in Micah 5:14 links with a conversion of the nations and the fall of Zion’s enemies. This, in turn, prepares for the theme of the Nahum document that follows, while the themes of the Jonah document are found not only in the conversion of the nations in Micah 7:17 but also in the submersion of the sins of the remnant of Jacob (rather than the prophet) in the depths of the sea. This continuing level includes Micah 1:2; 2:12–13; 4:6–7; 4:9–13*; 5:6–7, 8, 14; 7:1–20.

The three stages so briefly sketched here obviously do not exclude isolated additions and continuations of the Micah document.

The Person and Historical Background of Micah and the Micah Document

First of all, we must draw a fundamental distinction between the prophet Micah from the eighth century BCE, to whom the superscription of the Micah document attributes its composition, and the figure and message of the prophet as we can derive them from the texts of today’s canonical Micah. As we have shown, this is the fruit of a long process of continuation and interpretation that essentially came to an end only with the completion of the Book of the Twelve Prophets and its canonization in the Hebrew Bible. It even experienced a continuation in the ancient translations of the Septuagint and the Peshitta. Neither of the latter can be understood simply as translations in the modern sense; they each combine the process of translation with the application of their own individual interpretive viewpoint. To that extent the various forms of the Micah document only allow very limited conclusions about the proclamations of the prophet Micah from the eighth century BCE.

The period designated for Micah’s preaching in the superscription encompasses approximately the period between 744 and 696 BCE, or about fifty years. Since,

Period of
Micah’s
preaching