

Introduction to the Commentary

Hermeneutical Considerations

Purpose of the Superscription “The word of Y^{HWH} 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.