Micah

# Introduction

Micah 1:1 suggests that Micah was preaching during the bulk of the time between about 740 and 690; during this time he presumably delivered many other messages that came from Yahweh, but just these few were preserved as of ongoing significance. His first period as a prophet, during the 730s, fell when Judah was inclined to turn to Assyria for help because of pressure from Ephraim and Aram (see Isa. 7), and when the Assyrians did invade Ephraim. Chapter 1 gives the impression that Samaria has not yet fallen to Assyria, which happened in 722. In Hezekiah’s day Judah rebelled against Assyria and in 701 the Assyrians under Sennacherib devastated Judah. They almost took Jerusalem, an event which corresponds to Micah’s earlier threats though it did not bring the city’s destruction. Like Jonah but unlike most Prophets, Micah is mentioned within the First Testament outside the scroll that bears his name, in Jeremiah 26:18-19, which associates him with the time of Hezekiah.

## One Scroll and One God

The Micah scroll is unequivocal in its threats of destruction to come on Jerusalem from Yahweh the judge, but also in its promises of future blessing from Yahweh as one who forgives. The difference between these two strands of material has raised even more forcibly with Micah than with the preceding scrolls the question whether the entire scroll comprises the messages of one prophet in the same period. It’s an exaggeration to say that it “seems to be beyond dispute” that “in its present form, the book of Micah is a post-exilic work,”[[1]](#footnote-1) but not much of an exaggeration.

Two main considerations raise questions about that conclusion.

1. Whereas the Isaiah scroll makes concrete reference to the exile as now a past event and to Cyrus the Persian emperor as a figure of present though he lived two centuries after Isaiah, there are no such references in Micah. Further, scholarly attempts to trace the process whereby the scroll developed over several centuries after Micah’s day all differ from one another, which suggests that the process cannot be traced.
2. Yahweh’s intentions towards Judah did involve both devastation and restoration, so it does not seem so implausible that Yahweh should inspire Micah to speak of both. Even though Micah makes no reference to the possibility of Yahweh’s cancelling his threat, people knew that there was a fair chance that turning to Yahweh would have that effect (see Jer. 26:18).

My conclusion is that we may as well follow the scroll’s own pointers and picture its messages as given to Judah in the late eighth century. I don’t see reason to view anything but 1:1 as coming from anyone other than Micah, and I picture Micah or a disciple of his assembling the scroll in Hezekiah’s day or soon after.[[2]](#footnote-2) But any reader of this commentary may take “Micah” as a cipher for “the Micah scroll”— or may take “the Micah scroll” as a cipher for “Micah.” Further, as scholars who believe that the scroll developed over several centuries do not agree on the process whereby this happened, so scholars who believe that much of the scroll came from Micah do not agree which of the contexts in his lifetime (e.g., the 730s, the 720s, and the 700s) is the background to its different sections. The reason for this lack of consensus is again that the scroll gives us no concrete information on the question. It does not point us to reading the different sections against specific historical contexts.

One major stimulus to study of the redaction history of the Micah scroll is thus the diversity in its portrait of Yahweh. On one hand, Yahweh is “judge and executioner”; on the other he is “divine shepherd.” He is ferocious and punitive; he is also “restoring and forgiving.” If the scroll developed over centuries, one might then infer that its eventual editor preserved these sharply diverse images in the conviction that “Yahweh as the one God embodies the punitive and forgiving characters that coexist in tension.” The divine opposites constitute “a faithful portrayal” of Yahweh, “ferocious, devastating, and punitive, but caring, restoring, forgiving and compassionate at the same time.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

That summary provokes three comments. First, one should perhaps rethink the phrase “at the same time.” Yahweh is always the same person with the same characteristics, and the two metaphors of executioner and shepherd complement each other in the regular fashion of metaphors, by illuminating different aspects of that same person and safeguarding against a misreading of each other. But the scroll’s implication is that Yahweh behaves in different ways at different times, for reasons that emerge from historical circumstances and from Israel’s attitude to him and from Israel’s situation and from his own decision-making. Second, one should also note that the close of the scroll with its links to Exodus 34:6-7 implies that these two aspects to Yahweh’s character are not of equal significance. As Lamentations 3:33 puts it, when he brings affliction or grief to anyone, it does not come from his heart, from the center of his being, but from somewhere nearer the edge of that being. And third, if it was possible for the editor of the scroll to make this sophisticated affirmation of Yahweh’s complex character, it was surely possible for Micah himself to do so. Does a process of redaction then become a disposable hypothesis?[[4]](#footnote-4)

## Diversity and Unity in the Scroll’s Stance toward Israel

The diversity in the portrait of Yahweh and the tension between threats of disaster and promises of blessing are related; awareness of this tension played a role in the development of redactional hypotheses concerning the scroll’s origin. Key to the development of redactional hypotheses was the presupposition that eighth-century prophets spoke predominantly or even exclusively of disaster to come to Israel; it seemed logical that promises of blessing came from the time when disaster had happened. But if they spoke as if Yahweh’s only intention was to destroy Israel, were they not as much false prophets as their opponents?[[5]](#footnote-5) Their scrolls imply that Yahweh had revealed to them something of his wider intentions for Israel, beyond punishment, and that they also spoke of these intentions.

Related to the two sides to Yahweh’s character, then, is his commitment to Israel and his simultaneous commitment to moral uprightness. Like a parent, Yahweh holds together love and care with discipline and integrity. This double commitment which emerges from Yahweh himself implies a faithfulness to Israel over the long haul which will make it impossible ever to abandon his people, and in addition a long-temperedness over the short haul and even the medium haul which is willing to carry Israel’s sin rather than insisting on Israel’s carrying it. But it also means that like a parent, Yahweh has to be prepared to say “that’s it!” from time to time, as he did in an interim way to Ephraim in 732 and to Judah in 701, and in a more devastating way to Ephraim in 722 and to Judah in 587. It does also mean that the “that’s it!” will not signify the annihilation of the people—a “remnant” of Ephraim survives 732 and 722 (perhaps mainly in Judah), and a “remnant” of Judah survives 701 and 587. It further means Yahweh’s ensuring that the remnant in due course will come to grow and flourish so that the people of Israel continues to have its place in his purpose.

It seems quite plausible that in Micah’s day Yahweh should have wanted the Judahites to see the big picture of his involvement with it in this way and thus should inspire a prophet to reveal it. The threat of s terrible disaster would hardly cease to be reason to repent just because it would not be the effective end of the present generation. (The fact that I think that much of the church in California will be dead in a generation makes me agonize, even though I know that this does not mean the end of God’s purpose for his church even here.)

A different explanation has been suggested for the difference between the condemnatory material and the hopeful material in the Micah scroll. The promises about Yahweh’s reign of peace, of a ruler from Beth-lehem, and of Yahweh’s restoration of the people parallel the promises of the false prophets whom Micah condemns. They are promises that could serve the interests of the leaders and well-to-do people whom Micah condemns. Does the Micah scroll combine the messages of someone who speaks on behalf of ordinary people and of others who speak on behalf of the leaders and well-to-do people?[[6]](#footnote-6) One might call these messages expressions of the Mosaic perspective and the Davidic perspective.

The implication of the scroll as a whole would then be that there are insights in both perspectives. Maybe the Mosaic perspective is the ideal, but the Davidic perspective represents Yahweh making allowance for human hardness of heart (cf. Mark 10:1-12—ironically, Jesus links this allowance with Moses).

Yet it is not simply the powerful and well-to-do who have welcomed the hopeful material in Micah nor has it been simply the ordinary people who have received the condemnatory material. According to Jeremiah 26:16-19, King Hezekiah (who is an implicit object of Micah’s critique) responded to Micah’s message, and according to the story in Jeremiah, some of Israel’s elders drew positive attention to the fact. On the other hand, according to Matthew 2, people in power did not welcome the message about a ruler from Beth-lehem.

Conversely, Micah critiques the ordinary people as well as the leaders and well-to-do. Further, “the Micah text as a whole… does not even summon the poor people to action.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The nearest it comes to imperatives about action are the first-person commitment that Micah’s hearers are expected to affirm in 4:4 and the description of what Yahweh looks for in 6:8. In such statements and in the threats about coming catastrophe there is no doubt an implicit exhortation to Israel (and specifically to the well-to-do and the leadership) to “turn back,” to repent. At least, Hezekiah assumed so, to judge from the story in Jeremiah, and his assumption fits with the presupposition of the Jonah story.

“Can texts affect readers’ understandings of themselves in the world, and the choices these understandings provoke?” (If the answer is no, why on earth are we reading them?) To be more specific, “can texts successfully position readers work towards justice?” Given its concern for justice, Micah might seem a text that could play a role in this connection. Yet it is a text whose meaning is often hard to discern—not only because some of the words are difficult to interpret but because of “what seem to be constantly shifting identities of addresses and addressor” and “unclear relations between the various participants.” Can a rather indeterminate text be a persuasive force for justice? Or might this characteristic actually contribute to such an end?[[8]](#footnote-8) Yett Micah’s speaking almost exclusively about what God has done and about what God intends to do suggests the assumption that awareness of these acts and intentions are the key to bringing about change in our understanding of ourselves in the world, and change in the world itself.

## Outline and Structure

Something similar has to be said about the structure of the Micah scroll as I have said about its origin. Is it the case that “the book of Micah has… a clear-cut structure and theme”?[[9]](#footnote-9) Many scholars think so, but their accounts of its structure all differ, as we noted to be the case with Hosea. Indeed, “it is always difficult to discern major divisions in the materials of the OT prophets.”[[10]](#footnote-10) I therefore offer you my account of the structure with the same combination of confidence and diffidence that I expressed in connection with Hosea. It is either the real truth, or simply an account which will help to make clear some aspects of the scroll.

As is the case with other scrolls, Micah includes some sections that could have comprised quite a long message from the beginning (e.g., 1:2-16). It includes other sections that likely result from the juxtaposing of shorter units that were originally self-contained but have been brought into association on the basis of links or of the possibility of generating links, so as form longer units. I analyze them as follows.

1:1 Preface

Three sections with some linear development: confrontation with no promise in the first, confrontation with a promise at the end of the second, confrontation with a more extensive promise at the end of the third:

1:2-16 Reason to lament and howl

2:1-13 The aggressive preacher and his challengers

3:1—4:8 Jerusalem’s plowing and exalting

Three arguments: about leadership and politics, about memory (good and bad), and about the future

4:9—5:15 [14] Now and then

6:1-16 On following Omri and Ahab

7:1-20 Exodus 34:6-7 lives again

The Dead Sea Scrolls include two fragmentary expositions (“pesharim”) of Micah (1QpMic and 4QpMic)[[11]](#footnote-11) which apply the references to Samaria and Jerusalem typologically (as we might put it) to the Pharisees and the Deceitful Preacher over against the Qumran community and the Faithful Teacher. When Theodoret of Cyrus comes to Micah, it makes him think of Jesus’s words, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to you: how often I wanted to gather your children in the way a hen gathers its chicks under its wings, and you refused” (Luke 13:24).[[12]](#footnote-12) The New Testament includes one precise quotation from Micah (5:2 [1], in Matt. 2:6; cf. John 7:42), and noteworthy allusions to 7:6 (Matt. 10:21, 35, 36; Mark 13:12; Luke 12:53) and to 7:20 (Luke 1:55).

# Micah 1:1—Preface

## Translation

1Yahweh’s message which[[13]](#footnote-13) became a reality to Mîkāh[[14]](#footnote-14) the Mōraštite in the days of Yôtām, ’Āḥāz, Yəḥizqiyyāh, kings of Yəhûdāh, which he saw concerning Šōmərôn and Yərûšālaim.[[15]](#footnote-15)

## Interpretation

See the comments on Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1, and Obadiah 1. Whereas the prefaces to Hosea and Jonah give the prophet’s father’s name, the preface to Micah provides information on his home town. It perhaps indicates that he came from Moreshet Gat which features in v. 14 (though Tg assumes he came from Mareshah which features in v. 15). Micah thus compares with Amos, who is identified by his home town as well as by his occupation. Like an English surname, any of these pieces of information functions to distinguish the person from others of the same name; the town name might usefully designate someone living and working somewhere other than his home town. In Micah’s case the location would be Jerusalem, where he preached (cf. 3:9-12 and the Jerusalemite reference in Jer. 26:18). In the case of both Amos and Micah, the identification of them by their home towns marks them as strangers in the places where they preached, which may have contributed to the clarity with which they confronted situations that seemed scandalous to them.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Unlike the list of kings in Hosea and Isaiah, the Micah scroll omits Uzziah, which implies that Micah was prophesying slightly later than those two prophets. Not surprisingly, it omits reference to any Ephraimite king, like Isaiah; the omission contrasts with the inclusion in Hosea and Amos of some Judahite kings. All these prefaces were designed for Judahite readers. It is then surprising that the preface closes by telling us that Micah’s message related to Samaria and Jerusalem, in that order, but Micah does begin with Samaria’s waywardness and destiny as they are interwoven with Jerusalem’s (see 1:5-9).

## Theological Implications

See the comments on Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1, and Obadiah 1.

# Micah 1:2-16—Reason to Lament and Howl

## Translation

2Listen, you peoples, all of them;[[17]](#footnote-17)

give heed, earth and what fills it,

And may the Lord[[18]](#footnote-18) Yahweh be among you,[[19]](#footnote-19)

as a witness,[[20]](#footnote-20) the Lord from his sacred palace.

3Because there is Yahweh, going out from his place,

so he may go down and make his way on earth’s heights.

4The mountains will melt beneath him,

the valleys will split,

Like wax before the fire,

like water poured down a slope.

5All this is for the rebellion of Ya‘ăqōb

and for the wrongdoings[[21]](#footnote-21) of the household of Yiśrā’ēl.

What[[22]](#footnote-22) is the rebellion of Ya‘ăqōb?—

Šōmərôn, isn’t it.

But what is[[23]](#footnote-23) the great shrine of Yəhûdāh?—

Yərûšālaim, isn’t it.

6So I will make Šōmərôn into a ruin in the open country,

into vineyard plantations.

I will roll its stones into the ravine,

I will lay bare its foundations,

7When all its sculptures are shattered

and all its fees are burned in the fire,

And I make all its idols a waste,

because it collected them[[24]](#footnote-24) with a whore’s fee,

and they will turn back into a whore’s fee.

8On account of this I[[25]](#footnote-25) will lament and howl,

I will go barefooted and stripped.

I will make lamentation like jackals,[[26]](#footnote-26)

and mourning like ostriches,[[27]](#footnote-27)

9Because it’s devastated, its wounds,[[28]](#footnote-28)

because it’s come to Judah.

It’s reached right to my people’s gate,

right to Yərûšālaim.[[29]](#footnote-29)

10In Gat don’t tell[[30]](#footnote-30) of it,

don’t cry and cry.[[31]](#footnote-31)

In Bȇt-lə‘aprāh

cover yourself[[32]](#footnote-32) in dirt.[[33]](#footnote-33)

11Pass on, you people,[[34]](#footnote-34)

inhabitants of Šāpîr,[[35]](#footnote-35) in shameful nakedness.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The inhabitants of Ṣa’ănān[[37]](#footnote-37)

didn’t go out.

The lamenting of Bet ’Ēṣel[[38]](#footnote-38)

will take up from you its stance.[[39]](#footnote-39)

12Because the inhabitants of Mārôt[[40]](#footnote-40)

writhed[[41]](#footnote-41) for something good,

Because bad fortune went down from the presence of Yahweh

to the gate of Yərûšālaim.

13Hitch[[42]](#footnote-42) the chariotry to the horse,

inhabitants of Lākîš:

It is the first[[43]](#footnote-43) of Daughter Ṣiyyôn’s[[44]](#footnote-44) wrongdoing,

because in you were present the rebellions of Yiśrā’ēl.

14Therefore you[[45]](#footnote-45) will give farewell gifts

for[[46]](#footnote-46) Môrešet Gat.[[47]](#footnote-47)

The houses of ’Akzîb will be a disappointment[[48]](#footnote-48)

to the kings of Yiśrā’ēl.

15I will yet bring a dispossessor to you,

inhabitants of Mārēšāh.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Right to ‘Ădullām

Yiśrā’ēl’s splendor will come.

16Crop yourself, shear it,

for the children in whom you delight.

Broaden your crop like the vulture,

because they’ve gone into exile from you.[[50]](#footnote-50)

## Interpretation

Chapter 1 is a remarkable opening to the Micah scroll in the breadth of its horizon, its vision of Yahweh’s cosmic appearing, its perspective embracing both Ephraim and Judah, its lament, and then its detailed account of calamity in Judah.[[51]](#footnote-51) At the same time it begins in a way comparable in some respects to Amos, Isaiah, and the main direct proclamation part of Hosea (Hos. 4:1-3), with a message that starts with the nations of the world as a whole and could encourage its hearers to feel relaxed, whereas it is actually softening them up before kicking them in the teeth. In Micah’s variant on this ploy, he summons the nations in a way that suggests to his Israelite audience that Yahweh is testifying against the nations and coming in judgment upon them, when actually he is coming down to the earth to act against Israel itself. Had anyone ever spoken of Yahweh’s judgment in this way in Judah—In Jerusalem itself?

Micah’s strategy has a further parallel with that of Amos (the two prophets came from Judahite towns only twenty miles apart, but as far as we know they never met). As a preacher in Ephraim, Amos follows up his indictment of other peoples with an indictment of Judah before turning on Ephraim. As a preacher in Judah, Micah follows up his summons of other peoples with an indictment of Samaria before turning on Jerusalem. As Amos goes on to pray for Ephraim later in the Amos scroll, Micah goes on to lament for Jerusalem. Amos speaks to and mostly about Ephraim but takes a side glance at Judah (partly because it’s his people). Micah speaks to Judah but here speaks mostly about Ephraim, though with a side glance at Judah (because it’s his people and the people he’s addressing). While Assyria will be the means of implementing the calamity, and Micah is passionately concerned about his people’s political destiny, like Amos and Joel (but unlike Hosea) he does not refer to the human agents Yahweh will use, only to what Yahweh will do. He speaks in this chapter only in the most general terms of the reasons for Yahweh’s action (rebellion, wrongdoing, whoring). While thus focusing on the facts about that action, he thereby raises the question “Why?” which chapter 2 will say more about.

The structure, form, and content of the chapter suggest that Micah spoke before any calamity took place. Events such as the fall of Samaria thus happened in (partial) fulfillment of his warnings.[[52]](#footnote-52) It is not that events started to happen and Micah then interpreted them; actually, when the Assyrians took Samaria they did not destroy it. It’s therefore hazardous to try to link statements Micah made with particular happenings, as if he is interpreting things people have seen on the television news.

MT [C] provides a petuhah after v. 16, though MT [L] only a setumah.

**Micah 1:2-4**. Micah begins, then, with a summons to all the peoples of the earth (v. 2), to the population that fills the earth. The reason for the summons is that Yahweh intends to appear among them in the manner of someone coming to make a solemn declaration. Like a king coming down from his palace to a meeting of the council in the city, he is coming down from his palace in the heavens. The one who is coming is “the Lord”; the expression comes in Micah only on these two occasions in v. 2. He comes to give solemn testimony to the gathering, in accordance with community life in a traditional society such as Israel. He is not like a witness in a Western court, appearing because he has evidence to give in a case brought by the state or by some individual. As a witness he is himself “litigant, plaintiff,”[[53]](#footnote-53) bringing his own case. Yet because he is the king/King, he is simultaneously declaring judgment. When Micah speaks of his acting as witness, people could understand his words to denote his being a witness *against* the nations and coming to judge them. But Micah’s word order suggests “among you as a witness” (as in Job 16:19).

For the moment, Micah lets the ambiguity stand (v. 3) as he pictures Yahweh descending from his abode in the heavens so as to stride across the heights of the earth like a colossus, as in Amos 4:13 (Ps. 18:7-15 [8-16] is the most extravagant version of this picture). “The connotations are military” now rather than legal, but the imagery is undeveloped.[[54]](#footnote-54)

In response to his advance (v. 4), the land across which he strides will reverberate. Mountains will dissolve like wax before fire, and thus fresh valleys will form, splitting wide open so that the rocks from the newly-formed ravines tumble down like a tsunami. The two lines in v. 4 form a complex whole, deepening in effect. Both lines are internally parallel (mountains melting, valleys splitting; like wax, like water) and mutually parallel (mountains like wax, valleys like water). They counter one’s usual assumptions, because mountains are solid and immovable, not wax-like, and valleys pour water, not rocks. Everything is being turned upside down by Yahweh’s coming. And he’s not actually doing anything yet: he’s just coming to make a deposition.

**Micah 1:5-6.** So what is Yahweh so keen to testify to? What has the world done? It turns out that he refers not to the offences of the world as a whole but to the rebellious wrongdoings of Jacob-Israel. Micah “dared to accuse of wickedness men who appeared to be very holy.”[[55]](#footnote-55) In this connection it is the peoples who are the witnesses when he brings his case—or are they called as entities who are to implement the judgment?[[56]](#footnote-56)

Once again there is ambiguity about who Micah refers to (v. 5a); the use of the names Jacob and Israel in the scroll can be “bewildering.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Theologically, both terms apply to Judah and Ephraim as a whole. But the greater size and political importance of Ephraim meant that politically it counted as “Israel,” and the term “Jacob” easily applied to it, too (e.g., Hos. 10:11; Amos 3:13; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 9:8). So that’s what Micah’s listeners might assume regarding the terms here.

The next line (v. 5bαβ) confirms the point. Jacob’s rebellion centers in Samaria. There was no full-service sanctuary in Samaria (Beth-el was effectively Samaria’s sanctuary town), and when Hosea and Amos talk about Ephraim’s rebelliousness, they are as likely to be talking about its political policies and community life as about its worship (e.g., Hos. 7:13; 8:1; Amos 2:6; 3:14). Here Micah likewise likely refers to these aspects of Ephraim’s life, and he may again have his Judahite listeners congratulating themselves because (for instance) they do not keep getting involved in coups like those Ephraimites. Judah has the Davidic line, and it has Jerusalem, the place to which Yahweh made a commitment.

If they did congratulate themselves, Micah then clouts them (v. 5bγδ), with a dense and complex declaration. Once again the two lines in v. 5b are parallel. Both are rhetorical questions. Both refer to the two peoples and then to their capitals (the name “Judah” occurs in Micah only when Judah set over against Ephraim, in 1:1, 5, 8, 9, and to indicate the location of Beth-lehem, in 5:2 [1]). But Micah’s listeners would not immediately realize what he is doing in this second of the two parallel lines, because he begins by talking about shrine(s) (see Hos. 10:8; Amos 7:9; and the comments). Given that Micah has been slating Ephraim, hearing the word *bāmôt* would make people think of the multiplicity of shrines throughout Ephraim with their unorthodox worship, or of the shrines that likely existed in Samaria itself, or they might be familiar with a prophet such as Amos slighting a “proper” sanctuary such as Beth-el as just a big shrine (Hos. 10:8). But before they have thought through all those possibilities Micah has made clear that he is actually speaking about Judah’s shrines, of which there were also many (see 2 Kings 14:4; 15:4, 35; 16:4), even if they were not as unorthodox as Ephraim’s. And then he is identifying the shrines with Jerusalem itself. Jerusalem is just a collection of shrines. Or more likely, Micah is using that plural word *bāmôt* in the same way as Hosea did. As Hosea said that the exalted sanctuary at Beth-el was just an overgrown shrine, so Micah is saying that Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem, the city which Yahweh chose and which Yahweh loves—it’s just a gigantic shrine. So Judah needs to listen to what Yahweh says about Ephraim and about Samaria, because his assessment also applies to Judah and to Jerusalem. Yet more suggestively, the phrase *bāmôt* *Yəhûdāh* could make someone think back to Micah’s description of Yahweh making his way on *bāmŏtȇ* *’āreṣ* in v. 3—was he striding over the sacred high places of the country rather than the physical high places of the earth?[[58]](#footnote-58)

What, then, will Yahweh do to Samaria (v. 6)? Micah moves from a heavens-and-earth-wide theological picture to a down-to-earth, realistic, matter-of-fact one, and from speaking about Yahweh to speaking in Yahweh’s name; in retrospect, one should perhaps see this transition as coming with v. 5. Yahweh will turn Samaria back into farmland. Three years ago I chatted with men harvesting olives from the slopes of the ruin of Samaria, but its having been turned back into orchards reflects Samaria’s destruction centuries later; Samaria’s fall in Micah’s day did not involve such destruction. As usual, the prophet’s warnings are not advance movies of what the event will be like but God-given imaginative pictures designed to bring people to their senses.

Samaria’s religious sculptures and idols (v. 7) are perhaps the ones located in Beth-el as its sanctuary town. Micah talks about them in terms that resonate with Hosea’s. Ephraim had engaged in whorish activity in making treaties with people such as the Arameans and the Assyrians, which involved recognizing their gods, and from which it had profited one way or another. So the impressive aids to worship in the sanctuary were the fruit of whoredom. And as Samaria will be destroyed, so will be the accoutrements of its worship. “The triple ‘all’ and the repetition of words belonging to the semantic field of idolatry gives the impression of a city full of idols.”[[59]](#footnote-59) Or as an alternative or follow-up to destruction, materials from which the idols were made such as gold and silver that would survive destruction and fire will once again become a whore’s fee, as the representatives of the peoples with whom Ephraim entered into their adulterous alliances come and claim back their “fees” (as happened on occasions described in 2 Kings when attackers and conquerors pillaged Jerusalem and its temple). Along with the summons to the nations in v. 2, this comment is the nearest the vision comes to implying that human agents will bring about the destruction, though even here the destruction could be the result of an earthquake brought about by Yahweh’s striding across the landscape, with this closing colon simply describing people taking advantage of that catastrophe.

**Micah 1:8-9.** Perhaps Micah himself could be neither enthusiastic nor cool about his vision of Ephraim’s calamity, but the point of telling people of his lamentation and grief is not to let them into his emotions but further to underscore the horror of what he has been describing, to bring home his message to Judah.

“On account of this” (v. 8) usually refers to what precedes,[[60]](#footnote-60) but here everything that follows will further spell out “this.” “Lamentation” commonly applies to grieving over the dead, like “mourning,” but “howl” (*yālal*, suggesting ululation)is a more general expression, referring onomatopoeically to the noise of the lamenting. The comparison with jackals and ostriches (or owls) derives from the raucous harshness of their cry; they sound like people howling in mournful lament. In other contexts being stripped of shoes and (outer?) clothes could suggest the fate of captives on the way to exile (cf. v. 11), with which Micah would then be identifying, but he makes no reference to exile in the immediate context and he is more likely suggesting the dress of mourning, comparable to wearing sack. So much death is presupposed by his preceding prophecy.

He goes on to summarize the reason for his lament again (v. 9). The past tense verbs refer to the devastation that will have happened when Micah does his mourning. The balance of the tricolon with its extra colon again shows how his real concern is with Judah. Perhaps he cares about Ephraim; but the point of his prophecy is to get Judah to wake up. Ephraim’s destiny will be Judah’s destiny too (cf. Isa. 10:11). The double *kî* (because) produces a clumsy asyndetic effect but it helps underline and transfer the emphasis to the way the pattern of Ephraim’s experience will recur in Judah. The catastrophe will come not only to Ephraim and its capital; it will come to Judah and its capital. Ephraim is more exposed and Samaria is easier of access, whereas in Judah an invading force would need to deal with the lowlands and then make its way into the mountains to take Jerusalem. But (Micah asserts) it will get there, to the very gates of the city where his listeners live and where he is standing. “The fate of Samaria is sealed. Whether this is the case for Jerusalem may be an open question as is suggested by the imagery of it reaching the gate.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

**Micah 1:10-15.** The two-stress cola that open this subsection and recur during it are a marker of its being a lament. I take it to be the lament Micah announced in v. 8. Whereas there was little indication of military activity in vv. 2-9, this subsection does suggest the results of an invasion. A comparable list of places in Isaiah 10:28-32 follows the route of a possible Assyrian march on Jerusalem in the 700s, though Isaiah 36—37 recognizes that actually Sennacherib’s army invaded the coastal plain via the area of which Micah speaks (“the soft underbelly of Judah”)[[62]](#footnote-62) and devastated the lowland before marching up to Jerusalem. But insofar as we can identify the places Micah mentions, he’s not tracing the possible route of an invasion. While the places in vv. 13-15 are mentioned elsewhere in the First Testament and have been located with some conviction, the ones in vv. 10b-12 are not so mentioned or locatable; perhaps they were lsettlements near Moreshet that were known to Micah.[[63]](#footnote-63) The comparisons with Isaiah 36—37 (and with Sennacherib’s records),[[64]](#footnote-64) the nature of the list, and the placing of the subsection in Micah 1, together suggest that vv. 10-15 are Micah’s imaginative account of a lament that will be needed in light of an invasion by a conqueror and that it dates from before the fall of Samaria, rather than an account of the lament needed in light of an actual or expected invasion a couple of decades later.[[65]](#footnote-65) When the Assyrians attacked Ephraim in the 730s they also campaigned in Philistia,[[66]](#footnote-66) and Micah’s imagination could have been stimulated by those events. But his sense that Yahweh intends to bring about an invasion need have no correlation with political events at a particular time.

Our not knowing the location of most of the places does not affect an understanding of the passage’s meaning. Further, while Jerome notes that the Septuagint differs markedly from the Hebrew in these verses and that one needs even more than usual to have the Spirit’s help in interpreting the text,[[67]](#footnote-67) and Luther comments on this passage that “We are absolutely insane, then, when we undertake the interpretation of the prophets without a very great skill and understanding of the Hebrew language,”[[68]](#footnote-68) things do get a bit easier once one recognizes that paronomasia is a significant key to understanding the passage.[[69]](#footnote-69) Perhaps Micah’s focus on paronomasia also lies behind his not focusing on generating a metrically consistent lament. Many of the places Micah mentions thus have names that he can link with some aspect of Judah’s prospective fate:

Dirt house, cover yourself in dirt….

Beautiful people in shameful naked ness.

Exit people don’t exit.

Withdrawal house adopts its stance.

Bitter people writhe for something good.

Harness the chariots, chariot town….

You will give a marriage gift for betrothal town.

The houses of disappointment will disappoint….

I will bring a dispossessor to the possession people.

Working with the names in this way, Micah is “surrounding each place in turn with an aura of doom and evoking feelings of dread and despair”[[70]](#footnote-70)—in order to drive them to change their lives. But in addition, “as the text stands, its choppy, detached statements and shifting imagery… harmonize with a picture of confusion and disorder, and disintegration under enemy attack,” as the expression of personal grief in vv. 8-9 gives way to mockery and taunting.[[71]](#footnote-71) Both are ways of seeking to communicate with the Judahites, even though there is no summons to repent or to fasting.

Micah’s starting with the once-Philistine town of Gat (v. 10) carries different significance, as David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan begins “Don’t tell of it in Gat” (2 Sam. 1:20). David notes that you don’t want your enemies to be given the chance to rejoice over your loss. Reversing the words to “In Gat don’t tell of it” may link with the fact that in the 730s Gat belonged to Judah;[[72]](#footnote-72) it is the people of Gat themselves that Micah is telling to stay quiet in this connection (as LXX makes explicit). Similarly, whereas David bade the Jerusalem girls to cry, here he bids people not to indulge in too much crying. The second line contrasts with the first in bidding people to mourn extravagantly, which will also be an appropriate response to the coming calamity. One should not insist on logic in this prophetic pronouncement; both the commission not to make too much fuss and the commission to roll in dirt (Bet-le‘ophrah’s name can usefully be understood to mean Dirt-house) are ways of marking the grimness of what will happen.

The name Shaphir (v. 11) suggests “beautiful”; its fate will contrast with that implication when it becomes naked and thus shamed as its people trudge off into exile. The name Sa’anan could suggest that its people would “go out” to engage the invader, but Micah imagines them deciding that it wasn’t worth attempting to fight. Bet Esel might suggest “house of withdrawal,” which would fit the comment that goes with the name: they learn from the example of Sa’anan.

The name Marot (v. 12) aptly suggests “bitter things”; it belies the good fortune people will screw themselves up to hope for and it will correspond to the fate they experience. Their hope for something good will contrast with the bad fortune that goes down from Yahweh and reaches right to Jerusalem’s gate: “went down” takes up the verb from v. 3, and “to the gate of Jerusalem” takes up the expressions in v. 9. The passing nature of the reference to Jerusalem suggests it is subordinate to the reference to Marot as a place on the route up into the mountains towards the capital; it is this location of Marot that leads to its people’s becoming the invader’s victims.

Lakish (v. 13) was important as a place as well as one whose name Micah can work with. It was Judah’s strategically located second city, down on the edge of the coastal plain, and it did experience terrible suffering when Sennacherib invaded Judah. It was a fortress city, and harnessing the chariotry of Lakish “to the horse” (*lārekeš*)would usually be preparation for battle. Here it’s preparation for flight. But reliance on military hardware is the essence of Judah’s wrongdoing, because it takes the place of reliance on Yahweh (cf. Isa. 31:1-3). The reference to Israel (that is, Ephraim) in the parallel colon suggests that the problem here is Judah’s being only too like its big brother. While there was not much room or use for chariots in the mountains, the mention of Zion in this context reflects the key military significance of Lakish as a gateway to the city where the temple is as well as to the nation’s political capital. Expressions such as “Daughter Zion” recur in the Prophets; they may imply no more than the conventional assumption that a city is a she. If they can suggest a note of endearment, in this context (and in the case of “Daughter Babylon”) the suggestion of endearment may be sardonic.

Moreshet Gat (v. 14) is possibly Micah’s home town; all the places in vv. 13-15 are in this area, but they did not have the same importance as Lakish. Moreshet features because its name is again suggestive. Someone who is *mə’ōrāšāh* (of which *mə’ōrešet* would be an alternative or construct form) is “betrothed” in the sense that the marriage gift has been made in connection with her upcoming wedding (see Hos. 2:19 [21] and the comments). The town’s double name may suggest that it had been a dependency of Gat—but maybe not the Philistine Gat, as there were several places of this name (it means winepress) and Moreshet is not especially near that one. It is one of the towns that will pass from Jerusalem’s control to the control of an invader, so Jerusalem will be saying farewell to it like parents saying farewell to their daughter, and giving the marriage gifts that go with that leaving. But they won’t be giving them to the girl; they’ll be giving them for her to her new lord. Akzib, too, will live up to its name. The word for disappointing (*’akzāb*) otherwise occurs only in a description of a stream that fails, not having water when you look for it (Jer. 15:18). So Akzib will no longer be of any value to the kings of Israel—which presumably here means Judah, or perhaps Judah and Ephraim as a whole. If the houses of Akzib were the royal potters’ workshops, the letdown lies in their no longer being able to supply the kings’ needs in this connection.[[73]](#footnote-73)

The name of Mareshah, in turn (v. 15), apparently a different place from Moreshet, recalls the verb meaning (dis)possess, which encourages a formulation about its coming fate. Adullam rounds off the list of places by completing a Davidic bracket with Gat in v. 10. The glorious “splendor” of the Davidic household (e.g., 2 Chron. 1:11-12; 17:5; 18:1) ends up in somewhere best known as the place where David the bandit had to take refuge (1 Sam 22), though it has become a military fortress.

**Micah 1:16.** In his closing summons to mourning, Micah continues to speak to Zion-Jerusalem. In the reverse of Western custom, Israelites who wanted to look well turned-out would be more likely to let their hair grow than to trim it, but they would shear it off as a sign of sorrow. Ms. Zion will have reason to show the marks of grief in respect of the children who were the joy of her life as a mother. The second line parallels the first, though in a slightly paradoxical way. The shearing will be even more marked than usual; a vulture has a down-covered head that makes it look bald. Yet the loss of the children will be a loss to exile not to death. There is no need to see a reference to *the*  exile; “massive relocation of population after conquest was already common policy in the eighth century B.C.E. All references to ‘exile’ do not have to be attached to the Babylonian Exile of the sixth century, just because it has been given so much space in the Hebrew Bible.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

## Theological Implications

1. When “judgment begins at God’s household” (1 Peter 4:17), part of our shame is that God calls the world to look. Calvin prays:

Grant, Almighty God, that, since to a perverse, and in every way a rebellious people, thou didst formerly show so much grace, as to exhort them continually to repentance, and to stretch forth thy hand to them by thy Prophets, —O grant, that the same word may sound in our ears; and when we do not immediately profit by thy teaching, O cast us not away, but, by thy Spirit, so subdue all our thoughts and affections, that we, being humbled, may give glory to thy majesty, such as is due to thee, and that, being allured by thy paternal favor, we may submit ourselves to thee, and, at the same time, embrace that mercy which thou offerest and presentest to us in Christ, that we may not doubt but thou wilt be a Father to us, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the, blood of thine only-begotten Son.[[75]](#footnote-75)

1. God is not merely someone living among us or within us but someone who sits in his sacred palace in the heavens from which from time to time he comes to earth to take action against wrongdoing. When he does so, there may naturally be reverberations in nature.

Granite mountains melt like wax. Men experience volcanic eruptions with their lava flows. During earthquakes valleys, once peaceful, secure, and inhabited, suddenly break open with deep clefts that become increasingly more dangerous and treacherous as they are transformed into streams, which, like gigantic waterfalls, hurtle down steep cliffs towards the lowlands…. The God of the prophets… has at his beck and call all the power of the universe, particularly when earth and heaven are shaken by catastrophe.[[76]](#footnote-76)

1. While the church in one part of the world may often have things to learn from the church in another part, it may also be led astray by it. But in addition, “if one member suffers, do not all suffer together (1 Cor. 12:26)?”[[77]](#footnote-77)
2. It’s sometimes hard to know whether Micah or Yahweh is speaking. But “even if it is I, Micah, who delivers the message, even if as a man I perhaps act as mediator, still it is the God of all in person who adjures you…. He will therefore be a witness to you.”[[78]](#footnote-78) “Don’t take my preaching in any other way than as if God Himself were speaking to you.”[[79]](#footnote-79)
3. In a Qumran exposition of Micah, 1QpMic, Jerusalem and the high places of Judah are taken to refer to “the Faithful Teacher [‘the Teacher of Righteousness’] who teaches the law to his council and to all who offer themselves for enrollment among the elect of God,” while Samaria refers to the Jerusalem priests who misguide people.[[80]](#footnote-80)
4. Micah hardly implies that the invader will stop at the gates of Jerusalem, though Sennacherib’s force did stop there; it never walked through the gates of Jerusalem. Isaiah 28—37 can see here evidence of Yahweh’s being both judging and faithful in letting him get so near but not within.
5. Judah is “my people” (cf. 2:8-9; 3:2-3). In Hosea or Amos the “my” would be Yahweh, but here it is Micah.[[81]](#footnote-81) There is further some similarity and some difference in the way Micah over against Amos and Jeremiah has to deal with the tension between identifying with his people and identifying with Yahweh’s commitment to judgment.[[82]](#footnote-82) A prophet has to do both. It is part of his standing between them and beings called to identify with both.
6. Names can be worth reflection.
7. Micah is one with Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos

The single purpose of all the holy prophets, dear also to God, was to persuade Israel to decide to part company resolutely with deception and instead to opt for serving God, living and true, and glorying in the ornaments of righteousness by removing as far as possible their involvement in wrongdoing.[[83]](#footnote-83)

# Micah 2:1-13—The Aggressive Preacher and His Challengers

## Translation

1Oh, you[[84]](#footnote-84) who plan trouble,

and deal bad fortune,[[85]](#footnote-85) on their beds,

Who do it[[86]](#footnote-86) at morning light

because it’s in the power[[87]](#footnote-87) of their hand,

2And desire fields and seize them,

households and carry them off,

Defraud a man and his household,

an individual and his domain.[[88]](#footnote-88)

3Therefore Yahweh has said this:

Here am I, planning for this family bad fortune

from which you will not be able to free your necks.

You will not be able to walk erect,[[89]](#footnote-89)

because it will be a time of bad fortune.[[90]](#footnote-90)

4On that day someone will raise a poem over you,

and utter a deep wail,[[91]](#footnote-91)

Say,[[92]](#footnote-92) “We are destroyed, destroyed,[[93]](#footnote-93)

as he exchanges my people’s share.

Alas![[94]](#footnote-94)—he makes it slip away for me,

to give back[[95]](#footnote-95) our fields, which he will share out.”

5Therefore you[[96]](#footnote-96) will not have

someone throwing a cord on the lot

in Yahweh’s congregation.

6“Don’t spout,”[[97]](#footnote-97) they spout,

“people shouldn’t spout about[[98]](#footnote-98) such things.

He will not withdraw[[99]](#footnote-99) with great shame:

7is it to be said,[[100]](#footnote-100) household of Ya‘ăqōb?

Has Yahweh’s spirit become short,

or are such things among his doings?”

My words do good, don’t they,

with the person going about as someone upright.[[101]](#footnote-101)

8But just now “my people”—

it rises up as an enemy.[[102]](#footnote-102)

From the front of a coat you strip the dignity,

from men passing trustingly, returned[[103]](#footnote-103) from battle.

9The women of my people you drive out,

[each] from the household in which she delights.

From her babies

you take my splendor permanently.[[104]](#footnote-104)

10Get up, go,

because it’s not this that is the place to settle down,

On account of defilement[[105]](#footnote-105) that will bring ruin,

yes, grievous ruin.[[106]](#footnote-106)

11If[[107]](#footnote-107) someone goes about with spirit

but with falsehood deceives:

“I will preach to you about wine and liquor,”[[108]](#footnote-108)

he will be the preacher for this people.

12I will definitely gather[[109]](#footnote-109) Ya‘ăqōb, all of you,

I will definitely collect the group that remains of Yiśrā’ēl.

I will put them altogether,

like sheep in a fold.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Like a flock inside its pen,

it will be in tumult from people.[[111]](#footnote-111)

13When one breaking through has gone up before them, they will break through,

they will pass through the gate and go out by it.

So their king will pass through before them,[[112]](#footnote-112)

yes, Yahweh at their head.

## Interpretation

Micah resumes his warning that Yahweh intends to bring catastrophe and his explanation of the reasons, but changes the balance between these two, now putting more focus on the reasons. He also moves from offenses in worship to offenses within the community. People with resources are making sure that they have more resources; the appropriate punishment is that they will lose them (vv. 1-5). A further, related offense is people telling Micah that he shouldn’t say such things; for which there will also be an appropriate fulfillment of prophetic words (vv. 6-11). But there is also a promise for the victims (vv. 12-13). While the first subsection could stand alone, the second refers back to it, so it never existed on its own. The sayings in the third subsection could have stood alone; if they once did, they have become a linked whole with vv. 1-11, and chapter 2 would be incomplete without them. MT has a petuhah after verse 2 and another after v. 13.

Micah does not make explicit whether he is addressing people in the area from which he came (to which he referred in the last part of chapter 1), or in Jerusalem (which he was addressing there), or in Ephraim (on which he focused earlier in chapter 1). The only names that come are Jacob and Israel (v. 12), terms that were used with their common flexibility in chapter 1. The implication would be that chapter 2 applies anywhere within the people of God, and that the dating of the last subsection loses importance.

**Micah 2:1-2.** When a prophet says “Oh” (*hôy*) (v. 1),there is reason to be worried. The exclamation is an “expression of shocked sorrow,”[[113]](#footnote-113) but one likely to lead into critique and/or bad news (see Amos 5:18 and the comments). Here it immediately leads into critique; the bad news will come in a moment. Micah is speaking to people who scheme trouble for fellow-members of the community, in the privacy of their homes. One might think of them reclining after nightfall on the beds that double up as their couches, or imagine individual schemers lying in bed in the dark thinking about what they will be able to do when night is over (cf. Ps. 36:4 [5]). “They do not dream; they calculate.”[[114]](#footnote-114) They do not sacrifice work in order to stay in bed but “sacrifice their rest for the sake of their work.”[[115]](#footnote-115) Night time can be time for reflection and for praising God, and the moment when morning dawns is the moment for offering sacrifice, but for these people, night and the coming of dawn has another significance.[[116]](#footnote-116) Noting that they then take action in broad daylight underscores their brazen confidence; thieves commonly operate at night. But they have the power in their hands, so they can do it (cf. Deut. 28:32; Neh. 5:5): “power” is *’ēl*, a homonym of a word for “God,” which hints that the power in their hand has replaced God in their thinking. While it’s possible to have this power in your hand to do something good to another person (Prov. 3:27), it’s also possible to have this power to do something bad (Gen. 31:29).

Specifically (v. 2a), they find ways of appropriating people’s land and the households themselves. The line could denote the reasonably legal but arguably still unethical practice of foreclosing on people’s debts. Evidently the creditors’ attitude was open to critique. “Desire” (*ḥāmad*)is neither a very common word nor an inherently negative one, so the parallel with the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21 [18]) which refers to desiring households is striking. So is the ironic contrast with the promise about other people not desiring (and appropriating) your land when you go up for a festival (Exod. 34:24). “You people are contravening a basic requirement of Israelite commitment to Yahweh and behaving like the Canaanites Yahweh promised to protect you from.” The objects of the desire and appropriation are twofold—a family’s land and the household itself. The result of foreclosure will be the family’s having no land to farm and thus no food to eat, and its being compelled to become servants of the people to whom it had been indebted, who take over its farm.

The parallel line (v. 2b) transitions to talk of what is actually illegal; “defraud” or swindle (*‘āšaq*) gives further sharpness and precision to “seize.” Seizing and defrauding one’s neighbor is another practice that goes against basic requirements of the Torah (Lev. 19:13; also Samuel’s self-defense, 1 Sam. 12:3). The closing reference to the domain (*naḥălāh*)that belongs to a man and his family introduces another key Israelite notion that the accused are ignoring, the principle that the land is divided in perpetuity among clans and extended families and should stay that way. Micah also makes even clearer here that he is not talking about the oppression of the inherently poor but about the robbing of a man, a *geber*, an upstanding, self-sufficient, free member of the community.[[117]](#footnote-117) He is someone with fields that form his domain. Or he did have them, before he was dispossessed of them. Hosea and Amos talk about fraud in Ephraim (Hos. 12:7 [8]; Amos 4:1) but do not refer as concretely to such practices as feature in Isaiah (see Isa. 5:8) as well as in Micah in Judah. But the Naboth narrative about events in Ephraim (1 Kings 21) provides the First Testament’s spectacular concrete story about an extreme instance of the action Micah critiques, which involves utilizing the law fraudulently rather than simply ignoring it.

**Micah 2:3-5**. Not surprisingly, the “Oh!” of protest in v. 1 leads into a threatening “therefore” (cf. Amos 7:1-7; also Isa. 5:8-17)—in fact, into two, one in v. 3, another in v. 5. The declaration that the threat is something that Yahweh has said (this introductory expression, common in Amos, comes just once more in Micah, in 3:5) adds to the threatening nature of the introduction to what follows.

Yahweh has done some thinking and planning of his own (v. 3), concerning “this family” that he has been addressing in vv. 1-2. In such contexts “this” often has pejorative overtones, and the word “family” is used in the mafia sense (mafia “families” not necessarily related). Such a so-called family is a group that has taken over the position of the proper extended family which comprises people who are mostly actually related, live together, and are committed to one another. In contrast, “this family” is used to planning bad fortune for other people. Yahweh is now planning bad fortune for it. The repetition of the same words helps convey the point: “a function of wordplay is to denote reversal.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Like other Prophets, Micah sees Yahweh operating on the basis of poetic justice. The punishment fits the crime. In turning their victims into servants, the wrongdoers put them under a yoke, like an ox; the wrongdoers themselves will now be unable to escape such an experience (for the image, compare Isa. 9:4 [3]; 10:27). Thus they will not be able to walk upright, as they can at the moment.

Another poem and another lament will therefore be appropriate (v. 4). Yahweh jumps over any concrete description of the trouble that will come to the “family” in order to speak of the way people will need to react to the catastrophe, with the lament that will need to emerge from the lips of the people against whom Yahweh acts. Such a revelation is at least as frightening. The wail about destruction involves the kind of words that Isaiah puts on the lips of Moab or Tyre (Isa. 15:1; 23:1), though also that Jeremiah later puts on the lips of Judah (e.g., Jer. 4:13, 20). Coming from the lips of the prophet announcing the lament, it is thus a poem (a *māšāl* ) of the kind that practically amounts to a taunt.[[119]](#footnote-119) But the person on whose lips Micah puts the words will not appreciate the irony, nor the further irony of his speaking of his associates as “my people,” as Yahweh earlier referred to them as “this family.” Yet another term that should apply to the people of God is thus applied to the group whose mutual relationship has replaced that identity. And they speak of themselves as having a “share” (*ḥēleq*)—another word that properly denotes the share of land that each extended family has. They’ve come to view the land they control, which includes what they have appropriated, as their “share,” but in another expression of poetic justice, they will be bemoaning their “share” as they have caused the proper shareholders to bemoan the shares that these wrongdoers appropriated. With yet further irony, they acknowledge that “he” (Yahweh) has exchanged this share (that is, given it new owners) and made it slip away from them. They speak in the way that one might when praying a protest psalm, as if they were people who were in the right and could properly utter such a protest. Perhaps they see themselves that way, convinced that the people whose land they have appropriated must have been inefficient or lazy to have got themselves into the trouble they have experienced. But now Yahweh is sharing out their fields to other people. The closing colon of v. 4 expresses the real nature of Yahweh’s action. The ironic reference to “our fields” compares with v. 2a and draws attention to the poetic justice of what Yahweh will do. The verb “share out,” related to that noun for “share,” takes up the term used to describe the original allocating of the land to the clans (e.g., Josh. 13:7; 19:51). Yahweh is giving back the land to the people to whom it really belongs. Micah puts on the lamenters’ lips a declaration that is quite correct; they will be wrong only in believing that there is something inappropriate about it.

The tricolon closing the subsection (v. 5) not only affirms that declaration, but adds that things are worse than they say. As well as losing their (illegitimate) share, they will not get another. Taken literally, the verse may indicate that from time to time the community reallocated the land, reenacting the process described in Joshua, and metaphorically marking out boundaries with a rope. Given that the judgment threatened in vv. 3-4 will mean they in effect lose their place in Yahweh’s people, they will not take part in any such reallocation. But perhaps the entire line is a metaphor for that loss of membership. A further implication (in another expression of poetic justice) is that as landless people they will now be in the same position as their erstwhile victims, able to occupy only the position of servants in relation to the people who now control the land.

**Micah 2:6-7a**. Like his contemporaries Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah, Micah incorporates material recounting the opposition he receives.

In giving his side to an argument (v. 6abα), he puts on his would-be silencers’ lips the same verb as Amos puts on Amaziah’s lips (Amos 7:16). Micah has his challengers speaking in the plural (cf. Amos 2:12), which implies that he is not on his own as a prophet. His opponents might be the people he has been attacking in vv. 1-5. But their backing up their declarations with some theological arguments suggests that they may be equivalents to Amaziah, ministers from the temple whose job might include maintaining control of rogue preachers in the sanctuary environs, or other prophets like the ones critiqued in Isaiah 30:10. Either way, they identify with the land-accumulators.

They argue (v. 6bβ-7a) that it is surely inappropriate to speak of Yahweh in the way Micah has. Would Yahweh really “withdraw” from his people as Micah has implied (“withdraw” suggests unfaithfulness), and thus bring such shame on them and/or on himself? When Micah speaks of Jacob or Israel, he commonly means Judah; here “Jacob’s household” may denote especially the people with power in the Judahite community (see the comments on Amos 3:13-15), who will also be the people involved in the appropriation that Micah has critiqued. Yahweh is someone long-spirited, long-tempered, they imply (Exod. 34:6). Two can play at the game of recollecting things that go back to Sinai. If Micah says people are not living by Sinai, his challengers can claim to measure Micah’s preaching by Sinai, too.

**Micah 2:7b-10**. While “my words” (v. 7b) might at first seem likely to introduce Micah’s own rejoinder to the attempt to silence him, it will become clear that Yahweh’s own words are the ones that are good and do good. They are the words that bring blessing and good fortune rather than the bad dealings and bad fortune of which vv. 1 and 3 spoke. Whereas people involved in bad dealing need to be wary of Yahweh’s words or of Micah’s words, God’s words or a Prophet’s words bring good fortune to people who walk straight and upright.

But instead of walking upright, “my people” (v. 8aα) is asserting itself in the manner of a people that wants to undertake hostile action. In the context, it would be surprising if “my people” referred to Judah as a whole, given that the victims of wrongdoing for whom Micah is concerned are members of “my people” in this sense. The expression rather picks up the defrauders’ self-designation in v. 4. It is this group that is asserting itself in warlike fashion.

Against whom (v. 8aβb)? Against Yahweh? in some sense that will be true, though the context suggests that Yahweh has in mind the antagonistic way this group asserts itself against members of Yahweh’s actual people. The accusations parallel the critique in vv. 1-2, though they now focus more concretely on the aggressors attacks on individuals. But they express themselves opaquely; indeed, v. 8 as a whole “might be the most obscure verse in the entire book” which is thus notable for “the scholarly ingenuity that has been applied to making sense of it,”[[120]](#footnote-120) commonly by emending the text. More discretely, Calvin comments that “as the words of the Prophet are concise, they contain some obscurity.”[[121]](#footnote-121) My ingenuity lies in understanding v. 8 in light of what preceded in v. 2 and what will follow in v. 9, which speaks of the community’s woman and children, and thus complements and draws attention to the focus on the community’s menfolk in v. 8aβb.[[122]](#footnote-122) In the three lines comprising vv. 8aβb-9 as a whole, then, Micah protests the way the people with power treat ordinary people, spelling out the implications of v. 2. A man comes home from battle with relief and with the expectation of a hero’s welcome but is treated not as a returning hero but as a target. His coat is his basic protection against the cold and is therefore not to be taken away as surety when he needs a loan (cf. Exod. 22:9 [8]). But it is taken away. Being decently dressed even when he returns from battle preserves his dignity (perhaps Micah makes reference to a specific battle that has just taken place, or perhaps v. 8aβb speaks metaphorically). The land-accumulators treatment robs him of his honor and replaces it by humiliation.

If the man’s place is in battle, the woman’s place is looking after the home (v. 9), not least when her man is out at war. Perhaps “homestead” gives more the right idea, with Proverbs 31 indicating the extensive responsibility that attaches to being in charge of it. But Micah has already spoken of people with power and resources finding ways of turning independent households into servants. They might be able to do so more easily when the menfolk are away in battle and the family is more likely to get into economic trouble with the men unable to work the farm or work in the town. Such circumstances have implications for the woman’s little children, too. They will permanently lose Yahweh’s splendor—the term perhaps refers to their family’s share in Israel’s glorious heritage from Yahweh (cf. Jer. 3:19). Running through vv. 8aβb-9 as a whole is again the implication that the ruthless action of the well-to-do is not a matter of oppressing people who are already poor or homeless but of taking advantage of reversals that come to what we might call middle-class people, families with dignity and happiness and honor.

Micah therefore bids such families (v. 10) to turn what has happened to them into an opportunity to get out of here anyway. He speaks rhetorically, his real addressees being the same people as in v. 1 and vv. 8-9. His point is again to underline the catastrophe that is coming on the city. There is a deep sadness to his further declaration that this is no place for anyone to settle down, no resting place. It was what the land was supposed to be for the people of Yahweh (e.g., Deut. 12:9; 1 Kings 8:56). But the action of the well-to-do has turned the holy city and/or land into a defiled city and/or land, and a defiled place cannot be a resting place. In a creative way Micah brings together two ideas which we might call Deuteronomic and Levitical.

**Micah 2:11**. Micah returns to people’s bidding him not to preach, so that vv. 6-7a and 11 form a bracket around vv. 7b-10; the participle “walking about” also makes a link with v. 7b. To the people issuing that bidding, he now returns the compliment. His challengers talked about the spirit of Yahweh (v. 7) and Micah himself is someone who goes about with the spirit of Yahweh (3:8). But here what follows the word “spirit” is not “of Yahweh” but another noun, the word “falsehood.” He wants his hearers to think of people who have spirit as people with the kind of enthusiasm that has the forcefulness or substance of empty wind (cf. Jer. 5:13), or to think of people who simply speak in a spirit of falsehood. Either way they deceive. Do they literally preach about wine and liquor? Prophets can speak positively about wine as Yahweh’s gift, but they more often warn about wine, and they are invariably negative about anything stronger. But more likely Micah speaks hyperbolically about the con man who preaches what the audience wants to hear.[[123]](#footnote-123) “This people” will again be the group he has called “this family” (v. 3) and who call themselves “my people” (vv. 4, 8), who don’t really count as members of “Yahweh’s congregation” (v. 5).

**Micah 2:12-13.** For the victims of fraud and misappropriation, it might be nice to know that their troublers are going to pay for their wrongdoing, and it would be encouraging to think of their land being returned. Is there any more good news for them? If the city is to be destroyed, how does that help them?

First, they are going to be gathered (v. 12). A century or two later, prophets will promise that Yahweh will gather the remains or remnant of Israel from exile, but these verses do not speak in terms of such a gathering. They are closer to the language of Amos 5:15 (but also of the picture in Amos 3:12). Calamity is going to come to Judah, but (as Amos again declares) it will not mean total destruction. Yahweh will keep an eye on the real Jacob, the real Israel, in Judah. He will keep them secure, like sheep in a pen where the wolves can’t get them. And while this company may be just the remains of what Israel once was, it will also be or it will become a big flock that makes a lot of fuss and a lot of noise.

Nor is it going to be stuck forever inside this pen (v. 13a). In due course its leader will break through its confines; in a change of imagery, the pen has become a city besieged. The change in the image, the change to Yahweh speaking, and the change from yiqtol (literal future) to qatal (past tense applying to the future) suggests that vv. 12 and 13 are two separate sayings that have been put together to form a double exposition of a promise theme that closes the chapter. Although Jerusalem was besieged in Micah’s lifetime, one should not be prosaic in interpreting his poetry, and it would be odd to speak of “going up” from Jerusalem. That verb rather suggests the image of someone leading Israel up out of Egypt or leading them in occupation of the promised land. They will follow their leader out of the confines of pen or city into the broad land outside.

Who is this leader (v. 13b)? Like other eighth-century prophets, Micah has little or nothing positive to say about the present king of Judah, who is failing to exercise any authority to see that society is working in Jerusalem in a moral way. The next chapter will make that point even clearer. He does also assume that Yahweh isn’t finished with the Davidic line, but his most explicit comment about a coming Davidide (5:2 [1]) describes him as a ruler (*môšēl*)not a king (*melek*), and in the promise in 4:6-8 he will talk of Yahweh reigning (*mālak*). Here the parallelism between the two cola suggests that the one who passes before them and the one who is at their head is the same person. Yahweh is their king.[[124]](#footnote-124)

## Theological Implications

1. Power can replace God in the thinking of his people. They will then be in danger of assuming that they are exercising power on his behalf when the opposite is the case.
2. Land belongs to God and he allocates it to families for them to look after and to use its produce. Families (menfolk, womenfolk and children) belong together, and they are designed to be self-sufficient, delighting in one another, delighting in the splendor of what God gives them, able to hold their heads high in this connection, and not be subservient to other families.
3. Desire is a basic human problem and source of wrongdoing as it drives people to want to possess more and thus deprive other people of their self-sufficiency. Such action defiles what was wholesome and pure and sets going a dynamic that will ruin it. But God will ensure that the victims of such treatment are rescued, protected, blessed, and enabled to flourish.
4. It is not Micah who is planning bad fortune in recompense for such action, but God does so. He does not ignore it. His “peculiar office” is “to repay to all what they deserve.”[[125]](#footnote-125) Indeed, “while men make plans for evil, God is already far ahead of them in making counterplans.” [[126]](#footnote-126) But his justice is restorative as well as retributive. It is designed to discipline thieves, but also to take back from them what they have stolen so as to return it to their victims. Thus we pray:

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art pleased to try our patience by requiring mutual justice and the offices of love and benevolence, — O grant, that we may not be wolves one to another, but show ourselves to be really thy children, by observing all those duties of justice and kindness which thou commandest, and thus follow what is right and just through the whole course of our life, that we may at length enjoy that blessedness which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.[[127]](#footnote-127)

1. Groups within the people of God are inclined to see themselves as his people, with special favor or special rights. We are easily capable of deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are in the right when we are not.
2. While God is long-tempered, his spirit can become short; he can run out of the instinct to take no action against his people’s wrongdoing.
3. The idea that the hardnosed and merciless action of the well-to-do has defiled the city fits with the assumption in Leviticus that wrongdoing brings defilement on a person and makes it impossible to come into Yahweh’s presence. In seeing such defilement (of Yahweh’s own city!) as not something that Yahweh can simply ignore, Micah’s declaration also fits with Leviticus. Yahweh must do something about it. Yet Micah makes that point, too, with theological suggestiveness, because he does not say that Yahweh will need to take action. Rather, by an inbuilt process, defilement will itself bring about destruction.
4. It’s easy for prophets or preachers to be characterized by enthusiasm but falsehood as they proclaim the encouraging message that their people wish to hear.

# Micah 3:1—4:8—Jerusalem’s Plowing and Exalting

## Translation

1So I said,[[128]](#footnote-128) listen, please, heads of Ya‘ăqōb,

chiefs of the household of Yiśrā’ēl.

It’s for you[[129]](#footnote-129) to know about decision-making, isn’t it,

2you who repudiate what is good and are loyal to what is bad,

You who tear[[130]](#footnote-130) the skin from on them,[[131]](#footnote-131)

the flesh from on their bones,

3Who have eaten my people’s flesh,

stripped the skin from on them,

Broken up their bones,

cut them up as[[132]](#footnote-132) into the pan,

like meat inside a pot.

4Then they will cry out[[133]](#footnote-133) to Yahweh

but he will not answer them.

He will hide his face from them at that time

as they have made their deeds bad.

5Yahweh has said this

to the prophets[[134]](#footnote-134) who lead my people astray,

Who bite with their teeth[[135]](#footnote-135)

but proclaim peace.

And someone who does not give at their word—[[136]](#footnote-136)

they sanctify war against him.

6Therefore it will be night for you, without a vision;

it will be dark for you, without divination.

The sun will set on the prophets;

the day will be murky for them.

7The visionaries will be shamed,

the diviners will be confounded.

They will cover their lip,[[137]](#footnote-137) all of them,

because there’s no answer from God.

8Yet I—I am full of energy, with Yahweh’s spirit,

and of decision-making and strength,

To tell Ya‘ăqōb about its rebellion,

Yiśrā’ēl about its wrongdoing.

9Listen to this, please,

heads of Ya‘ăqōb’s household,

chiefs of Yiśrā’ēl’s household.

Who despise decision-making

and everything that is upright, they twist,

10One building[[138]](#footnote-138) Ṣiyyôn[[139]](#footnote-139) with bloodshed,[[140]](#footnote-140)

Yərûšālaim with villainy.

11Its heads—they make decisions for a gift,

its priests—they instruct for a fee,

Its prophets—they divine for silver,

but it is on Yahweh that they lean, saying,

“Yahweh is among us, isn’t he,

bad fortune will not come upon us.”

12Therefore, because of you,

Ṣiyyôn will be plowed as a field,

Yərûšālaim will become ruins,[[141]](#footnote-141)

the mountain of the house a great high place in a forest.

4:1But it will come about, at the end of the time:

The mountain of Yahweh’s house will become established[[142]](#footnote-142)

at the head of the mountains.

It will be raised above the hills,

and peoples will stream[[143]](#footnote-143) to it.

2Many nations will go,

and will say, “Come,

Let’s go up to Yahweh’s mountain,

to the house of the God of Ya‘ăqōb,

So he[[144]](#footnote-144) may instruct us from his ways,

and we may walk in his paths.”

Because from Ṣiyyôn instruction will go out,

Yahweh’s message from Yərûšālaim.

3He will make decisions among many peoples

and reprove powerful nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into hoes,

their lances into pruning knives.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,

and they will not learn battle again.

4An individual will sit under his vine

and under his fig tree,

And there will be no one disturbing him;

because the mouth of Yahweh Armies has spoken.

5Because[[145]](#footnote-145) all the peoples walk,

each in the name of its god.

But we ourselves will walk in the name of Yahweh our God,

permanently, for ever.

6In that day (Yahweh’s proclamation):

I will gather the lame,[[146]](#footnote-146) and collect the straying—[[147]](#footnote-147)

yes, the ones to whom I have brought bad fortune.[[148]](#footnote-148)

7I will make the lame into a group that remains,

and the far-flung into a powerful nation.

Yahweh will reign over them,

on Mount Ṣiyyôn, from now and permanently.

8So you, watchtower for the herd,[[149]](#footnote-149)

Daughter Ṣiyyôn’s[[150]](#footnote-150) stronghold—[[151]](#footnote-151)

Right to you it will come,

the former rule will arrive,

the reign[[152]](#footnote-152) for Daughter Yərûšālaim.

## Interpretation

Micah 3 parallels 2:1-11: Micah indicts the authorities in Judah for their abuse of the people and declares that Yahweh will turn away from them (3:1-4), indicts the prophets for misleading the people and declares that calamity will also fall on them (3:5-8), and indicts the priests as well as the authorities and prophets for the way they exercise their leadership and declares that they will bring about the destruction of Jerusalem (3:9-12). Then 4:1-8 parallels 2:12-13 in bringing some good news: the destruction of Jerusalem will not be Yahweh’s last act towards it. Thus the English chapter division which separates off chapter 3 from what follows is rather misleading. MT’s units are 3:1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 4:1-5; 6-7; 4:8—5:1 [4:14]. There is variation between the codices over whether these divisions mark a section or a subsection (a petuhah or setumah)[[153]](#footnote-153) but their tendency is not to separate chapter 3 from chapter 4 any more sharply than they separate other units within chapter 3—4 but to recognize that the scroll here comprises a series of short units. Chapter 3 brings together three related messages of similar structure (explicit or implicit call to listen, accusation, threat), with verbal links but of separate origin. Micah3:9-12 thus begins in a similar way to 3:1-4, goes on in a way that parallels 3:5-8, and closes with a declaration about Zion and Jerusalem and about the mountain of the house. Micah 4:1-5 continues with a contrasting declaration about the mountain of Yahweh’s house and about Zion and Jerusalem, while 4:6-8 makes another such contrasting declaration about Zion and Jerusalem. The material in the section might date from the pressure of the 730s.[[154]](#footnote-154)

**Micah 3:1-3**. While the introductory “so I said” (v. 1a) is unusual in a prophetic message, Micah speaks of or for himself more often than some other prophets (e.g., 1:8, 9; 3:3, 5, 8). The introduction designates what follows as a continuation of the accusations, warnings and promises in 2:1-13, which 3:1—4:8 parallels and extends; it looks like an expression that issues from Micah’s compiling the scroll out of the various short messages that it assembles.[[155]](#footnote-155) So far Micah has described the objects of his critique only as people who are in an economic position to take advantage of other people who get into economic difficulties, and who are skillful enough to use the legal system to this end. He may now be addressing the same people, but he speaks to them in their capacity as people with authority in the community (his “please” is rather snide). In a village the heads and chiefs would be the heads of families, the community’s elders. In towns they might be the kind of people appointed by Jehoshaphat according to the story in 2 Chronicles 19,[[156]](#footnote-156) which emphasizes their judicial role. In Jerusalem things would be complicated by the presence of the king. Indeed, it may seem odd that Micah does not here directly refer to the king, though he seems implicitly to do so in v. 10. But Isaiah’s (and Amos’s) diction in this connection is similar, and it’s said to be fairly common “for the deprived and oppressed to believe the king to be innocent, ignorant of their plight, and surrounded by evil ministers”;[[157]](#footnote-157) perhaps they are not far wrong,. But the reason for *addressing* people such as heads, chiefs, priests, and prophets may be the practical one that Micah preaches in the temple courtyard where such people congregate, whereas the king might not be simply hanging about among them.

It’s their responsibility to know what the exercise of authority really means (vv. 1b-2a). Micah uses a key verb and a key noun. As is often the case, “knowing” (*yāda‘*)means more than simply being aware. It means acknowledging, owning, and living by. The word for “decision-making” (*mišpāṭ*) is commonly translated “justice,” but it refers to the legitimate authority possessed by people who exercise the power of government in the community. It is supposed to be exercised with justice but it can be a means of exercising injustice, as it is here. In this connection Micah use two further pairs of key terms. The words for “repudiate” and “be loyal to” (*śānē’*, *’āhēb*) are conventionally translated “hate” and “love,” but in a context such as Micah 3 they are action words more than feelings words. Instead of being committed to doing what is “good” to the people whom they govern, they give themselves to doing what is “bad” for them. Both pairs of words are prominent in Proverbs, which reflects their being “fundamental and universal values” that are basic to life in society.[[158]](#footnote-158) Amos 5:15 also brings together the two pairs of words and the link with decision-making (see the comments).

Micah takes up a frightening image (v. 2b) to express the way the leaders’ misdirected loyalty works out. They treat people like animals. One strips off the skin of an animal to make shoes or clothes and tears off the flesh to cook and eat. That’s how the government treats people. There’s no actual word for “people” here. Micah might be speaking of animals.

It’s in the next line (v. 3) that he makes explicit the metaphor’s horrifying implications—or rather, makes explicit that it is a metaphor. It’s the way the leaders have been treating “my people.” While they are Yahweh’s people, and elsewhere Yahweh would commonly be the “my” in this phrase, Micah’s usage is different. He was the “I” in v. 1 and he will speak of Yahweh in the third person in the next verse. Micah is expressing his own revulsion and disgust on behalf of the people to whom he belongs and for whose sake he is fulfilling his ministry. He goes on to make the point more gruesome and macabre[[159]](#footnote-159) in a tricolon that forms a semi-colon in the subsection. When you cook a goat, you not only strip off its skin and look forward to eating its flesh. You break and chop up its bones because they add to the stew’s flavor. The animal is meat. The officials treat people as meat. They are butchers.

**Micah 3:4**. Who are “they”? Is Micah continuing to describe the fate of “my people”? It would be a realistic comment about how things often are. Is he putting words on the authorities’ lips that articulate their cynical attitude about the fate of “my people,” reminiscent of the convictions expressed in Psalm 14? Or is he speaking about the fate of the heads and chiefs themselves, about whom he has also been speaking in the third-person in v. 3? The “they” has two sets of antecedents and could refer to the oppressed or the oppressors. The last colon resolves its ambiguity as it takes up the description of the authorities from v. 2a as the people who are committed to bad dealing: v. 4 describes their coming fate. As happened in 2:4-5, with his “then” and “at that time” Micah leaps over any concrete description of the fate that will come to the authorities, to describe the consequences of their action. He simply declares that when disaster comes to them, they will cry out to Yahweh but get no answer (cf. Prov. 21:13; Jer. 11:11). Yahweh will not turn his face to them in order to shine on them with a look of acceptance and a promise of blessing. Micah thus implicitly urges them to do their repenting now, and implicitly encourages their victims with the certainty that Yahweh will not be soft towards the people who are breaking them. As they have made their deeds bad, so will Yahweh (cf. 4:6). “It is not that God will be absent…. God will be very much present—in judgment.”[[160]](#footnote-160)

**Micah 3:5-8**. As happened in chapter 2, Micah moves on from addressing the direct wrongdoers to addressing the prophets, the indirect wrongdoers who collude with them. “Denial of justice to ‘my people’ moves through three stages”: appropriation of someone’s land, denial of justice by the magistrates, and validation of both procedures by the prophets.[[161]](#footnote-161) “It is the first conflict of this sort [i.e., between prophets} in which the actual criteria that the prophet used are set out before us.” [[162]](#footnote-162)

The other prophets lead “my people” astray (v. 5a); again the context suggests that Micah is grieving over what is happening to the people to whom he himself belongs. Leading them astray (see Amos 2:4 and the comments) implies giving them the wrong impression of Yahweh, as if people can do as they like and still be okay with him, be secure, and do all right. With some subtlety Micah reworks the way a confrontational message commonly works. Whereas in vv. 1-4 he addressed the leaders, issued an indictment, then followed it by a threat, here he incorporates the indictment in the introduction that describes the people he is speaking to.

There is a twofold problem with them (v. 5b). They are involved with the frauds and with the officials in biting people like snakes, but they are still reassuring the community that things will go well for it. The authorities themselves apparently still count as “my people,” and they are among the people the prophets are misleading, by not confronting them and by thus encouraging them to continue in their reprehensible ways. The word for peace (*šālôm*) covers both the presence of well-being and the absence of war, and both aspects of its meaning could apply here. On one hand, then, the prophets promise the people that things will go well for them (cf. Jer. 6:14). On the other, when someone doesn’t come up with the “donation” that they ask for in return for their services, they declare war on them. They bite the hand that doesn’t feed them. Given that being a prophet is your profession, a way of having something to eat and being able to feed your family (compare Amaziah’s words in Amos 7:12), you will want to bring an encouraging message to people who make that possible. The prophets’ message is determined by who pays them. “What comes out of their mouths depends on whether anything goes in.”[[163]](#footnote-163) Thus they bring an encouraging message to the swindlers and they attack their victims. Literally they “sanctify war” (see the comments on Joel 3:9 [4:9]). They declare war in Yahweh’s name, and in Yahweh’s name call others to join in the attack on Yahweh’s enemies. The victims here will be the people who are being taken advantage of and swindled, who by the nature of their situation do not have the wherewithal to make a gift to a prophet in return for a word from God. The prophets are Job’s friends: these people have got into economic trouble, so they must have been unfaithful to Yahweh, and it’s appropriate that they lose their land. Thus whether they bring a positive or a threatening message, these prophets lead people astray.

Therefore night will fall for them (v. 6). The image has several significances. It could suggest that they will lose their prophetic gift through making it subordinate to their need to make a decent living. We might be inclined to think that their exercise of their gift was phony, but Micah does not go that way. They “are not lacking in gift; they are lacking in moral conviction and strength.”[[164]](#footnote-164) They’re not insincere; they believe in what they say, like the four hundred prophets in the story of Micah’s near-namesake (1 Kings 22). More specifically, they will find disasters happening that they had not envisaged or divined when they spoke of peace. Divination denotes the seeking of supernatural knowledge or guidance by means of omens or ritual procedures or the interpretation of signs or the casting of lots. While the First Testament commonly associates divination with false religion, procedures such as Urim and Tummim are forms of divination that Yahweh uses, and Micah doesn’t condemn divination any more than he condemns visions in the parallel colon. For the sake of argument, at least, he doesn’t dispute its propriety; he simply says that they’ll find it hasn’t worked. Darkness will fall on these prophet-diviners. The second line points to the broader significance of the idea that night will fall for them. Their own lives will be characterized by darkness rather than light, trouble rather than blessing (cf. Amos 5:18).

They will thus look for a word from God but not find it (v. 7). They will be shamed and confounded in their own being, but also in their relationship with people who turn to them in the hope of getting guidance from Yahweh or getting a declaration that Yahweh has heard and will respond with action (cf. 1 Kings 18:29).[[165]](#footnote-165) Covering themselves above the upper lip was apparently a gesture that drew attention to one’s taboo status if one was defiled and defiling though skin disease or contact with death (Lev. 13:45; Ezek. 24:17, 22). It’s related to covering one’s face in shame; their shame will mean having to acknowledge that they have been abandoned by God,

Micah thus contrasts them with himself (v. 8) in a verse which is “form-critically superfluous” (the declaration of judgment was complete with v. 7) but “compositionally the endpoint” of vv. 5-8.[[166]](#footnote-166) Micah implied its contrast at the close of 2:6-11; he makes it explicit here. The other prophets are full of energy and spirit (again, cf. 1 Kings 18). Micah spoke about their spirit earlier, though without speaking in terms of Yahweh’s spirit (2:11). Only here are prophetic ministry and energy or power correlated.[[167]](#footnote-167) The leaders of Micah’s community are full of strength and decision-making authority, though they don’t properly recognize the nature of this decision-making power (v. 1). Micah claims to be the equal of both the prophets and the community authorities. The difference in relation to both groups is that his energy and authority are directed to an end that they do not acknowledge, to challenging Israel about its rebellion and wrongdoing. The rebellion and wrongdoing are the ones we have already heard about in 1:5, the actions we have heard about through the scroll so far.

**Micah 3:9-12**. Micah turns again to address the heads and the chiefs, as in v. 1. He again speaks in his own name (he refers to Yahweh in the third person in v. 11) rather than in Yahweh’s name, though Jeremiah 26:18 quotes v. 12 as a word of Yahweh—the difference between these two ways of speaking is more rhetorical than substantial.[[168]](#footnote-168)

Once again (v. 9) he begins with a snide “please” and with a critique of the way the heads and chiefs exercise their power. Far from knowing about the proper exercise of authority and acknowledging its importance (v. 1), they treat it as something despicable: Micah uses the verb linked with the word for “abomination,” something quite alien to who Yahweh is and what he has said.

Jerusalem was developing in the eighth century (v. 10); we know it from archaeological discoveries. In what sense was bloodshed involved in its growth? Micah might refer to King Ahaz’s sacrificing his son (2 Kings 16:3); such a sacrifice sometimes accompanied a building project. This monumental sacrifice is then acerbically dismissed as murder and villainy. More broadly, building projects require resources and labor. Perhaps they came from wrongdoing of the kind Micah has been critiquing, like that of Ahab in relation to Naboth (1 Kings 21). These actions enabled the authorities to seize the property of people they had falsely accused and had been able to execute, and/or to find other ways of appropriating it, and/or to turn people into state serfs to work on building projects. They are actions that involve villainy or corruption. The reference to bloodshed then puts more succinctly the implications of vv. 2-3; if Micah is being hyperbolic, he shares the hyperbole with Isaiah 1:15. The singular “one [who is] building” would be the king, who would be responsible for much of the building work; he at last gets actual if only implicit mention. In the story in Jeremiah 26:17-19 the saying that comes here in v. 12 is linked to Hezekiah’s day, and his reign did see significant building projects. Isaiah portrays Hezekiah in ambiguous terms; while he is sometimes a king who trusts in Yahweh, his reign is one in which Judah puts its trust in alliances with Egypt. Micah’s comment adds to the ambiguity.

The further reference to the basis on which authorities make decisions (v. 11) leads into a broader critique of the dominance of money in the city, which also affects religious leaders. You ask a priest for instruction on whether your ailment counts as something that makes you taboo—you have to pay. You ask a prophet for guidance in making a decision—you have to pay. Yet all of them, heads, priests, and prophets, think they can continue to “lean” on Yahweh (cf. 2 Chron. 13:18; 14:11 [10]; 16:6-8), in the prophetic and scriptural conviction that he is present among them (e.g., Isa. 12:6; Zeph. 3:15, 17; Ps. 46:4-5 [5-6]). In making less use of the words “I” and “my” in application to Yahweh, and more generally referring to “Yahweh” less frequently than (say) Joel or Amos, is Micah distancing himself from people who too easily claim their association with Yahweh?[[169]](#footnote-169)

Actually (v. 12), the religious leaders are going to discover that for all the reasons expounded in vv. 9-11, the truth about Yahweh’s presence is the opposite to what they assume. Once again a prophet utters a frightening “therefore,” and nuances it with an unnerving “because of you.” Micah’s description of the fate of Zion and Jerusalem recalls that of Samaria, which is due to become a ruin and a plantation (1:6). Micah had declared that Samaria’s moral, social, and religious disease had come to affect Jerusalem, but he had not said anything about what would follow. Here is the equivalent declaration for Jerusalem. The term for a great high place (the plural *bāmôt*) is the expression he used in that context to describe the landscape over which Yahweh would stride (1:3) and then to denigrate Jerusalem as just an overgrown shrine (1:5). Here he uses it in another pejorative sense which resonates with both these passages. Jerusalem the overgrown shrine will be turned into a collection of forested hills like the ones that surround the city. Thus “Micah 3 represents the high point in the prophet’s proclamation of doom,”[[170]](#footnote-170) and a note in MT’s margin observes that, by a nice chance, this actual verse comes at the midpoint of the Book of the Twelve.[[171]](#footnote-171)

According to Jeremiah 26:17-19, in the short term “Micah’s prophetic word was effective:”[[172]](#footnote-172) Hezekiah repented, Yahweh didn’t have to implement this devastating threat, and the threat indeed proved to be Jeremiah’s salvation, though Yahweh did implement it a century later (see Lam. 1:4).[[173]](#footnote-173)

**Micah 4:1-5**. If and when destruction came, it could hardly be the termination of the story. The time of desolation will come to an end. The message in 4:1-3 is virtually the same as that in Isaiah 2:2-4. The biggest difference is that “nations… many peoples” in Isaiah is “many peoples… powerful nations far and wide” in Micah, which provides a link with the description of Israel’s destiny in Micah (see v. 7). It’s difficult to see why Isaiah would abbreviate the fuller description, which makes it more likely that Isaiah had the message and Micah derived him from him than vice versa, but Yahweh might have given it to each of them separately, or both prophets may have adopted it from a liturgy, or it might be a message given to another prophet, preserved separate from any explanation of its origin, and eventually included aptly in both the Micah scroll and the Isaiah scroll.[[174]](#footnote-174)

There is no pointer to a necessity that “the end of the time” (v. 1; on this expression, see the comments on Hos. 3:5) will have to wait for centuries or even decades. The promise is no more eschatological or apocalyptic than 3:12.[[175]](#footnote-175) In its context in Micah it forms a brilliant contrast to what has preceded. Vulnerability and destruction is replaced by establishment and exaltation. Jerusalem is not merely restored to what it was before; it is transformed in significance. Jerusalem is not the highest point in Israel, or even the highest mountain in its immediate area; the Mount of Olives is higher. Micah’s metaphorical description of its elevation invites people to imagine its literal elevation. The promise that Zion will be established on high corresponds to promises in Psalms 48:8 [9] and 87:5 that Yahweh will establish Zion. We don’t know whether these psalms antedate or postdate Micah, but comparing it with them draws attention to three distinctive features. One is that link and contrast with what precedes: Yahweh’s threat to destroy Zion doesn’t mean it’s the end of Zion’s story or nor does it undo the promises in the psalms. Second, Zion is not to be merely established but to be established on high. Third, this exaltation is not merely to glorify Israel but to attract the nations to flock there; they will not need compelling or even persuading, but will respond naturally to something astonishing.

Many nations will thus utter the words that Israelites utter (v. 2) when encouraging one another to “go up” in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The nations, too, will undertake such repeated pilgrimage, not just a one-time haj. The idea of peoples streaming there need not be good news: it is not good news when the Assyrians, and later the Babylonians, do so, though people stream to Babylon to worship Bel in a positive sense (Jer. 51:44).[[176]](#footnote-176) But this enthusiastic flocking seeks to be instructed (*yārāh*) by Yahweh. It’s the verb from which Torah comes; there’s some irony in its recurring from 3:11. Thus instruction (*tôrāh*) will go out from Zion. Instruction can be given by priests (as in 3:11); *the* Torah is both the source and the deposit of the priests’ teaching. Instruction can also be given by the teachers whose schooling is collected in Proverbs (e.g., Prov. 13:14) and by prophets (e.g., Isa. 8:16); here the parallel reference to Yahweh’s message or word makes one think of prophets. But there is no need to narrow down the word’s reference. One way or another, the nations will receive instruction. Micah does not speak of their “conversion,” but declaring that they will consequently come to walk in Yahweh’s paths implies an acknowledgment of Yahweh and of his teaching, and thus a turning to him.

The point is what Yahweh achieves by issuing instruction (v. 3). While v. 2 suggests that Yahweh gives the nations comprehensive teaching about his ways, v. 3 indicates that he also says some things specific to them. In a passage leading into Isaiah’s version of this message, Isaiah 1:24-28 speaks of Yahweh cleaning up Jerusalem. Micah has made it clear that Judah has a crisis of decision-making and the exercise of authority (3:1, 9, 11) but he leaps over this internal cleaning up or takes it for granted in portraying some even more extraordinary action on Yahweh’s part relating to decision-making. Yahweh’s action will transform the world, not just Jerusalem. Isaiah lives in a period when there are wars and rumors of wars (Aram, Ephraim, Assyria; and see Amos 1—2), but things will not be like that forever. It will be possible to recycle weapons of war into farm implements. Micah has spoken of his own exercising decision-making authority (3:8): does he envisage Yahweh exercising the missing authority through him and/or through people like him, not merely in Judah but among the nations? He doesn’t say.

The description of an individual able to relax (v. 4) commences the material in this message that distinguishes Micah’s version from Isaiah’s, though the image appears elsewhere (1 Kings 4:25 [5:5]; Zech. 3:10). Such an individual is able to relax because he need not fear being assailed or harassed. The events threatened by 1:8-15 or presupposed by 2:8 will not recur. Neither will there be recurrence of the economic troubles that make him vulnerable to losing his farm and household. While the picture is a simple one, it is one implying self-sufficiency and prosperity that contrasts with the economic vulnerability that gives opportunity for aggrandizement to the people Micah critiques. “Grapes and figs are the most precious fruits of the land. To be able to sit underneath them means, first, security from the danger of war…. Furthermore, this phrase also means to live in joy… and in neighborly friendship.”[[177]](#footnote-177) The context indicates that the promise applies to all the nations, in light of the peace that Yahweh will bring. If it all seems unbelievable, Micah says, note that the mouth of Yahweh Armies has made this declaration (on this title, see the comments on Hos. 12:5).

Surprisingly, the message’s closing lines (v. 5) return to something like a parallel with the Isaiah version: “Household of Ya‘ăqōb, come, let’s walk in Yahweh’s light” (Isa. 2:5). The two versions have little in common beyond the verb “walk,” and even that verb takes different forms (yiqtol here, cohortative in Isaiah). Yet their shared use of the verb is significant. While both versions presuppose that Yahweh will make himself known to other peoples, both recognize that this reality lies in the future. Whether this future lies a decade or a century or a millennium away, the present challenge to Judah is to start its walk now.

**Micah 4:6-8**. Perhaps not surprisingly, the section ends with a promise paralleling the one at the end of chapter 2. Given that the ruinous action of its leadership means Jerusalem will be destroyed, the promise of Yahweh’s exalting Jerusalem and drawing the nations is great, but what about the people who are the victims of tyranny now? What does Yahweh have to say to them?

As in 2:12, Yahweh speaks of gathering and collecting (v. 6). This time he categorizes the objects of this action as the lame and the straying. “Lame” could make one think of Jacob (Gen. 32:31 [32]), which would be a thought-provoking link (compare v. 2). But as a collective the word might rather make people think of sheep, such as were the object of the gathering and collecting in 2:12. That possibility is encouraged by the parallel word “straying” (e.g., Ezek. 34:4, 16)—which suggests not a willful wandering off but an involuntary scattering. Yahweh owns that he caused the calamity that incidentally added scattering to the trouble they were in through the action of the wrongdoers. He acknowledges that he is “the one who opened the gates to those making war on Israel, who made everything smooth for them.”[[178]](#footnote-178) But he commits himself to dealing with the consequences for the lame and the straying.

He then (v. 7) picks up the expression “a group that remains” (*šə’ērît*) which appeared in 2:12, though he uses it in a different way in declaring that he will make the lame *into* a group that remains. This expression which has often has negative connotations (only remainders will survive) can be one with positive implications (cf. Gen. 45:7). They are still not a “faithful remnant.”[[179]](#footnote-179) But the group that remains has the potential to become the basis for something new, as is spelled out in the parallel colon. Here the “straying” become the “far-flung,” while in the parallelism the group that remains becomes a powerful nation. Micah thus takes up the term in v. 3 and reasserts Yahweh’s intention for Abraham (Gen. 18:18). Israel will be a nation that holds its head high in the world. In a further link with 2:12-13, Micah adds that Yahweh will reign as king over this nation on the restored Mount Zion and that this will be a permanent reality, as he urged their commitment to be in v. 5.

Micah reinforces the point in a further restatement of the promise (v. 8), closing the section with a tricolon.[[180]](#footnote-180) Jerusalem constitutes a protective watchtower for the herd of sheep that is Israel. Protective watchtower is Jerusalem’s role as capital in relation to the towns and villages all around. The reference to Israel as a herd supports the idea that the lame and straying were sheep. To put it another way, Jerusalem is like an acropolis for the entire nation, a stronghold for it, a place to take refuge if necessary. Micah’s point constitutes a restatement of v. 7. As was the case in 2:13, in isolation one might take v. 8 to be referring to a rule of Jerusalem over the nations or to a restored Davidic kingship over Jerusalem; “the text in vv. 6-8 does not advance but does not exclude the possibility of a Davidide’s rule over Jerusalem.”[[181]](#footnote-181) But the context of references to Yahweh’s kingship suggests it is a restatement of the promise that Yahweh will rule and will reign again over Daughter Jerusalem, and also will rule and reign over the nations from here as vv. 2-4 envisaged. Micah can move between shepherd imagery and kingship imagery because Middle Eastern thinking saw kings as their people’s shepherds. They had authority, they led, and they provided.

## Theological Implications

1. “There can hardly be anything more destructive in a state than… when the princes do not promote equal justice but allow money to overwhelm them so that they corrupt justice.”[[182]](#footnote-182) Thus “what God requires mainly from those in power” is “that they abstain from doing injustice: for as they are armed with power, so they ought to be a law to themselves. They assume authority over others; let them then begin with themselves, and restrain themselves from doing evil.” Micah tells them so: he “in no degree flattered the great.”[[183]](#footnote-183)
2. Jesus’s story about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 19) corresponds to Micah’s declaration that it may be impossible to turn to God when you’ve come under judgment. Despite Micah’s threat, if people do really do turn to God in repentance, they may find that God cannot resist the temptation to respond to them. But Micah doesn’t want people to be working on that hypothesis and postponing repentance. They will then find he can resist the temptation. And it’s no good them thinking they can turn to God and pray for mercy if they haven’t repented in the sense of started being merciful (James 2:11).[[184]](#footnote-184)
3. There are good theological arguments for paying people as pastors and prophets, but it’s also a hazardous practice. Further, “it is permitted to you, priest, that you should live from the altar, not that you should live luxuriously.”[[185]](#footnote-185)
4. It’s possible to claim to be wise but to become a fool and for your senseless heart to be darkened (Rom. 1:21-22).[[186]](#footnote-186) The implication of Micah’s challenge to the other prophets is that we must examine ourselves, not focusing on condemning others as false prophets.[[187]](#footnote-187) Micah practices “unmasking,” and we must allowed ourselves to be unmasked.[[188]](#footnote-188)
5. Prophets tell the people of God about their rebellion and wrongdoing, and especially about the rebellion and wrongdoing of their leaders. Micah declares that there is something wrong with the city of Jerusalem itself and that the city will be destroyed. It’s built on bloodshed. Judah’s problem is structural sin not just the sin of some individuals.[[189]](#footnote-189)
6. Micah’s challengers declare, “God has promised to be with His people. Therefore those prophets are insane who threaten us with evil, as if God were not in the midst of us.”[[190]](#footnote-190) Indeed, “Micah had denied all they held dear.”[[191]](#footnote-191) As there is a proper awareness of God being present in Jerusalem and a visionary prospect of God’s defeating nations there (Ps. 46), so there is an improper conviction about Yahweh being present in Jerusalem or in the church and a visionary awareness that God ultimately has another intention for the nations.
7. “Israel’s God is the one who will not tolerate the abuse of the prophetic office and the neglect of its responsibilities, especially when people's well-being is involved.”[[192]](#footnote-192)
8. Micah’s devastating threat looks like the end, but it isn’t. When a prophet’s threat doesn’t come true, it may indicate that he has succeeded; people have repented.
9. For Jerusalem, but also perhaps for any city, “the possibility of… becoming the highest mountain or a heap of ruins is ever present.”[[193]](#footnote-193)
10. A pastor asked her Bible study group what Micah 4:1-5 has to say to us. “‘Should we take what Micah has to say seriously, as a plan for this world? Or is it just a beautiful dream that will never come to pass?’ It was the consensus of these dedicated, caring people, after very little discussion or questioning, that this is simply a beautiful dream that has little or nothing to say to our current world or personal situation.” But Micah 4:1-5 “is an example of imaginative use of concrete and anticipatory metaphor to evoke an alternative world in the consciousness of Israel.”[[194]](#footnote-194) Yet Micah does not infer that “God is constantly and effectively active in the midst of time and history” or that “working for peace, freedom, justice, and human dignity will bear fruit in the end.”[[195]](#footnote-195) He rather realistically implies that sometimes God is active and sometimes not, and that the vision in 4:1-5 requires God to fulfill it; our efforts may be irrelevant. “It is precisely the city which had been reduced to a wilderness which becomes the source of ultimate world peace. That… is written into the ‘family history’ of a ruined Israel, of a disintegrating, faltering church.” Yet “a mission emanating from God’s people is not even hinted at. Yahweh himself and Yahweh alone establishes something entirely new." [[196]](#footnote-196) On the other hand, while here it is not explicit how Yahweh’s teaching goes out from Jerusalem. Isaiah 42:1-4 makes Israel as Yahweh’s servant its means of doing so.
11. The nations coming together and finding peace involves religion not just politics. It involves the nations being drawn to the one God, the God of Jerusalem. Micah’s gospel combines universalism and particularism. It’s for the whole world, but there is only one way. It’s not the case that in 4:5 “universalism is replaced by unyielding particularism.”[[197]](#footnote-197) And Israel has to make its commitment to Yahweh even while other nations have not yet come to acknowledge him. But it is also the case that 4:1-5 “is not only Israel/Zion/Jerusalem-centered,… it also serves to communicate a strong reaffirmation of the… Jerusalem-centered community.”[[198]](#footnote-198)
12. “The scene used to evoke the quality of the peace which ensues is not the myth of paradise… but the ideal of the peasant farmer freed from the demands and threats of the military state.”[[199]](#footnote-199)
13. Sometimes by collateral damage God brings trouble to people who do not deserve it, but he promises that this will not be the end of the story. And sometimes the people of God are harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17; Matt. 9:36).[[200]](#footnote-200) Fortunately “the life of the Church is not without a resurrection, nay, it is not without many resurrections.”[[201]](#footnote-201)
14. In light of John 4:21, 24, Theodore expresses amazement at people who think that 4:1-5 “is a kind of type of what would happen in the time of Christ” as well as relating to the return from the exile.[[202]](#footnote-202) Yet characteristically, the promise in 4:1-5 did see some fulfillment in First Testament times, found decisive confirmation in Jesus and in the spreading of the Jesus story, but still awaits concrete realization.

# Micah 4:9—5:15 [14]—Now and Then

## Translation

4:9Now, why do you[[203]](#footnote-203) shout and shout,[[204]](#footnote-204)

isn’t there a king in you?

Or has your counselor[[205]](#footnote-205) perished,

that writhing has seized you like a woman giving birth?[[206]](#footnote-206)

10Writhe and labor,[[207]](#footnote-207) Daughter Ṣiyyôn ,[[208]](#footnote-208) like a woman giving birth,

because you are now to go out of the town.[[209]](#footnote-209)

You will dwell in the fields,

and come right to Bābel.

There you will be rescued,

there Yahweh will restore you,

from your enemies’ fist.

11But now many nations

have gathered against you

Who are saying, “It’s impious;[[210]](#footnote-210)

our eyes are to have a look[[211]](#footnote-211) at Ṣiyyôn.”

12But those people, they don’t know about

Yahweh’s intentions.

They don’t have insight into his counsel,

that he has collected them like sheaves on the threshing floor.

13Get up and thresh, Daughter Ṣiyyôn,

because I’ll make your horn iron.

I’ll make your hooves copper,

and you’ll crush many peoples.

And I’ll devote[[212]](#footnote-212) their ill-gotten gain to Yahweh,

their resources to the Lord of all the earth.

5:1Now you’re to squad together, Daughter Squad,[[213]](#footnote-213)

as someone has set a siege against us,

As they strike on the jaw with a club

the leader[[214]](#footnote-214) of Yiśrā’ēl.

2But you, Bȇt-leḥem Eprātāh,

little[[215]](#footnote-215) to be among Judah’s clans,

From you there will emerge for me[[216]](#footnote-216)

someone[[217]](#footnote-217) to be ruler in Yiśrā’ēl,

Though his emergings are from long ago,

from days of old.

3Therefore he[[218]](#footnote-218) will give them up

until the time when the one who is going to give birth has given birth.

When the rest of his brothers turn back

to the Yiśrā’ēlites,

4He will stand and shepherd in Yahweh’s power,

in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God.

So they will settle [there],[[219]](#footnote-219) because now he will be great, right to the ends of the earth,

5and he will be the one of peace.[[220]](#footnote-220)

As for ’Aššûr—when it comes into our country

and when it makes its way into our fortresses,[[221]](#footnote-221)

We will set up over it seven shepherds,

eight deputies[[222]](#footnote-222) for people.

6They will shepherd[[223]](#footnote-223) the country of ’Aššûr with the sword,

and the country of Nimrod, in its gates.[[224]](#footnote-224)

So he will rescue[[225]](#footnote-225) from Assyria when it comes into our country,

when it makes its way into our territory.[[226]](#footnote-226)

7The group that remains of Ya‘ăqōb will be,

in the midst of many peoples,

Like dew from Yahweh,

like downpours on plant life,[[227]](#footnote-227)

Which does not hope for a person

or wait for human beings.

8The group that remains of Ya‘ăqōb will be, among the nations,

in the midst of many peoples,

Like a lion among the animals of the forest,

like a cougar[[228]](#footnote-228) among herds of sheep,

Which, if it passes by and tramples,

it tears and there is no rescuer.

9Your hand is to be high[[229]](#footnote-229) over your adversaries,

and all your enemies are to be cut down.

10And it will be on that day (Yahweh’s affirmation):

I will cut down your horses from among you,

and obliterate your chariots.

11I will cut down the towns in your country

and tear down all your fortresses.

12I will cut down the charms from your hand,

and there will be no more mediums for you.

13I will cut down your sculptures,

and your pillars from among you,

And you will not bow down any more

to things your hands have made.

14I will uproot your totem poles from among you,

and destroy your towns.

15And I will make redress[[230]](#footnote-230) in anger and in fury

on the nations that have not listened.

## Interpretation

We have noted how 4:8 brought its section to an end; the exhortation in 6:1 will form the beginning to another new section. Micah 4:9—5:15 [14] is a more miscellaneous compilation of short units, though it does comprise three statements beginning “now” (4:9—5:6 [5]) and then three statements which one could see as referring to “then” as they begin “it will be” (5:7-15 [6-14]).[[231]](#footnote-231) “The main intention of this unit is to convey an association between the past and the future.”[[232]](#footnote-232) The first three statements address Jerusalem under pressure “now” and deservedly threatened by calamity, but they promise that calamity will not be the end; “these three promises of consolation provide encouragement by dealing with the actual terrors of the present situation, each in its own way.”[[233]](#footnote-233) The dynamic of the “then” sayings (5:7-15 [6-14]) is almost the reverse. They begin and end with promises and a declaration of redress on the nations that have resisted Yahweh, but before they reach that final declaration, they weigh into Judah with more threats. In a sense, then, the dynamic of 3:1—4:8 continues: the scroll issues critiques, threats, and promises. One can imagine this message against the background of the Aramean/Ephraimite threat in the 730s,[[234]](#footnote-234) or the Assyrian threat in the 700s, or one of the Babylonian sieges a century later. In MT the units comprise 4:8—5:1 [4:14]; 5:2-6 [1-5]; 5:7-9 [6-8]; 5:10-15 [9-14].[[235]](#footnote-235)

**Micah 4:9-10.** This first subsection announces the now/then dynamic or the critique/threat/promise dynamic. Jerusalem is experiencing the kind of crisis that Micah has already announced.

Jerusalem is understandably in a state of panic (v. 9), but Micah speaks with disdain. While shouting isn’t necessarily or even usually a sign of panic, what follows in the subsection makes clear its significance here. The disdain concerns the contrast between the city’s fretfulness and its usual expectation that its leadership should be able to cope with situations (cf. Isa. 7 in Ahaz’s day and Isa. 30—31 in Hezekiah’s day). In this connection Micah for the first time explicitly refers to the human “king,” with that disdain—almost with the implication “your so-called king.” Jeremiah’s similar question about Yahweh as king (Jer. 8:19) underlines the irony of Micah’s query. Israel’s request for a king to lead them and fight their battles (1 Sam. 8:20) doesn’t seem to be working out very well.[[236]](#footnote-236) For the first time, too, Micah also refers to the king’s political staff, in the person of his counselor (see e.g., 2 Sam. 15:12). This staff is apparently a differently group from the heads and chiefs of whom Micah has previously spoken. The nature of the city’s shout becomes explicit in the last colon. As usual, the city is thought of and addressed as a woman, which opens up the possibility of portraying her shout as the shout of a woman giving birth, with the danger, pain, and fear associated with that experience.

Carry on contorting, Micah sardonically urges (v. 10abαβ). There’s no suggestion at this point that the pain brings new life;[[237]](#footnote-237) it could be more like the pain of a woman who dies in childbirth (though 5:3 [2] will prompt a rethink of that point). The personification of Jerusalem is the personification of its population, and they are going to have to abandon the town, perhaps because it’s been devastated and is no longer habitable, or perhaps because its attackers drive them out. In the immediate term they will have to camp out like refugees, but then they will find themselves having to go as far as Babylon. In Micah’s day, the threat suggests the events related in 2 Kings 17:23-24 and the threat in Isaiah 39;[[238]](#footnote-238) the irony is that Judah thought Babylon was a potential ally. A century or so later, it corresponds to the city’s actual fate when people got take off into exile in Babylon.

Typically, Micah doesn’t regard such a fate as the end of the story (v. 10bδεζ). Yahweh will rescue and restore. The two verbs have a wide set of resonances. Both appear occasionally in the shorter prophets (Hos. 13:14; Amos 4:11). More significantly, both describe Yahweh’s original liberation of Israel from Egypt (e.g., Exod. 3:8; 6:6): the rescue from Babylon will be a repeat of that liberation. “Rescue” is especially associated with the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in Hezekiah’s time: the verb occurs twelve times in Isaiah 36—37, while Isaiah 38:6 also unusually promises rescue from the Assyrians’ fist (as opposed to hand). The irony here is that “rescue” denotes a deliverance that will follow the taking of Jerusalem rather than forestall it. “Restore” is the action of a family member who puts in effort and resources to reestablish someone who has fallen on bad times and ended up in servitude; the vast bulk of its theological application comes in Isaiah 40—66 and concerns the rescue of Judahites from Babylon in the sixth century and subsequently.

**Micah 4:11-13.** Micah returns to the “now,” when the city is under pressure from “many nations/many peoples.” Their stance and destiny is shockingly different from that in vv. 1-5.[[239]](#footnote-239)

Again Micah speaks with disdainful irony (v. 11). He portrays the nations as recognizing that Jerusalem behaves in a way that shows contempt for Yahweh and thus forfeits his presence and protection, and perceiving that they therefore have the opportunity and perhaps even the responsibility to take action against the city. They will then be in a position to look at it with satisfaction or derision. If one is to be matter-of-fact in identifying the “many” nations, the term will refer to the units from the various parts of the empire in an imperial power’s army.

Paradoxically (v. 12), although they are right in their assessment and in the obligation Yahweh has placed upon them, these peoples don’t comprehend the bigger picture. Micah’s comments about them correspond to Isaiah’s comments about Assyria (Isa. 10-5-34; 14:24-27). “Know about” again implies more than understanding; it implies acknowledgment. Notwithstanding the understanding attributed to them in v. 11, they don’t show up at Jerusalem just to act as Yahweh’s servants. They don’t understand Yahweh’s intentions about Judah or about themselves. As Yahweh’s counsel is set against the counsel of the Judahite administration (cf. v. 9) who are inclined to make up their own mind about Judah’s political policies (e.g., Isa. 5:19; 30:1), so it is with the nations who attack Judah (cf. Isa. 8:10; 14:26). But “the apparent self-willed ‘gathering’ of the nations in fact originates in the will of Yahweh. It is not they who have assembled themselves together; Yahweh has.”[[240]](#footnote-240) Yahweh has collected them, with sinister intentions. They are going to be trampled on.

Zion is to be the agent of their threshing (v. 13a). When the nations attack the city, thinking that the Judahites will simply lie down and die, they will find things are otherwise. The Judahites will be like farmers threshing the newly-cut wheat, or like the ox that pushes a threshing sled and itself takes part in the trampling. They will have the strength of an ox, symbolized by its horn, which indeed will be like a horn made of iron. Or they will be like an ox that has hooves of copper, which also engage in the threshing. Over against the quotation from the nations that elucidated their intentions and their conviction of their superiority, in v. 11, is set a quotation from Yahweh that elucidates his intention and could bolster Jerusalem’s confidence that he will provide them with superior strength.[[241]](#footnote-241) Self-willed threshing of a people may be reprehensible (Amos 1:3) but it may be Yahweh’s act of judgment.

Judah will gain nothing out of the victory (v. 13b), which would be one safeguard against the danger of a people claiming to be Yahweh’s threshing agent. Whereas the real point of war for a great power is to gain territory and gain control over trade routes, not to serve Yahweh, the point of war for Judah will not be to make gains for itself. It is a defensive war in which it will be merely the agent of Yahweh’s bringing calamity on a great power that must be put down. Micah takes up the verb “devote” (*ḥāram*) which most commonly denotes the destruction of cities, peoples, and animals, especially in connection with Israel’s gaining control of Canaan. There, too, Israel acts as Yahweh’s agent in bringing calamity on a sinful people, and the use of this verb points to the fact that Judah will not attack the nations in order to gain something for itself. The resources that the nations have gained through their war-making become something dedicated to Yahweh as the God who has shown he is the Lord of all the earth and therefore the Lord over these nations.

**Micah 5:1-6 [4:14—5:5].** The third “now” speaks once more to the city of Jerusalem under pressure.

The prophet again speaks in rather snide fashion (5:1 [4:14]), urging it to get its military act together; the term for “squad” is not very complimentary, and “Daughter Squad” is a rather demeaning alternative title for “Daughter Zion” or “Daughter Jerusalem.” Yet Jerusalem needs to focus because it’s under siege. Metaphorically speaking, the besiegers have slapped the Judahite king in the face. Once again one can imagine the comment being made in connection with Ahaz (cf. Isa. 7), with Hezekiah (cf. Isa. 36—37), and with a sequence of kings a century later. The staff was supposed to be something the king wielded (Ps. 2:9), not something he felt the force of.[[242]](#footnote-242) Once again Micah avoids glorifying the king with the title “king.” “Leader” is the term in Judges for people like Gideon, Jephtah, and Samson—who wouldn’t have stood for the treatment this “king” is receiving.

Again Micah moves from present to future (v. 2 [1]). “The shift of address from besieged Zion to Bethlehem… hints that Zion is doomed,” and the promise that follows hints that the Davidic monarchy needs a wholly new start, and will receive one.[[243]](#footnote-243) But it will be a new start that stands in continuity with the past. It has a background in Yahweh’s action towards and his promise to David three centuries ago, “from long ago” (used of David’s time in Neh. 12:46), “from of days of old” (used of David’s time in Amos 9:11).[[244]](#footnote-244) Micah still does not speak of a king, but here of a ruler (*môšēl*); Yahweh had originally called David a ruler (*nāgîd*) rather than a king (2 Sam. 7:8). While the promise may imply a disparagement of the present king, following on 5:1 [4:14] it also more overtly suggests that his shaming will not have the last word on the significance of David’s line. The small town of Bethlehem from which David came is the home of the Ephratah clan within Judah, to be distinguished from the Bethlehem in Zebulun (Josh. 19:15).

Meanwhile, however, Yahweh is giving the Judahites up (v. 3a [2a])—giving up on them, giving them over to some hostile power. Yet in the context of 4:10, the one who is going to give birth to this new David is Daughter Zion.[[245]](#footnote-245) Even if his ultimate background is Bethlehem, and even if his actual birth certificate says Bethlehem, metaphorically-speaking his birth certificate will say Jerusalem.

The result will then be (vv. 3b-4a [2b-3a]) that his far-flung brothers (4:7) such as the Ephraimites will come back to the people who count as the real Israelites (that is, the Judahites!—cf. also 2:12), and will come back to him; the promise compares with Hosea 3:5. He will take his stand as leader and thus as shepherd with authority and commitment, like Israel’s original shepherd leader (see 2 Sam. 5:2, and the comments on 4:8). In keeping with Yahweh’s promise to David, he will be the means of Yahweh’s own power and majesty being seen in the world. Yahweh will be his God; in a sense Yahweh is his God no more than he is any Israelite’s God, but there will be a special relationship between the Davidic ruler and God in the sense that God will be distinctively involved with him, in working through him.

To restate the point (vv. 4b-5a [3b-4a]) Yahweh’s power exercised through the earth in fulfillment of the promise to David (see Ps. 2:8; 72:8) will be what frees his brothers to come back and settle under him. A proclamation of peace in both senses will now be possible (see the comments on 3:5; these are the only two references to *šālôm* in Hosea to Micah except for an occurrence where it means a pact in Obad. 7).

What of the great power of the day (vv. 5b-6 [4b-5])? The possibility of Assyrian invasion was an underlying threat in Micah’s day and it became a reality in the 700s. In effect, Micah has already portrayed Assyria marching into Judah and its fortresses (1:8-15). Here the end result of such an incursion is going to be different. Assyria will find that it has bitten off more than it can chew. It is Goliath and Israel is David. The first and last lines of these four form a bracket around the second and third. The first and last refer to Assyrian invasion and to the new ruler’s rescuing the country from the Assyrians in those circumstances. The middle two lines reach far beyond such rescue. They presuppose a counter-invasion that leads to the ruler taking control of the Assyrian empire and appointing a considerable number of administrators who become the Israelite equivalent to the governors that a king puts in place over the various parts of his empire. One shouldn’t press the “seven” and “eight” (like the “three” and “four” in Amos 1:3—3:2) or seek to identify them:[[246]](#footnote-246) it just means an appropriately large number. Like David cutting off Goliath’s head, as shepherds they will use violence to put down the violence of Assyria, the country of Nimrod the first great man of violence (Gen. 10:8-11). Neatly, Nimrud is the modern name of one of Assyria capitals in Micah’s day, and for Micah and his listeners “Nimrod” would likely suggest Assyria.[[247]](#footnote-247)

**Micah 5:7 [6]**. There follows the first of the three declarations about how “it will be,” about “then.” Reference to “a group that remains” from Jacob “has lost any negative tone…. Now they are the saved remnant, the people of God, who will be founders of a new family.”[[248]](#footnote-248) They will be like the dew that takes crops towards ripeness in the dry summer, or (to intensify the point) like the pouring rain that fulfills a more fundamental role in fall, winter, and spring. Where are the dew and the rain falling? While the peoples of the world are destined to flock to Jerusalem to learn from Yahweh, and he will sort things out for “many peoples” (4:1-3), more recently the scroll has spoken of Jacob threshing “many peoples” (4:13), and in a moment it will liken Jacob to a lion in a similar connection. So while Micah might be capable of thinking in terms of Jacob becoming a blessing *to* the peoples, he actually speaks of Jacob being a blessing *among* the peoples, and the context in vv. 3-6 and 8-9 points in a different direction. The remains of Jacob, having become a powerful nation (4:7), will have a ministry *among* the peoples but *toward* their far-flung brothers and sisters, which will inspire them to return to Canaan. The closing affirmation (v. 7b [6b]) no doubt applies to the dew and the rain but more directly to the thing they are compared with. The remains of Jacob cannot transform itself; it is because of what Yahweh does in transforming it that it can be a blessing. So Jacob needs to look to Yahweh: to put its hope in Yahweh and wait for Yahweh.

**Micah 5:8 [7]**. What of the peoples and nations among whom the brothers and sisters have been forced to live? Insofar as the nations and peoples are adversaries and enemies, invaders and attackers, this transformed remainder of Israel will not be like dew or a shower but like a wild animal among sheep.

**Micah 5:9-15 [8-14].** A jussive declaration (v. 9 [8] marks a transition into an address to “you” (masculine singular) which continues through the subsection. The opening line ends with a promise that Israel’s enemies are to be cut down.

But the bulk of the subsection [vv. 10-14 [9-13]) begins with Israel becoming the object of this verb . Four times Yahweh threatens “I will cut down.” Then, as he pauses and the listeners utter a sigh of relief, he adds “I will uproot” and “I will destroy.” Colon after colon ends with “you/your” as the object of the onslaught. Micah has been emphasizing what Israel will be, dew-like and lion-like, in words of encouragement to the beleaguered remains of Jacob, and in line with what thus precedes, Tg takes vv. 10-13 [9-12] as a declaration about other peoples. But in MT it is a declaration about Israel. The framework verses (vv. 9 and 15 [8 and 14]) suggest the context for the threats, the same context as other subsections. An enemy is attacking and Judah is using its initiative to ensure its safety—which contrasts with v. 7b [6b].[[249]](#footnote-249) The threats counter that instinct. Micah directs himself against everything that stands in the way of trust in Yahweh “and thus constitutes a violation of the first (and second) commandment.”[[250]](#footnote-250) Most of the terms appear here for the first time in Micah, though the drift of Yahweh’s declaration matches 1:6-13 and other sections of the scroll, and in particular it resonates with 4:1-3.[[251]](#footnote-251) Micah seems to be making a point of describing Yahweh’s purge in unfamiliar ways: the verbs cut down, obliterate, uproot, and destroy are hardly used elsewhere with the objects they have here.[[252]](#footnote-252) The chariots with their horses (Judah’s means of attack), the towns with their fortifications (Judah’s means of defense), the diviners with their charms (Judah’s means of seeking supernatural revelation and guidance), the sculpted images and the columns (Judah’s aids in approaching Yahweh), they will all go. Israel will no longer have the use in war and in worship of those things that helped them. To sum it up, Yahweh will destroy the totem poles and the towns. It is an act of judgment, but also an act of “cleansing,”[[253]](#footnote-253) a “divine purge.”[[254]](#footnote-254)

The final line (v. 15 [14]) goes back to the nations, so that references to the fate of the adversaries or heedless nations form a bracket around the threats to Israel in the verses between.[[255]](#footnote-255) Redress, anger, and fury are further realities Micah has previously referred to, but the first words Yahweh uttered in Micah were an exhortation to the peoples to listen.

## Theological Implications

1. The people of God are inclined to put their trust in their human leaders, and the human leaders are inclined to put their trust in themselves. A crisis may be what disabuses both parties. “It is therefore surely an excellent choice to remain subject to God as king and choose him as our strength, protector, and helper.”[[256]](#footnote-256) Thus the Prophets regularly combine threats of calamity, so that people do not live in false security, with promises of restoration so that our minds may be “sustained by hope.”[[257]](#footnote-257) “God will ‘give *them* up’…. But God will not give up on them.”[[258]](#footnote-258)
2. Micah’s promise about a ruler to emerge from Bethlehem rests on the commitment God made to David which led the Targum to see the promise of an Anointed One or Messiah here and enabled priests and theologians to answer the Magis’ question about where the Messiah was to be born (Matt. 2:4-6). One aspect of the significance of Jesus is thus that his emergence is a fulfillment of that commitment. The Jewish leaders’ quotation from Micah adapts the text somewhat. The very promise makes insignificant Bethlehem somewhere significant. Likewise the knowledge that Jesus was the embodiment of the word or message which existed from the beginning (John 1:1) made it natural for later theologians to see such significance in Micah’s talk of “emergings… from long ago, from days of old.”[[259]](#footnote-259) In a complementary direction, Theodore assumes Micah refers first to Zerubbabel, then to Jesus.[[260]](#footnote-260) And Micah’s subsequent description of this ruler from David’s line as “the one of peace” (5:5 [4]) makes one think of Paul’s description of Jesus the one who “is our peace,” specifically in turning Jews and Gentiles into one new humanity (Eph. 2:14).
3. Here’s a list of things that God won’t stand for our relying on.
4. Physical resources that we create to enable us to go on the attack
5. Physical resources that we create in order to defend ourselves
6. Means of seeking supernatural guidance and help that he has not countenanced
7. Aids to worship and to seeking a sense of God’s presence and guidance that he has not countenanced.

Thus

Whenever we see that the Church of God, though not possessing any great power, is yet diminished daily, yea, and becomes, so to speak, like a naked land, without any defenses, it so happens, in order that the protection of God may be alone sufficient for us, and that he may wholly tear away from our hearts all haughtiness and pride, and dissipate all those vain confidences by which we not only obscure the glory of God, but, as far as we can, entirely cover it over. In short, as there is nothing better for us than to be preserved by the hand of God, we ought to bear patiently the removal of all those impediments which close up the way against God, and, in a manner, keep off his hand from us, when he is ready to extend it for the purpose of delivering us. For when our minds are inflated with foolish self-confidence, we neglect God; and thus a wall intervenes, which prevents him to help us. Who would not wish, seeing himself in extreme danger and help not far distant, that an intercepting wall should immediately fall down? Thus God is near at hand, as he has promised; but there are many walls and many obstacles, from the ruin of which, if we would be safe, we must desire and seek, that God may find an open and free way, in order that he may be able to afford us aid.[[261]](#footnote-261)

Thus we pray

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou so kindly invites us to thy self, and promises that thy aid should never be wanting to us, provided we do not close the door against thee, — O grant, that though many earthly benefits may be granted to us, we may not yet trust in them and depart from thee, but, on the contrary, recomb on thy grace only: and then should it happen to us to be deprived of all helps, that our minds may be awakened, and that we may thus learn to hasten to thee, may nothing impede our course, that we may not, with the greatest haste and ardent desire, long to deliver up and devote ourselves wholly to thee.[[262]](#footnote-262)

1. Paul takes up the burden of the section’s closing threats more than once as part of his argument to drive Jews and Gentiles to turn to God, and as assurance that God will take redress from people who persecute believers in Jesus (Rom. 2:8; 2 Thess. 1:6-8).[[263]](#footnote-263)

# Micah 6:1-16—On Following Omri and Ahab

## Translation

1Listen,[[264]](#footnote-264) please, to what Yahweh is saying:

Get up, confront[[265]](#footnote-265) the mountains,

so that the hills listen to your voice.

2Listen,[[266]](#footnote-266) mountains,[[267]](#footnote-267) to Yahweh’s confrontation,

enduring ones, foundations of the earth.

Because Yahweh has a confrontation with his people;

with Yiśrā’ēl he will issue a reproof.

3My people, what did I do to you,

what did I exhaust you with?—aver[[268]](#footnote-268) against me.

4Because I got you up[[269]](#footnote-269) from the country of Mișrayim,

redeemed you from the household of servants,

And I sent Mōšeh before you,

’Ahărōn and Miryām.

5My people, be mindful, please,

of what Bālāq king of Mō’āb planned against you,

And how Bil‘ām ben Bə‘ôr

averred with him—

From Šiṭṭîm right to Gilgāl,

for the sake of your acknowledging Yahweh’s acts of faithfulness.[[270]](#footnote-270)

6With what should I approach Yahweh,

bow myself down to God on high?

Should I approach him with burnt offerings,

with year-old bullocks?

7Would Yahweh accept thousands of rams,

myriads of streams of oil?

Should I give my firstborn for my rebellion,

the fruit of my insides for the wrongdoing of my person?

8Man, he has told you what is good,

what Yahweh requires from you:

Nothing but implementing the making of decisions and being loyal to commitment,

and being circumspect in walking with your God.

9Yahweh’s voice calls to the city,[[271]](#footnote-271)

and discernment [calls to the one who] regards[[272]](#footnote-272) your name.[[273]](#footnote-273)

Listen, mace,[[274]](#footnote-274)

yes, who has directed it?[[275]](#footnote-275)

10Shall I yet forget[[276]](#footnote-276)

the household of the faithless person,

The faithless storehouses,

the accursed scant measure?

11Would I be in the clear[[277]](#footnote-277) with faithless scales

and with a bag of deceptive stones?

12One whose[[278]](#footnote-278) rich people are full of violence,

whose inhabitants speak falsehood,

whose tongue is deceit in their mouth?

13So I for my part[[279]](#footnote-279)—I have weakened you[[280]](#footnote-280) in striking you down,

made you desolate because of your wrongdoings.

14You—you eat but you’re not full,[[281]](#footnote-281)

with emptiness[[282]](#footnote-282) in your insides.

You remove but you don’t carry off,[[283]](#footnote-283)

and what you carry off I give to the sword.[[284]](#footnote-284)

15You—you sew but you don’t harvest,

you—you tread[[285]](#footnote-285) olives,

But you do not rub on oil,

and [you tread] new wine,[[286]](#footnote-286) but you don’t drink wine.

16As the decrees of ‘Omrî get themselves kept,[[287]](#footnote-287)

and every act of the household of ’Aḥ’āb,

You walk by their counsels

for the sake of my giving you[[288]](#footnote-288) to destruction

And its inhabitants to whistling

as you carry the reviling of my people.[[289]](#footnote-289)

## Interpretation

Chapter 6 again comprises a series of short messages placed after one another without being provided with close formal links. Yet it doesn’t take much ingenuity to make connections of substance between them. Yahweh challenges his people about their stance in relation to him in light of what he has done for them (vv. 1-5). He answers a question about what they should bring to him—in light of his acts? (vv. 6-8). He challenges the king more concretely about faithlessness in the city—which contrasts with what they should bring to Yahweh? (vv. 9-12). And he acknowledges the acts of chastisement he has brought and is bringing—with the implication that such factors lie behind these acts? (vv. 13-16). Rarely, all three MT codices agree in placing a petuhah after 6:16 (also a setumah or petuhah after v. 8). As is the case with other sections of the scroll, it’s possible to see it against the background of a number of contexts in the last third of the eighth century or later.

**Micah 6:1-5.** “Yahweh takes Israel to court,” and Micah “is given two tasks, he has to find witnesses (or a jury) and he has to act as Yahweh’s advocate, though he is supplied with his brief.”[[290]](#footnote-290)

“Listen” (v. 1) is a natural beginning for a prophetic message (cf. 3:1, 9), though it is unusual for a prophet to speak in terms of what Yahweh is “saying” (or “is going to say”). But actually this opening bidding addressed to the people is an introduction to a report of Yahweh’s own bidding addressed to Micah himself in v. 1b. It urges him in turn to address the mountains and hills, as Yahweh once bade him address the peoples of the earth (1:2). Yahweh is in a position like that of someone bringing a case against a fellow-member of the community, before the elders at the city gate. He might have assigned the role of the elders to the other members of his cabinet, but perhaps that could give a false impression of their status, so he assigns the role to impressive features of the physical terrain. Israel is urged to imagine that the imposing geographical realities that dominate their landscape are going to be evaluating them and challenging them. To that end Micah is to begin by confronting these mountains and hills, perhaps doing so like an enraged petitioner challenging the elders to do their duty to put wrongs right. But as was the case in 1:2-4, Micah is providing his actual Judahite hearers with false comfort by giving them the impression that they are not in the firing line, before opening fire in a moment.

Micah does as he’s told (v. 2). He repeats the imperative “listen” but now addresses it to the mountains in their abiding, daunting strength, and he draws attention to their being not merely arresting in towering upwards but critical to the world’s stability because their “roots” extend way down into the earth as its foundations. The foundations of earthly reality are imperiled by the wrongs he intends to expose, because while Yahweh has an argument with the mountains and hills, his real argument is with Israel. To the word “confrontation” the parallelism adds the word “reproof” to intensify the point. A confrontation (*rîb*) is a complaint or case or accusation that a person intends to bring. Reproving (*yākaḥ*) implies that the point has been established and the person can issue a rebuke to one who is manifestly in the wrong.

As usual, there is poignancy and also acrimony about addressing Israel as “my people” (v. 3). The nature of Yahweh’s accusation is then surprising. Actually, he skips over any accusation to move straight to the reason for Israel’s behaving the way it has. Yahweh’s questions look like a counter-accusation, or a response to an argument that Israel has made, of the kind that come in the Psalms. The Israelites have apparently complained about what Yahweh has done to them and how he has exhausted them—this verb often refers specifically to exhausting someone’s patience. Okay, testify as to how I did so, Yahweh urges.

Acerbically (v. 4), he offers suggestions regarding his possible failures. There was the way he got them out of Egypt, acting like someone paying good money to get a servant out of his servitude. There was the way he made sure they would find their way to their own land by providing Moses as leader, Aaron as priest, and Miriam as prophet—or by providing three prophets, Moses as teacher, Aaron to make atonement, and Miriam to instruct the women (so Tg).

Once again he addresses Israel as “my people” (v. 5a) and suggests that they might like to think about what happened at the other end of the journey. The verb for “be mindful” (*zākar*)is conventionally translated “remember,” but it “does not understand historical events as belonging to the past; rather, they provide orientation for the present.”[[291]](#footnote-291) Remember means “to recall the past and confront it as present reality.”[[292]](#footnote-292) When they were on the edge of the land and the Moabite king tried to hire a prophet to curse them (see Num. 22—24), Yahweh got Balaam to testify to Yahweh’s not letting him do so; Yahweh was committed to blessing Israel.

Or they might like to think about the subsequent, last crucial stage of the journey (v. 5b) when they crossed from Shittim on the east of the Jordan to Gilgal on the west side (see Josh. 3:1; 4:19). Immediately after Yahweh’s great act of protection from cursing and reiterating his blessing, there took place the great act of whoring at Shittim, yet Yahweh still took Israel from Shittim to Gilgal (Gilgal also came to have negative associations, so that both places are associated with faithlessness).[[293]](#footnote-293) Mindfulness will lead to the Israelites recognizing that Yahweh has been acting in faithfulness through their story. So if they were complaining, there is no basis to their complaints, and/or they need to set any more recent sufferings in the context of the story of those acts instead of behaving like “a people without memory.”[[294]](#footnote-294) The expression “Yahweh’s acts of faithfulness” (*ṣidqôt yhwh*) comes also in Judges 5:11; 1 Samuel 12:7. Different translations such as righteous acts, upright acts, saving deeds, and victories are all illuminating, though the they do not convey the key point that *ṣədāqāh* (of which *ṣidqôt* is the plural) denotes doing the right thing in relation to the people with whom one is in a committed relationship (see the comments on Hos. 2:19 [21]). It’s thus telling that “my people” and “acts of faithfulness” bookend v. 5. The acts to which Yahweh draws attention in vv. 4-5 indicate that any bad experiences the people have been having couldn’t just be acts of sadistic self-indulgence. Further, the expression “Yahweh’s acts of faithfulness” is but one of a number of links between vv. 1-5 and 1 Samuel 12. The frightening possibility that Micah is raising is that Yahweh’s reminders of his acts of faithfulness could be associated with a declaration that he is taking leave of his people.[[295]](#footnote-295)

**Micah 6:6-8.** At a formal level, some ingenuity is required in order to see an integral link between vv. 1-5 and 6-8.[[296]](#footnote-296) The image of a person bringing a case before the village court yields to the image of a worshiper asking for guidance from a priest (cf. Pss. 15; 24).[[297]](#footnote-297) While a passage such as Isaiah 5:1-7 also combines genres,[[298]](#footnote-298) it moves smoothly from one genre to another, which contrasts with the jerky transition here, where it’s more tempting to think that two separate messages have been brought together. But the juxtaposition does present us with someone who could be asking what on earth could be the appropriate response to God’s acts of faithfulness. The questions might then be read as an “indignant and almost hysterical” rejoinder to Yahweh’s challenge about how exactly he had exhausted Israel, leading to an eventual “*reductio ad absurdum.*”[[299]](#footnote-299) But they may be less cynically hyperbolic. In neither case do they involve critique of sacrificial worship itself, direct or indirect,[[300]](#footnote-300) since the sacrifices mentioned are mostly not regular ones or ones that people actually offer. Nor do they explicitly relate to the question “what do we need to offer when we come to Yahweh with our plea for deliverance.”[[301]](#footnote-301) Nor do they relate to the question “what does the sinner do to restore his relation with God,”[[302]](#footnote-302) until we come to v. 7b.

Approaching and bowing down (v. 6) are physical acts involved in worship; they parallel the way one physically approaches and bows before a king. Arguably the question is slightly strange, because everyone knew that one brought burnt offerings, but the proposed answer then becomes stranger in a different sense. No one offered bullocks; they are mentioned as offerings only in connection with the inauguration of the priesthood (Lev. 9).

Rams (v. 7) are more usual, but even Solomon didn’t offer thousands of them. Oil is vital, but wadis full of it, and myriads of them? So the possibilities become stranger and stranger until they come to a shocking climax with the idea of offering one’s son—one’s firstborn at that, when a father may not know if he will ever have another. From time to time the First Testament refers to the sacrifice of a son, though not as something mandated by Yahweh, and not in connection with an offering designed to deal with rebellion against Yahweh or with wrongdoing. Indeed, the question suggests a double failure of understanding. Yahweh forbids human sacrifice, and anyway no sacrifice can in itself compensate for deliberate rebellion and wrongdoing (cf. Heb. 10:4). While offerings can make expiation or can compensate for accidental failures or the infringement of taboos, if you have been seriously rebellious or done something seriously wrong, all you can do is repent and throw yourself on Yahweh’s mercy. But perhaps the idea is that such a significant sacrifice would mark how serious was someone’s repentance.

“Posing as a priest,”[[303]](#footnote-303) the prophet responds to the people’s basic question (v. 8). With simple directness, his instruction encapsulates the essence of Sinai—reorienting the people to the covenant and to a God-centered life.[[304]](#footnote-304) What Yahweh actually looks for is something both less demanding and more demanding than the possibilities raised in vv. 6-7. Yahweh has surely made the answer to the question clear enough in the teaching of the priests (Ps. 15 would be an example) which was subsequently embodied in the Torah. Indeed, in addressing the inquirer unusually as “man” (*’ādām*), Micah uses the Torah’s word that describes someone who is “approaching” Yahweh with an offering (Lev. 1:2)—the word used in v. 6 here.[[305]](#footnote-305) The answer is also clear enough in the proclamation of Prophets and in the instruction of Israel’s other teachers collected in Proverbs.

First, there is the proper exercise of authority (*mišpāṭ*), an insistence on seeing that decisions get taken and government gets administered in a proper way. Second, there is a love and care for commitment to Yahweh and to other people—in the context of the reference to decision-making, Micah may have in mind especially such commitment on the part of people in power. The first notion has featured already in Micah, while the second is familiar from elsewhere throughout the Scriptures. Both words came together in Hosea 2:19 [17].The emphasis lies on the third expectation, whose unfamiliarity heightens the parallelism. The verb for “be circumspect” (*ṣāna‘*) appears only here in the First Testament, though it is more frequent in later Hebrew.[[306]](#footnote-306) The related adjective comes in the aphorism, “When arrogance comes, belittling comes; smartness lies with people who are circumspect” (Prov. 11:2). It suggests being unassuming, unpretentious, self-effacing, reserved, restrained. One can see why this expectation comes at the climax v. 8 as it constitutes a contrast with the extravagant offerings proposed in vv. 6-7. And the phrase “your God” makes for a neat conclusion in light of the references to “my people” in vv. 3 and 5.

**Micah 6:9-12.** Here, too,, the form of the challenge that now follows doesn’t suggest that it started off as a continuation of the preceding subsection, but in substance it follows wel, as it forms a contrast with the expectations expressed in v. 8.

The city (v. 9) is presumably Jerusalem and the declaration that Yahweh’s voice calls out to it is another way of bidding people to listen to Yahweh. The notion of the power of Yahweh’s voice (Ps. 29:1-3) perhaps adds force to the unusual expression.[[307]](#footnote-307) Here the image comes from the way a king’s envoy would take a stand in the heights of the city or in its square and proclaim his message to people. In the parallel colon Micah restates the point, implying that Yahweh’s voice is an embodiment of wisdom and it is this insight that is calling out like a teacher summoning people to listen to her insight (cf. Prov. 1:20-21; 8:1-4).[[308]](#footnote-308) Then Yahweh explicitly urges, “Listen.” He is initially addressing the mace that stretches out in authority over the city—mace is another way of referring to the club of 5:1 [4:14]. To put it more prosaically, he is addressing the one who wields the mace, who has responsibility for directing the city’s life. Once again Micah refers to the king without calling him the king.

The bidding leads to some rhetorical questions about this city (v. 10). Is Yahweh to continue to turn a blind eye to households in the city whose stores of food and drink (and/or valuables) were gained by faithlessness? Specifically, they were gained by giving short measure, an “emaciated ephah”[[309]](#footnote-309)—an ephah of wheat is roughly equivalent to a barrel. These merchants charge for a barrel but manage to give rather less. It’s an infamous practice, one that people curse. “Forget/put out of mind” (*nāšāh*) is not the verb that regularly pairs with the word for “remember/be mindful of” which came in v. 5, but nicely it has a homonym meaning “lend,” which fits with what precedes and follows in vv. 8, 11-12. Further, the collocation is still suggestive: if they are not mindful of Yahweh’s acts, Yahweh will be mindful of theirs. He will not forget them (cf. Amos 8:7).[[310]](#footnote-310)

Yahweh goes on to another rhetorical question, even more scandalous (v. 11). He speaks as if he were himself a merchant, or were simply tolerating false practices by merchants (in the manner of the person who holds the mace). Whereas grain was measured out by volume, silver was measured by weight; it was the equivalent of cash. Suppose the merchant has a bag containing stones of different weight, so that he can covertly bring out the ones that favor him. Is it possible to be in the clear with Yahweh if one uses scales that are rigged through using weights that are lighter or heavier than they should be, so that less or more is required to balance them according to which works in the merchant’s favor?

Micah ricochets to another accusation that recurs in the Prophets (v. 12), and may seem on another level of seriousness. The city’s rich people are rich not only because of their dishonest business practices but because they are habitually engaged in violence (cf. 3:1-3). The two go together in Amos 3:10; 6:3. In the parallelism the second and third cola point to the means whereby they are able to act with violence; the Naboth story again provides a textbook if extreme illustration (1 Kings 21). They can get people thrown off their own land and even get them found guilty of a capital offense because there are people whose false testimony they can buy. Micah implies that falsehood runs through the entire community. You can’t trust the people’s words any more than you can trust a merchant’s weights (Like the English words, the Hebrew words for “deceit” and “deceptive” are related).

**Micah 6:13-16**. If vv. 3-5 are one aspect of a response on Yahweh’s part to an accusation from his people, here is another aspect.

Have I exhausted you? Guilty as charged, Yahweh admits (v. 13)—but I acted in this way with total justification. Three strong verbs build the force of Yahweh’s admission, but then comes the “because of” phrase that undoes the effectiveness of the admission.

Yahweh perhaps continues to quote back to them their own protests (vv. 14-15). You’re not starving but you’re not able to eat properly. You take action to acquire things, possibly illegally (“remove” is the word for moving the boundary stone on someone’s land), but you don’t get to enter into possession of them. And if you do, you lose them (perhaps they are human beings or animals that you stole).You plant but the harvest fails, or you aren’t around for the harvest. You harvest your olives, but you don’t get chance to anoint yourself with their oil. You produce the new wine from the grapes, but you don’t get chance to drink it when it’s mature. The statements correspond to warnings in the Torah of Yahweh’s ensuring that his people’s careful actions will turn out to be futile (e.g., Deut. 28:30-31, 38-40).[[311]](#footnote-311) Instead of blessing in the realm of everyday basic needs (4:3-4), there’s breakdown there.[[312]](#footnote-312)

The explanation follows (v. 16), as happened within v. 13. The experiences described in vv. 14-15 issue from Jerusalem’s living by the rules observed in Ephraim (cf. 1:5-7). Omri was king of Ephraim when it was at the height of its strength back in the ninth century; he built Samaria (1 Kings 16:23-28). The expression “Omri’s decrees” makes for an ironic contrast with “Yahweh’s decrees.”[[313]](#footnote-313) Ahab, his son and successor, gets more attention in the biblical story (1 Kings 17—22, which again draws attention to Naboth). We thus get more information on his acts, though the “acts of his household” also cover Ahaziah and Jehoram (2 Kings 1—9). The problem is that the Jerusalemites live by these kings’ principles. It’s a very different “walk” from the one Micah spoke of in v. 8.[[314]](#footnote-314) “The Prophet here uses respectable terms” such as decrees and counsels “in order to show that those pretenses were frivolous and of no account, which superstitious men adduce, either to commend or to excuse their own inventions.”[[315]](#footnote-315) Indeed, it’s as if they are deliberately aiming to get Yahweh to destroy them and subject them to horrified whistles as they receive the reviling that will come to Yahweh’s people. This “for the sake of” balances the “for the sake of” that closed vv. 1-5. They have declined to follow the first “for the sake of,” which in effect means they have chosen the second. It’s paradoxical that they should be behaving in a way that seems calculated to take them to this fate, and paradoxical that Yahweh should be willing to cooperate in taking “my people” there. If vv. 14-15 do refer to chastisements that have already come to them, v. 16 warns them that these are only the beginning, if they choose to continue as they are.

## Theological Implications

1. Being mindful of what God has done in the past is of key importance, especially when we’re inclined to think that God is treating us badly. It’s of key importance to the Scriptures’ approach to theodicy. Such mindfulness may make it possible for us to live with tough things that God does, in the conviction that they can’t simply indicate that God is being vindictive without warrant. Or It may drive us to recognize that God’s action is warranted by things we have done.
2. “For any worshipping community with liturgical protocols and traditions, Micah's questions should set off alarm bells.”[[316]](#footnote-316) It’s tempting to think that God wishes us to make costly offerings to him when he is looking for responsibility in government, commitment to one another, and thoughtfulness in our walk with him. Keep it simple is the watchword for worship (Ps. 50). Love is thus the fulfillment of the Torah, and it is in accordance with the mercies of God (Rom. 12:1-2; 13:8-10).[[317]](#footnote-317)
3. ‘"Walking’ in the Bible is a metaphor for a life journey or a life performance. ‘Being on the way’ is a life chance and a life performance…. If we walk the path humbly, acknowledging ‘the other,’ who will be our companion along the way? The answer to this question is given by Micah, ‘with your God.’”[[318]](#footnote-318)
4. A city can easily become a place characterized by dishonesty and violence, and the authorities in the city are responsible for seeing that it is not so, rather than being complicit in it.

# Micah 7:1-20—Exodus 34:6-7 Lives Again

## Translation

1Alas for me,[[319]](#footnote-319)

because I have become like the gatherings[[320]](#footnote-320) of ripe fruit,

like the gleanings of the grape-crop.

There’s not a cluster to eat,[[321]](#footnote-321)

an early fig for my appetite’s desire.[[322]](#footnote-322)

2The committed person has perished from the country;

the upright among people—there is none.[[323]](#footnote-323)

All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;

each his brother, they trap with a net.[[324]](#footnote-324)

3Both palms[[325]](#footnote-325) are good at bad dealing;

the official, the person who makes a decision, asks for recompense.[[326]](#footnote-326)

The big man speaks—

it’s his personal desire,[[327]](#footnote-327) and they’ve twisted it.[[328]](#footnote-328)

4The good man among them[[329]](#footnote-329) is like a brier,

the upright worse than a thorn hedge.

Your lookouts’ day,[[330]](#footnote-330) [the day of] your being attended to, has come;[[331]](#footnote-331)

now their confounding[[332]](#footnote-332) will happen.

5Don’t trust in a neighbor, don’t rely on a friend,

with the one who lies in your arms keep watch on the doors of your mouth.

6Because son is going to treat father as a villain,

daughter is going to rise up against mother,

Daughter-in-law against mother-in-law:

the people in his household are a person’s enemies.[[333]](#footnote-333)

7But I—I will look out for Yahweh,

I will wait for the God who will deliver me,[[334]](#footnote-334)

my God will listen to me.

8Don’t rejoice over me, my enemy; [[335]](#footnote-335)

when I’ve fallen, I’ve got up.[[336]](#footnote-336)

When I sit in the dark,

Yahweh is my light.[[337]](#footnote-337)

9Though I carry Yahweh’s rage

because I’ve done wrong in relation to him,

Until he engages in the confrontation about me,

and effects the decision about me,[[338]](#footnote-338)

When he gets me out into the light,

I will look on his faithfulness,

10So that my enemy will look,[[339]](#footnote-339)

and shame will cover it—

The one who says to me, “Where is he,”

Yahweh your God?”

My eye will now look at it;

now it will become something trampled,

like mud in the streets.

11A day for building your fences,

a day, that one, when your authority[[340]](#footnote-340) will extend far.

12That day, yes, it will come[[341]](#footnote-341) right to you,[[342]](#footnote-342)

from ’Aššûr and the towns of Māṣôr,[[343]](#footnote-343)

From Māṣôr to the River,[[344]](#footnote-344)

sea from sea, mountain to mountain.

13The earth will become a desolation

because of its inhabitants, as the fruit of their deeds.

14Pasture your people with your club,

the flock that is your domain,

Dwelling on its own

in a forest in the middle of garden-land.[[345]](#footnote-345)

May they pasture[[346]](#footnote-346) in Bāšān and in Gil‘ād,

as in long past days.

15As in the days when you[[347]](#footnote-347)went out from the country of Miṣrayim,

I will enable it[[348]](#footnote-348) to look at wonderful acts.

16Nations will look and be shamed[[349]](#footnote-349)

by all their strength.

They will put their hand on their mouth,

their ears will become deaf.

17They will lick the dirt like a snake,

like things that crawl to the earth.

They will come trembling from their fastnesses[[350]](#footnote-350) to Yahweh our God;

they will be in dread and awe of you.

18Who is a God like you, carrying waywardness,

passing over rebellion for what remains of his domain.

He has not kept his anger strong forever,

because he loves commitment.

19He will again have compassion on us, he will tame our acts of waywardness,

you will throw into the depths of the sea all their wrongdoings.

20You will show truthfulness to Ya‘ăqōb,

commitment to Abrāhām,[[351]](#footnote-351)

Which you pledged to our ancestors,

from past days.

## Interpretation

Like chapter 6, chapter 7 comprises subsections of different forms that have few verbal links but in substance connect with each other and follow neatly on each other. First Micah laments the degenerate life of the city and the catastrophe that is therefore coming, urges people to recognize how disturbing and demoralizing things will become, but declares his own trust in Yahweh (vv. 1-7). Then the city declares its conviction that catastrophe will not be the end; Yahweh will bring it out into blessing and put down its adversaries (vv. 8-10). Yahweh or Micah confirms this conviction and promises a new flourishing of the city (vv. 11-13). On the people’s behalf Micah prays for Yahweh’s restoration; Yahweh promises to act; and on their behalf Micah rejoices in what Yahweh will do and who he is (vv. 14-20). Thus “this chapter takes us on a long journey.” [[352]](#footnote-352) “In this last chapter [Micah] has brought together into one small package as it were his entire prophecy.”[[353]](#footnote-353) MT treats it as three sections, vv. 1-8; 9-13; and 14-20.

**Micah 7:1-7.** Whereas the so-called laments in the Psalter are commonly more like protests, this statement by Micah really is a lament, mostly a sequence of asyndetic clauses making for a “harsh staccato style.”[[354]](#footnote-354) Perhaps his people are to take the lament as uttered to Yahweh, but indirectly Micah continues to speak to them. It is designed for them to overhear so that they listen to themselves being described—as becomes more overt in vv. 4b-6. “Adopting this speech-form as a means of communicating divine truth in a manner familiar and acceptable to the people, he uses it to convey the normal prophetic message of accusation and punishment.”[[355]](#footnote-355)

The anguish of the opening “Alas” (v. 1) is clear enough, but the precise significance of the imagery that follows is not immediately evident. Micah paints a scene from fall. The ripe fruit has been gathered (see the comments on Amos 8:1) and the grapes have been harvested. When that has happened, just a few grapes typically remain, the gleanings left for people who don’t have their own land. In the parallelism, the colon about the grape-crop clarifies the colon about the ripe fruit—that is, “gleanings” applies to the “gatherings of ripe fruit” as well as to the grape-crop, and the emphasis in the comparison lies on the fact that it’s only gleanings that are left. Verse 1b makes the point even more sharply. There isn’t a single bunch of grapes that one could pluck and eat, and there isn’t a single fig for a dry throat to savor. In speaking of there not being a cluster to eat, Micah indicates that the verse involves another hypallege or transferred epithet. He had spoken as if he was like the gleanings, which would make sense, but really he’s like the person looking for the gleanings. Further, in speaking of early figs, he mixes his metaphor. By definition, early figs belong to early summer when they are a delicacy, while ripe fruit, grape-crop, and cluster all belong to the end of summer.

Micah then explains his allegory, his mashal[[356]](#footnote-356) (v. 2). In its context in the scroll, following on 6:13-16, one might have assumed that he was talking literally. But in itself, and if this subsection started off life as a self-contained message, people might have guessed that it has affinities with Isaiah 5:1-7. First, the missing fruit stands for anyone characterized by commitment, which is one of the handful of things Yahweh looks for (6:8). While in other contexts being committed (*ḥāsîd*)could denote unqualified loyalty and unwavering faithfulness to Yahweh, in the present context it will denote such loyalty and faithfulness to other people in the community. To put it another way, there’s no one upright or upstanding or straight (cf. 2:7; 3:9). In spelling out the implications in v. 2b, Micah makes clear that he is talking about the same realities as before (6:12). He also makes even clearer that he is describing the community as whole, not just its leaders or the people who are better off. His observations are a kind of converse of Jeremiah 5:1-5, though like Jeremiah’s observations, the rest of the scroll indicates that they involve some hyperbole.

And indeed, it is especially the people in authority (v. 3), the people charged with exercising responsibility for uprightness and justice. The single thing they’re good at is doing bad. One way they have both hands available for doing wrong is by having them open to receive a bribe in return for giving the decision that someone wants. The important person tells them what he wants, and they pervert justice in a way that ensures he gets the result he desires.

Even the good guys are bad (v. 4): even falling into the hands of someone relatively good and upright is like falling into a bramble bush. But now the day of reckoning has arrived. The “lookouts” are prophets like Micah (see Hos. 9:8 and the comments). They have been telling Israel that Yahweh would “attend” to it; Yahweh’s attention regularly has negative connotations (Hos. 1:4 [see the note]; 2:13 [15]; 4:9, 14; 8:13; 9:7, 9; 12:2 [3]; Amos 3:2, 14). The moment is now here, at least in Micah’s vision. The day of Yahweh is here. For anyone who is an exception to the pessimistic generalizations in vv. 1-2, Yahweh’s attention would be good news. Such a person has reason to look forward to Yahweh’s implementing the prophets’ promises about action being taken against wrongdoers. But the parallelism in v. 4b and the ease with which Micah switches between “you” and “they” suggests that the “you” and the “they” in v. 4b are the same people. The leading people in the community, at least, think they know how to make things work to their advantage, but they will now find that they are confounded and confused. They won’t know how to cope with the calamity that twists everything upside down.

A crisis such as invasion and siege can turn everyone against each other (vv. 5-6). Appropriately appended to vv. 1-4 is thus “new evidence for the bad situation that was deplored and threatened with chastisement” there.[[357]](#footnote-357) Here the formal and the rhetorical addressees are the same. People should not assume they can count on their closest friend. An individual should not tell his lover his plans or his thoughts (Jerome points to Samson and Delilah as an example).[[358]](#footnote-358) The closest relationships within the family may break down in the crisis that is coming. You may have welcomed into your household widows or orphans or resident aliens or people who have fallen on hard times and have become servants and family members, but you won’t be able to trust them. “In such circumstances life becomes hell.”[[359]](#footnote-359)

Micah knows who to turn to (v. 7). A lament or protest in the Psalms typically incorporates or ends with a statement of hope or trust, and Micah’s does so. The first-person statement here pairs with the one in v. 1 and rounds off vv. 1-7. Micah’s job is still to be a lookout, watching for that imminent coming of Yahweh when he will attend to Israel. It will mean confounding for Israel as a whole and conflict for relationships within the community and the family, but he is not afraid because the God who is coming will be for him the one who listens and delivers. The three mentions of God underline the fact that he is the only one Micah can look to.[[360]](#footnote-360)

**Micah 7:8-10**. Once again Micah starts in a way that requires the hearers to puzzle some things out. Who is the “I” who speaks? Initially, reading on from v. 7, one would think it is Micah himself. But v. 9 doesn’t fit Micah, and eventually the feminine suffix on “your God” in v. 10 gives the definitive indication: Zion speaks. Parallels between this subsection and Lamentations[[361]](#footnote-361) cohere with that inference. As the traditional connection with Jeremiah hints, Lamentations is “the already matured expression of insights that are found in the writings of the prophets of the two preceding centuries,”[[362]](#footnote-362) among whom Micah numbers. The clue to the identity of the “I” has been anticipated by the feminine participle also used to refer to the enemy. As usual Micah is actually speaking to Jerusalem itself, inviting the city to imagine that invasion has happened, and offering it a way of responding. While the words are thus formally addressed to the invader, they are designed to enable Zion to articulate something for itself. And as was the case with the different subsections of chapter 6, while formally this subsection does not look as if it always belonged with vv. 1-7, in substance it links onto it. The day when Yahweh attends to Zion has arrived; this is the way Zion is invited to respond.

So we are to imagine Zion speaking to a besieging adversary (v. 8). The scroll does not specify the enemy as it does not specify the victim at this point, and interpreters conclude that we have to puzzle out its identity, as we have to work out the speaker’s identity. In this case, however, Micah does not go on to make the answer clear. But if “the readers are… supposed to overhear what the speaker had to say within the world of the text,”[[363]](#footnote-363) and if they knew something about Assyrian political geography, it would presumably imply Nimrud, Dur Sharrukin, or Nineveh, the successive Assyrian capitals (all near Mosul) in Micah’s lifetime. For subsequent readers, failing to name the adversary issues an invitation to name it from their context. Tg adds “Rome,” Rashi precedes reference to Rome with reference to Babylon. In the exile, Edom would be a candidate.[[364]](#footnote-364) But “there are no historical allusions. The only clue is the theology.”[[365]](#footnote-365) Whoever it is, Zion declares that the enemy has no basis for being too pleased at what has happened to Zion, because there have been earlier occasions when Zion has got up after being knocked over. On such occasions, when things are dark for it, Yahweh is its light: the image of light suggests the experience of renewed blessing. The recollection of past experience of catastrophe and deliverance and the confession of present trust are recurrent features of the way Israel prays (e.g., Pss. 9—10; 40). Nevertheless it’s quite a confession for Micah to put on the city’s lips.

So is the next confession (v. 9). Zion would have no trouble saying that was on the receiving end of Yahweh’s wrath, but acknowledging that it had deserved that wrath would be a different matter. Micah invites it to do so or imagines it doing so. While Lamentations 3:58 can speak of Yahweh engaging in a confrontation *for* Israel on the basis of the wrong that its enemies have done to it, there’s no indication here that Zion is making a claim along these lines, and Micah has not long ago referred to the case that Yahweh is arguing *against* Israel (6:1-2). Zion has to accept that it deserves Yahweh’s condemnation and deserves the action that will follow as Yahweh exercises authority. But Micah invites it to affirm to the enemy but even more to itself that Yahweh’s deserved wrath does not last forever. There will come a time when enough is enough (cf. Isa. 40:1-2). Yahweh will then take Zion into the light again—once again light suggests the realm of blessing. In other words, Zion will thus look on Yahweh’s faithfulness; it will see Yahweh doing the right thing by it in light of the relationship that he has made a commitment to (see 6:5 and the comments). That faithfulness necessarily abides even when Yahweh has determined in the short term to act in wrath, because the acting in wrath is like that of a parent who remains committed to a son or daughter even if properly acting in anger.

The enemy will thus see that Yahweh is not finished with Zion (v. 10). Faithfulness is an event people can see.[[366]](#footnote-366) Shame will cover the enemy in the sense that the enemy will be shown to have been wrong in the assumptions it made about Zion—or rather about Yahweh. The implication of the question “Where is your God” (on which see the comments on Joel 2:17) is that Yahweh doesn’t really exist or has no power or has abandoned you. That conviction is the one that tempts Zion itself. Zion is invited to believe that it will be in a position to call the nations’ bluff on the question. The enemy will look at Zion with shame, and Zion will look at the enemy with satisfaction as it gets its comeuppance and is treated in the way it thought it would treat Zion or did treat Zion. A triple reference to looking comes to completion: Zion will see Yahweh’s act of faithfulness, the enemy city will see it and be shamed, and Zion’s eye will see the shaming.

**Micah 7:11-13**. The overt direction of the speaking changes back as Yahweh or Micah addresses Zion. Once again there is no formal connection between the subsections but there is a substantial link in that the promises that follow can be seen as a response to the confession of faith and confession of sin in vv. 8-10. Zion has declared the conviction that Yahweh will bring it out into the light. Yahweh or Micah affirms it and puts it more concretely.

There is thus a positive “day” to set against the negative one (v. 11). The first two aspects of the significance of that day concern boundary protections and boundaries themselves. In speaking to a city, it would be natural to talk about walls, and the actual city walls were extended in Micah’s time, but he doesn’t use the word for a city wall (*ḥômāh*) but one for a fence or the kind of stone wall that protects a field or vineyard or sheepfold (*gādēr*; e.g., Hos. 2:6 [8]; Isa. 5:5). Zion’s metaphorical boundary protections will be built up. But to complicate the implications of that promise, he adds that the “city limits” that the “fence” will need to cover will be extended.

There is in fact to be a vast extension of those city limits (v. 12). They will stretch to the area covered by various versions of Yahweh’s promise (e.g., Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4; presupposed by Ps. 72:8), an area stretching from the Assyrian border to the Egyptian border. We should not be prosaic about exactly what Micah means in geographical terms when he speaks of “sea from sea” and “mountain to mountain”; these expressions are simply a way of emphasizing the extent of this rule.

Outside these bounds (v. 13), throughout the world of the two great powers, there is devastation because of its inhabitants’ deeds. There is no indication that the deeds are wrongs done to Zion (contrast Joel 3:18-20 [4:18-20]). The declaration rather compares with Isaiah 24, but it also makes one think of the devastation that a marauding army brings wherever it goes.[[367]](#footnote-367)

**Micah 7:14-17**. Once again there is a reversal of direction in Micah’s words. The subsection is a psalm-like dialogical prayer, comparable to Psalm 12. It begins with a plea (v. 14); Yahweh replies with a promise (v. 15); and Micah responds to the promise with a plea for it to come true (vv. 14-17). There will follow a more hymnic act of praise (vv. 18-20). This analysis does not imply that the subsection is actually a liturgy or part of a liturgy.[[368]](#footnote-368) It is a prophetic message expressed in a quasi-liturgy.

The plea (v. 14) comprises more words articulated by Micah on behalf of the people. He is indeed praying this prayer, but the reason for including it in the scroll is that they need to pray it and live by the hope it expresses. A shepherd possesses a club with which to deal with animals that threaten his sheep; his club is therefore a comfort to them (Ps. 23:4). Yahweh has the ability to protect his flock in this way, and he has the motivation to do so because they are his domain, his personal possession (*naḥălāh*), like the tract of land that (in theory!) belongs irrevocably to a family (cf. 2:2; Joel 2:17; and the comments). The description of Israel as a flock settled on its own in a forest could have positive resonances; it’s out of the way and secure, and this state of affairs had served Judah well when Ephraim came under pressure before Judah did. But the further reference to its position in woodland in the middle of garden-land has more negative implications. The area around Jerusalem is by no means the entirety of the land that had been promised to Israel, and where it’s not wilderness it’s mostly forest or scrub which as such compares unfavorably with much of the rest of Canaan. (Ironically, Joshua 17:14-18 describes Ephraim and Manasseh complaining that their allocation of land was insufficient, and Joshua saying to them, “Go and clear the forest, then.”) Indeed, Micah had issued a warning about Jerusalem ending up as just a high place in a forest (3:12). So he prays for the flock to graze rather more broadly. To speak of Bashan and Gilead, traditionally excellent cattle and sheep country across the Jordan, is to imply a hope for the flock to spread over the entirety of the traditional bounds of the promised land. The prayer invites the people to have big hopes.

Micah knows that Yahweh has said “yes” to that prayer (v. 15). It would need a miracle, like that at the Red Sea, and Yahweh has promised it.

One might initially assume that Yahweh’s words then continue (v. 16), but it will become clear in v. 17b that Micah is now responding to Yahweh’s promise. Restoring Israel will mean rescuing it from the power of the nations, as happened at the exodus and the Red Sea and in the original occupation of the land, in some contrast with the pressure Judah has experienced lately. Now their adversaries will look open-mouthed at what Yahweh does for his people and will be shamed by the fact that their vaunted strength is no longer any use to them. They will have nothing to say and they won’t want to hear any more about it. “Malice not only blinds the sight of the eyes but also makes the ears become deaf.”[[369]](#footnote-369)

Licking the dirt (v. 17) is a metaphor for submission, perhaps simply a vivid way of denoting a bow right to the ground (cf. Isa. 49:23; Ps. 72:9), perhaps a reference to an actual practice (see Josh. 10:24). Micah pushes the metaphor by combining it with the image of a snake—the kind that crawls away when afraid. That image leads into the hyperbolic picture of the nations creeping out of their fastnesses in fear. Coming out in dread and awe for Yahweh (*pāḥad*, *yārē’*) could have positive implications, as could the whole of vv. 16-17. Trembling, dread, and awe feature in Exodus 14—15,[[370]](#footnote-370) and that link combined with the context makes it likely that the trembling, dread, and awe are directed towards Yahweh. The “you” with which v. 17 closes is then another instance of Micah’s switching gender, number, and person without implying a change of reference.

**Micah 7:18-20**. Micah’s closing act of praise, formulated for the community, is a natural continuation of vv. 16-17; it’s quite usual for a psalm to move from an expression of praise and trust arising from the particularities of a situation and from a promise or an act of Yahweh, to a more general expression of praise and worship. Such worship expresses itself to Yahweh but it is also designed to be heard by other people who need to be encouraged and transformed by the facts about Yahweh that are illustrated in the particularities of his relationship with the person who has been praying. The subsection conveys a most graphic and systematic account of the nature of sin and a most creative and rich account of the nature of forgiveness. It makes a striking and fitting end to the scroll.

The opening question “Who is like you” (v. 18a) recalls the “wonderful acts” to which v. 15 referred (see Exod. 15:11), but the stimulus for the rhetorical question turns out to come from a different direction. It is Yahweh’s forgiving mercy that is astonishing. He is one who carries waywardness. Waywardness (*‘āwōn*)is one of the First Testament’s common images for sin; it suggests deciding to walk in the wrong way, on the wrong road. “Carrying” (*nāśā’*)is then the most common First Testament image for forgiveness. Micah has had Zion acknowledging that it must carry Yahweh’s wrath, but here he declares that it need not do so. Yahweh does not make his people accept the consequences for their wrongdoing forever. He himself bears those consequences, in the sense that he refuses to let the wrongdoing ruin the relationship. To put it another way, he passes over rebellion (*peša‘*),another of these common images; it suggests refusing to accept the authority of your master or king. “Passing over” (*‘ābar*) such rebellion is an unusual image for forgiveness (cf. Amos 7:8; 8:2; also Prov. 19:11). Yahweh overlooks it or gets over it. The entire scroll has made clear that carrying waywardness and passing over rebellion would be a laughable oversimplification of Yahweh’s attitude to his people, but carry, waywardness, and rebellion first appeared together in Exodus 34:6-7 which goes on also to talk about Yahweh “attending to” waywardness (cf. v. 4 here). Micah implicitly grants the point by noting that it is the remains of his domain that is the object of Yahweh’s mercy. The bulk of the people have been the victims of Yahweh’s attention; he has taken action against the people who were his own possession, as Micah prayed in v. 14. His now forgiving the element within his people that survives his attention shows that they do not survive because they deserve to. They survive because he is simply not going to destroy his entire domain, is he?

So he gets angry, but he doesn’t stay angry (v. 18b). He’s not long of anger (Exod. 34:6; *’appayim* there is the dual for the word for anger here), because he loves commitment (*ḥesed*, another word in Exod. 34:6-7), as Hosea said (Hos. 6:6). He loves it or delights in it or likes it (*ḥāpēṣ*). He’s willing to take action against waywardness and wrongdoing and rebellion, but it’s not what he likes doing.

Micah is now speaking *about* Yahweh (v. 19); actually he made this move in the previous line. The transition is less obvious in Hebrew than in English. English can occasionally use the third person in speaking to someone (as with the use of “his” in v. 18a); Hebrew can maintain this way of speech for longer. But the formal move from second person to third person does draw attention to the fact that Micah is engaged in declarative witness to his people as well as direct praise to Yahweh. He’s addressing other people in teaching or testimony as well as addressing Yahweh in worship. Once again, praise is designed to build up the faith of the people who overhear it. In speaking of compassion (see the comments on Hos. 1:6) Micah takes up another expression from Exodus 34:6-7. But when he says that Yahweh tames or subdues our acts of waywardness, he introduces an innovative image. The unusual verb (*kābēš*) occurs a number of times to denote the subjugation of Canaan or the compelling of someone to be your servant. The verb implies that the people’s wayward acts will have no power to cause trouble for them in the future. Micah adds another innovative image as he reverts to addressing Yahweh directly: you will throw our wrongdoings into the deepest ocean from where no one will be able to retrieve them. The image again recalls the “wonderful acts” of v. 15: the destiny of the Egyptians (cf. Exod. 15:4-5) is the destiny of the people’s wrongdoings.

Micah’s closing line (v. 20) incorporates two more words that come together in Exodus 34:6, truthfulness and commitment (see the comments on Hos. 4:1). It gives expression to a further reason why Yahweh must show such characteristics to Jacob, to Abraham’s descendant. He had made a pledge or promise, sworn an oath, to Israel’s ancestors to which he cannot be unfaithful. On the first occasion when Yahweh made such a pledge (Gen. 15), and often elsewhere, the pledge relates in particular to the gift of the land of Canaan, and in the context of Micah 7 that significance is relevant. “The land will become the sacrament of his forgiveness.”[[371]](#footnote-371) But on the first occasion when the actual verb “pledge” appears (Gen. 22:16), it relates to a wider commitment, which is also significant for these broader closing verses.

## Theological Implications

1. The disasters of which v. 4 speaks “happened to the ancients ‘by way of a type, and were written down for our instruction’ [1 Cor. 10:11], so that we should ever avoid being caught up in similar sins and continue to enjoy good fortune by keeping the God of all as a benevolent and loving protector.”[[372]](#footnote-372)
2. In Matthew 10:35-36 Jesus takes up Micah’s words in v. 6 (cf. also Luke 12:49-53). The conflict Micah describes is a disturbing result of the coming of God’s judgment. The conflict Jesus describes is a disturbing result of his own coming. Correlating the two again reminds us that Micah actually wants people to turn to Yahweh and thus avoid the arising of that conflict, and reminds us that Jesus’s coming brings a crisis like the one of which Jesus warns. Jesus brings a sword.
3. How as sinners can we ask for God to be righteous with us?

God's righteousness does not really stand alongside His mercy, but... as revealed in its necessary connexion, according to Scripture, with the plight of the poor and wretched, it is itself God's mercy. Just because He is righteous God has mercy, condescending sympathetically to succour those who are utterly in need of His help, who without it would in fact be lost. God is righteous in Himself, doing what befits Him and is worthy of Him, defending and glorying His divine being, in the fact that He is our righteousness, that He procures right for those who in themselves have no righteousness, whose own righteousness is rather disclosed by Him to be unrighteousness, yet whom He does not leave to themselves, to whom rather He gives Himself in His own divine righteousness and therefore becomes the ground on which, against their own merit and worth and solely by His merit and worth, called away from themselves and summoned to surrender themselves to His will, they can truly stand and live. This standing and living of man is not, therefore, threatened but in the true sense established by the righteousness of God when in his confrontation by God man must necessarily confess that—in so far as he stands isolated from God's activity on his behalf—he is a sinner.[[373]](#footnote-373)

It is in this sense that Zion boasts of its hope in v. 9. For the church, likewise, “only an acknowledgment of the wrath of God which we have deserved” can open up the possibility of a different future. [[374]](#footnote-374)

1. “Who is a God like you?” (v. 18).

The God of Israel could be proved to be the true God from this circumstance—that having once received into favor the children of Abraham, he continued to show the same favor, and kept his covenant inviolably, though their sins had been a thousand times a hindrance in the way. That God then in his goodness surmounted all the wickedness of the people, and stood firm in his covenant, which had been so often violated by vices of the people—this fact may be brought as an evidence, that he is the true God.

*Who is a God like thee, taking away iniquity, and passing by wickedness?* By these two forms of expression, he sets forth the singular favor of God in freely reconciling himself to sinners. To take away sins is to blot them out…. To pass by wickedness, is to connive at it, as though he said, “God overlooks the wickedness of his people, as if it escaped his view”: for when God requires an account of our life, our sins immediately appear, and appear before his eyes; but when God does not call our sins before his judgment, but overlooks them, he is then said to pass by them….

The glory of God principally shines in this,—that he is reconcilable, and that he forgives our sins. God indeed manifests his glory both by his power and his wisdom, and by all the judgments which he daily executes; his glory, at the same time, shines forth chiefly in this, -- that he is propitious to sinners, and suffers himself to be pacified; yea, that he not only allows miserable sinners to be reconciled to him, but that he also of his own will invites and anticipates them. Hence then it is evident, that he is the true God.[[375]](#footnote-375)

1. Ephesians 5:18 urges people to address each other in psalms, hymns, and spirit-songs. Its assumption that praise is meant to be heard by other people as well as by God fits vv. 18-20 where Micah moves between addressing God and addressing people. Praise is meant to upbuild other worshipers’ faith.
2. Verses 18-20 are one of the readings for Yom Kippur afternoon[[376]](#footnote-376) and *B.* Rosh Hashanah 17b discusses them.

Beth Hillel say: He that abounds in grace inclines [the scales] to grace’. How does He do? — R. Eliezer says: He presses down, as it says, He will again have compassion on us, he will press down [the scale of merit against] our iniquities. R. Jose b. Hanina says: [He does so] by raising [the scale of iniquities], as it says, Raising iniquity and passing by transgression. In the school of R. Ishmael they taught: He puts aside every first iniquity; and herein lies the attribute [of grace]. Raba said: The iniquity itself is not obliterated, and if there is an excess of iniquities [God] reckons it with the others [and counts him guilty]. Raba said: He who forgoes his right [to exact punishment] is forgiven all his iniquities, as it says, Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression.

Who is forgiven iniquity? One who passes by transgression [against himself]. R. Huna the son of R. Joshua was once ill. R. Papa went to inquire about him. He saw that he was very ill and said to those present, Make ready provisions for his [everlasting] journey. Eventually, however, he recovered, and R. Papa felt ashamed to see him. He said to him, What did you see [in your illness]? He replied, It was indeed as you thought, but the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them [the angels]: Because he does not insist upon his rights, do not be particular with him, as it says, Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression. Who is forgiven iniquity? He who passes by transgression, ‘to the remnant of his heritage’. R. Aha son of R. Hanina said: We have here a fat tail with a thorn in it [a good thing containing a snag]: ‘for the remnant of his inheritance’, but not for all his inheritance.

The discussion in *B.* Rosh Hashanah 17b continues with a consideration of verses that seem to contradict each other because they speak both of God’s justice and of God’s mercy (Exod. 34:6; Pss. 62:12 [13]; 145:17). It resolves the tension by declaring that at first justice, but at the end, mercy; so here in Micah. As Paul puts it in line with v. 20, the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). Mary’s song (Luke 1:54-55) parallels the language of v. 20 with the same implication about the nature of God’s faithfulness to his people. One might then put together Mary’s song and Zechariah’s song (Luke 1:68-79): God’s faithfulness means both the restoration of the people and the forgiveness of sins. And “nowhere in all of the Bible do I find equally powerful and exultant statements about what we call the forgiveness of sins.”

1. R. Mason, *Micah, Nahum, Obadiah* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See further the material on “How a Prophet’s Words Got Known” in the introduction to this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Juan Cruz, *“Who is like Yahweh?”* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2016), 118, 231, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. John Barton’s comments on “the disappearing redactor,” *Reading the Old Testament* (London: DLT, 1984), 56-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. So my teacher Alec Motyer liked to say; he makes the point less pungently in *The Day of the Lion*, 20. Barton (*Reading the Old Testament*, 219)also credits the phrase “the disappearing redactor” (see previous note) ultimately to Motyer. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 101-53. Mosala’s thesis builds on a particular redaction-critical analysis, but it does essentially not depend on it. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics,* 149. Naveen Rao (*The Formulation of Scripture* [Delhi: ISPCK, 2010], 161-62, 233) notes that one can discern calls to action in Micah only by assuming that MT and LXX have softened the original text. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Erin Runions, *Changing Subjects:Gender, Notion and Future in Micah* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 11, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kenneth H. Cuffey, “Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian,” in Nogalski/Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, 185-208 (193). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See e.g., *DSS* 1:8-11, 334-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Twelve Prophets*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. LXX lacks “which.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Apparently one of several short forms of the name *Mîkāyāhû* “Who is like Yah?” (see BDB) which appears in Jer. 26:18 K as Micah’s name; and see on v. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Unusually, the one preposition governs both nouns, which binds them together in a way that fits what follows in vv. 2-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Lin Yan*,* “Internal Migrations and Social Justice in Amos and Micah,” in Hisako Kinukawa (ed.), *Migration and Diaspora* (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 19-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The move to the third person jars in English but not in Hebrew (see *IBHS* 4.7d; *TTH* 198, observation 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On the form *‘ădōnāy*, see *IBHS* 7.4.3e. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. LXX for this understanding of *bə*. Vg has “against,” but for this meaning one would expect the words in the reverse order (“a witness against you”). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. MT’s accents link “as a witness” with the previous colon, producing an implausible 5-3 line or an implausibly organized tricolon. I take both v. 2b and 3 as solemn 4-4 lines. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. LXX has singular, perhaps assimilating to the parallel colon—whereas MT pairs masculine singular and feminine plural. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Literally, “who”; the personal word Ya‘ăqōb perhaps attracts the personal interrogative. So also in the next line. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. LXX, Tg imply the addition of “the wrongdoing of,” to make the meaning clearer. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For *qibbāṣāh* (with the need to understand “them”) Vg, Tg imply pual *qubbāṣāh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Through v. 8 LXX has “it,” Tg “they,” assimilating to the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. LXX, Vg “dragon(s)” imply *tannin* for MT *tannîm*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Etymologically “daughters of greed” or “daughters of the desert” (or “daughters of song” [cf. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 34]). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The noun is plural, the participle singular: for understandings of the construction see Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage, and Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:717. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. While *‘ad-yərûšālaim* could attach to the previous colon (v. 9 would then be a tricolon to close the lament), I have taken it as an unusual one-stress colon parallel to the one that precedes. “The single stress of the final colon completes the woeful oracle like a solitary drumbeat” (Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 199). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “Tell” is *taggîdû* so it resonates with *gat*. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The idiom whereby the infinitive absolute reinforces the finite verb: “in crying, don’t cry.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Following Q (and Mur88), where the verb is collective feminine singular. K has “I covered myself,” assimilating to vv. 8-9. LXX, Tg have plural, assimilating to v. 10a. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Dirt is *‘āpār* so it’s appropriate to *Bȇt-lə‘aprāh*. “House for dirt”; on the name and its location, see Matthew J. Suriano, “A Place in the Dust,” *VT* 60 (2010): 433-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Literally “for yourselves” (masculine); the verb itself and the subsequent noun “inhabitants” are collective singular feminine. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The name could suggest “beautiful" (cf. Vg, Sym). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. JPSV links this phrase with what follows, against MT accents. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The name could suggest a link with the verb *yāṣā’* in the next colon. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The name might suggest “house of being beside” or “house of withdrawal” or “house of no shade” (Nadav Na'aman, "The House-of-No-Shade Shall Take Away Its Tax from You,’” *VT* 45 [1995]: 516-27); any would fit the comment that follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Cf. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:722-23 for what it calls the “least improbable” construing of this verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The name could suggest “bitter things.” [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The obvious parsing of *ḥālāh* links it to *ḥûl*, but LXX links it to BDB’s *ḥālal* III with the meaning “begin,” Vg, Aq to BDB’s *ḥālāh* I “be sick,” and (more plausibly) Theod, Sym, and Tg lto *yāḥal* “hope,” which gives good sense in the context. Micah might hope that his listeners would hear the resonances of both *ḥûl* and *yāḥal*. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Here the verb is masculine singular, but the subsequent subject is again collective singular feminine. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. In the sense of foremost (cf. LXX, Vg) rather than initial (cf. TNIV); the militarization of Lakish was hardly the chronologically-first expression of Jerusalem’s rebellious wrongdoing. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Not “Daughter of Zion” (e.g., *IBHS* 12.1b). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The feminine singular addresses Ms. Zion. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *‘Al* is not the obvious preposition to signify “to” (e.g., NRSV; contrast Vg *super*); 1 Kings 9:16 has *lə*. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Mə’ōrešet gat* would mean “Betrothed of Gat.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Disappointment is *’akzāb*, fitting the name *’Akzîb*. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The name looks as if it comes from *yāraš* meaning (dis)possess: see the parallel colon. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Through the verse the “you” is feminine singular. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Cf. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Indeed, Shaw (*Speeches of Micah*, 56-67) argues for earlier in the eighth century rather than in the 730s or 720s. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:212. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cf. Fretheim, *Reading Hosea-Micah*, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Mark E. Biddle, “‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob in the Book of Micah,” in Nogalski/Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, 146-65 (163). Jason Radine suggests that “Israel” may refer to Ephraimites who moved south in the eighth century (“Urban Change and the Designation ‘Israel’ in the Books of Micah and Hosea,” in Aaron Schart and Jutta Krispenz (eds.), *Die Stadt im Zwölfprophetenbuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 287-310. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Cf. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 47-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets* 2:353. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See *ANET*, 287-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 2-4, 48-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See Tiglath-pileser’s records, *ANET*, 283-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *In Micheam prophetam*, PL 25, column 1159bc. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Luther, *Minor Prophetts* 1:214. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. In his book on wordplay in Micah, Petrotta gives most space to 1:10-15 (*Lexis Ludens*, 65-85). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Hillers, *Micah*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See Wolff, *Micah*, 59-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. See A. Demsky, “The Houses of Achzib,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 16 (1966): 211-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:165. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:183. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:211. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See *DSS* 1:8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Cf. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 117. But Timothy K. Beal argues that Yahweh is the one speaking throughout 5-16 and thus lamenting in vv. 8-9 (“The System and the Speaking Subject in the Hebrew Bible,” *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994): 171-89; cf. Carol J. Dempsey, “Micah 1:1-16 and 7:1-10,” in Flesher and others (eds.), *Why?... How Long?* 36-48 (39-41). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Cf. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 137-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:181. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. LXX takes the line to denote a protest at “people who…,” but Vg recognizes the idiom whereby the participles with articles are vocatives (cf. DG 30, remark 1); the implicit second-person reference becomes explicit in v. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The participle *pō‘ălȇ* is too familiar to accept Rudolph’s suggestion (*Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 51-52) that the form comes from the noun *pō‘al* “and acts of bad fortune,”so as to avoid suggesting people are taking action while on their beds. Rather the line involves metathesis; “on their beds” qualifies “plan trouble” (Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 43). [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. The finite verbs continue the participial construction and the third-person verbs and suffixes continue to refer to the people addressed as “you” (cf. 1:2 and the note).. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. LXX, Vg take *’ēl* to be the common *’ēl* meaning “God,” but they then have trouble making sense of the colon (contrast Aq, Sym, Theod, Tg, which recognize the usage). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. The two lines are internally parallel, both working abcb’c’; they are also mutually parallel, working abb’a’ in their references to households and land. Desire, seize, carry off, and defraud build up to a climax, and “domain” adds an ethical/theological nuance to “fields.” [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Literally “walk [in] height”: that is, the hapax *rômāh* is a noun used adverbially (*HALOT,* DG 117 remark 2) rather than an adverb (BDB, *DCH*). The context does not suggest the moral connotation of “haughtily” (NRSV), though that would also be true. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Again these two lines are mutually parallel and work abb’a’, which adds to the sense of correspondence and poetic justice in v. 3 over against v. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. “And wail a wail of [or with] wailing.” [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. The verb is oddly qatal, “the second half of the verse being in effect a parenthesis” (Gelston, BHQ, 98\*). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Literally, “[with] destroying we have been destroyed”; on the idiom, see the note on 1:10. There are two further occurrences in v. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *’Ȇk*, literally an exclamatory “How.” [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. *Šôbēb* is polel infinitive construct (cf. LXX); cf. the usage in Isa. 49:7 (see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:729-31). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. The “you” is singular, referring to the “me” of the previous line. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. See the note on Amos 7:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. For *lə* with this meaning, cf. v. 11 where it recurs in a similar context. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. “Every step in studying *yissag* is uncertain” (Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 305). But on the form as niphal from *sûg*, see GK 72dd; the subsequent plural noun is then adverbial (Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 305-6). LXX takes the noun as direct object, implying *yāsîg*.Vg derives the verb from *nāsag*, an alternative spelling of *nāśag* which occurs in the hiphil meaning “reach, overtake,” and takes the feminine plural noun as its subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. “Condemned” (JPSV) implies emending *’āmûr* to a reading such as *’ārûr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Whereas the verse division implies that the entirety of v. 7 is Micah’s reply to the opponents (quoted in v. 6), v. 7a makes better sense as continuing the opponents’ words. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. “An enemy arises against My people” (JPSV) requires us to ignore the preposition on “an enemy” and assume a preposition on “my people.” [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Qal passive participles are occasionally used in a quasi-active sense, as with English participles such as “minded” and “experienced”; It is less likely that *šûb* qal has a properly transitive sense (see John Goldingay and David Payne, *Isaiah 40—55* [London: Clark, 2006] 2:267-68, 302). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *Lə‘ôlām* makes for a neat (but grim) contrast with *’etmôl* opening vv. 8-9 (Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 322). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. I follow MT [L] whose accents imply an infinitive functioning as a noun, rather than MT [C] which implies a third-person singular verb (see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:737-38; Gelston, BHQ 70, 99\*). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. *Ḥebel*, a homonym of the word for a cord in v. 4: ruin will mean having no share in the land, having no share in the land will mean ruin. Tg provides a double translation to cover both possible understandings of *ḥebel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. For *lû* Mur88 has *l’* and LXX, Vg may likewise imply *lô’*, which would then perhaps mean “no one goes about with spirit.” [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Falsehood is *šeqer*; liquor is *šēkār* (more specifically, *šēkār* denotes beer, but with the connotation that it is intoxicating—related words refer to drunkenness). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Since gathering can be a harvest image and can be bad news (e.g., Hos. 4:3; Zeph. 1:2), Micah could speak of a negative gathering of the wrongdoers; Gershon Brin sees vv. 12-13 as a whole as a declaration of judgment (“Micah 2,12-13,” *ZAW* 101 [1989]: 118-24). But the image more often has positive connotations when applied to Israel, and this fits the context; note especially the recurrence of the language in 4:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. MT has *boṣrāh* “[sheep of] Bosrah”; we don’t know why Bosrah should be mentioned in this context. LXX “in affliction” implies *bəṣārāh*, but Vg, Aq, Sym, Theod, Tg more plausibly imply *baṣṣirāh*, from a byform of *ṭîrāh* (see *HALOT*, 1054; *DCH* 7:159). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Cf. Tg. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Tg has “their kings,” while David Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage) takes the king to be the Messiah; cf. Colin Barnes, “In What Sense was the First Coming of Jesus Messianic?” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 38 (2014): 214-30. But the parallelism in the next colon “ensures the correct interpretation of MT ‘their King’" (Cathcart/Gordon, *Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 117)—though LXX translates the epexegetical *wə* at the beginning of the next colon “but,” frustrating this ensuring. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Wolff, *Micah*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2: 199-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Cf. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 43-44; HRSV has “householder.” [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Petrotta, *Lexis Ludens*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:202. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Jeremias takes a similar approach (*Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 152). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Cf. Claude F. Mariottini, “Yahweh, The Breaker of Israel,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28 (2001): 385-93. On the tension between divine kingship and human rule in Micah, see Mark E. Biddle, “Dominion Comes to Jerusalem,” in Albertz and others (eds.), *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, 253-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:188. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:196. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. LXX “and he will say” implies *wə’āmar* for MT *wā’ōmar*. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. That is, “It’s your responsibility.” [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Nicely, *gāzal* also means seize or rob (cf. 2:2). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The antecedent might be Jacob/Israel in v. 1 (Hillers, *Micah*, 41) or the suffix may be anticipating the reference to “my people” in v. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. For MT *ka’ăšer* LXX implies *kišə’ēr* “like flesh.” [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. *’Āz* followed by a yiqtol verb usually refers to a past event (cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 355-57), but it is hard to maintain that understanding here. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Tg has “false prophets,” which draws attention to the First Testament’s lack of such a way of distinguishing among prophets. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. NRSV has “when they have something to eat” (cf. Tg): but *nāšak* does not refer to ordinary eating (see the typical use of the verb in Amos 5:19; 9:3). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Literally “at their mouth”: see e.g., Num. 27:21; Deut. 21:5; 1 Chron. 12:32; Job 39:27 (cf. BDB 805b). Vg “give [put] something in their mouth” (cf. LXX, Tg) is the implication, but it is less likely to be the direct meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Tg adds “like mourners”: see the comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. LXX, Vg, Tg have plurals, an easier reading assimilating to the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Tg reads “the houses of”: “the *Shekinah* dwells in Zion (see next verse) so it is unacceptable to give the impression that Zion was built with blood” (Cathcart/Gordon, *Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 119). [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. See the note on Hos. 1:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. The Aramaic form of the plural, *‘iyyîn* (which Jer. 26:18 “corrects” to *‘iyyîm*) generates a paronomasia with *Ṣiyyôn* in the previous colon (cf. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 68, following F. Hitzig, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten* [4th ed., ed. H. Steiner; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1881], 211). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. The pleonastic form of the verb might suggest both “will become established” (see *IBHS* 37.7.1, though not citing this instance) and “will remain established” (JM 121e). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. JPSV “gaze” derives *nāhărû* from *nāhar* II. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. LXX interestingly has a plural, which thus attributes to the people the role MT gives to Yahweh. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. It is doubtful whether *kî* can ever be translated “though” (JPSV). It may here simply add emphasis, implying “indeed” (TNIV omits it on that assumption). [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. The feminine participles are collectives (GK 122s; DG 18b). [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Especially in Jeremiah and especially in the hiphil *nādaḥ* commonly denotes the enforced scattering brought about by the fall of Jerusalem, but in the niphal and in other contexts it has a broader range of reference. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Tg “removes the reference to the Lord's execution of harsh treatment” by its translation “those who were treated harshly on account of the sins of my people" (Cathcart/Gordon, *Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 120). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. *Migdal-‘ēder* is the name of a place near Bethlehem, and thus not far from Jerusalem, but here it is a term for Jerusalem itself. Tg has “anointed one of Israel,” making explicit that v. 8 refers to the coming of the Davidic king, the Messiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. On this expression and on “Daughter Jerusalem” in v. 8b, see the comments on 1:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Like *migdal-‘ēder*, *‘ōpel* is the name of a place, a particular area of Jerusalem (e.g., Neh 3:26-27), but it too can refer to the significance of Jerusalem itself (e.g., Isa. 32:14). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. LXX adds “from Babylon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. See Gelston, BHQ, 11\*. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. So Shaw (*Speeches of Micah*, 97-127), whoalso sees 3:1—4:8 as a unit; but more of an originally single discourse. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Hillers, *Micah*, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. David Reimer, “The Prophet Micah and Political Society, in Gordon/Barstad (ed.), *“Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela,”* 203-24 (220). [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Fretheim, *Reading Hosea-Micah*, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Mays, *Micah*, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Waltke, in Baker/Alexander/Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Wilhelm J. Wessels, “Empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh,” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 1 (2009): 33-47 (42) [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Cf. Mark E. Biddle’s arguments in “Obadiah-Jonah-Micah in Canonical Context,” *Interpretation* 61 (2007): 154-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Indeed, Burkard M. Zapff sees Micah as “the theological center of the Book of the Twelve” (“The Book of Micah,” in Albertz and others [eds.], *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, 128-46 [128]). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Fretheim, *Reading Hosea-Micah*, 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Cf. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:234. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. See e.g., McKane, Micah, 117-26; Andersen/Freedman, Micah, 413-27; Rick Byargeon, “The Relationship of Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 46 (2003): 6-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Cf. Daniel Smith-Christopher, “Sociological Approaches,” in Katherine J. Dell and Paul M. Joyce (eds.), *Biblical Interpretation and Method* (John Barton Festschrift; Oxford: OUP, 2013), 149-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Wolff, *Micah*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:212. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Cf. Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. With MT, Matthieu Richelle in “Un triptyque au coeur du livre de Michée (Mi 4-5)” (*VT* 62 [2012]: 232-47), sees v. 8 as rather beginning the next section; he sees 4:1-7, 4:8—5:1 [4:8-14], and 5:2-15 [1-14] as parallel sections. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:233. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:219. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:222. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Jerome, *In Michaeam Prophetam* PL 25, column 1184a. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:215. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Cf. Jennifer Κ. Berenson Maclean, “Micah 3:5-12,” *Interpretation* 56 (2002): 413-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Wolff, *Confrontations with Prophets*, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Naveen Rao, *The Formulation of Scripture* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:234. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Carol J. Dempsey, “Micah 2—3,” *JSOT* 85 (1999): 117-28 (126-27). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Kosuke Koyama, “The Mountain of the Lord,” *International Review of Mission* 77 (1988): 194-200 (196). [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Renée Rodgers Jensen, “Micah 4:1-5,” *Interpretation* 52 (1998): 417-20 (417). Her subsequent quotation comes from Walter Brueggemann, “Vine and Fig Tree,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 188-204 (189). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. As Jensen goes on to infer, pp. 417, 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. So McKane, *Micah*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Mays, *Micah*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 330. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:275. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Theodore, *Twelve Prophets*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. The “you” in this line and the next is feminine singular; Micah is speaking to the city of Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Literally, “why do you shout [with] a shout?” LXX “Why have you recognized what is bad” implies *tēdə‘î* for MT *tārî‘î* (the easy misread of *d* for *r*) and more interestingly links *rēa‘* with *rā‘ā‘* I (be bad) rather than with *rûa‘* (shout), while BDB suggests a link with *rā‘a‘* II “break” and Tg with *rā‘āh* II “befriend.” [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Tg has plural; Ibn Ezra (In *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage) takes king/counselor to refer to Yahweh, but the logic of the lines is then not so evident. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. The verse works abb’a’, the last colon with its “specific and powerful emotional charge” especially sharpening the first (Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 152). [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. On possible understandings of *gōḥî*, see the discussion in McKane, *Micah*, 139-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. See the comments on 1:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Is *qiryāh* a pejorative term for Jerusalem, usually called *‘îr*,a city? [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Micah is describing what the city already is through its own action rather than what the invasion will make it through the trampling of bloody and pagan feet (so TNIV, which takes the verb as jussive). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. The verb is singular but the subject is plural. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Tg takes *haḥăramtî* as an archaic second-person form (cf. LXX; see GK44h), which makes v. 13 easier in the context. Vg assumes it’s the usual first-person form; Yahweh is then the one who does the devoting (as in e.g., Isa 34:2), even though he then refers to himself in the third person. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. There are two verbs *gādad* (see *HALOT*) with associated nouns, one meaning cut (oneself), the other meaning band together. The verb is more common with the first meaning, the noun with the second. JPSV has “gash yourself in grief,” which shows that in the context the first meaning requires some reading in. But on the paronomasia, see Petrotta, *Lexis Ludens*, 114-18. LXX implies forms from the *gādar* “build a wall” rather than *gādad* (confusion of *d* and *r* as in v. 9; cf. NRSV). Rashi (In *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage) suggestively takes Micah to be addressing Jerusalem’s attackers, but this is harder to fit with what follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Staff is *šēbeṭ*, leader is *šōpēṭ*; the similarity underlines the enormity of the attack. Tg has plural “leaders.” [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. *Ṣā‘îr* suggests “trifling or insignificant” (Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 43); Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage) associates Bethlehem’s low status with the acceptance of Moabite Ruth into the community. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Instead of (or as well as) *lî*, 4QpMic has *l’*, implying *lō’* “there will not emerge” or *lu’* “would that there may emerge.” [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Tg adds *mšyḥ’*, “the anointed one.” [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. The prophet once again moves from speaking as Yahweh (v. 2 [1]) to speaking about Yahweh. TNIV assumes the third-person verb is impersonal, as in 5:1 [4:14]. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. It is doubtful whether *yāšab* can mean “live securely” (TNIV): contrast e.g., Lev. 25:18-19; Deut. 12:10, which add [*lā]beṭaḥ.* Rather cf. the absolute use in Amos 9:14; Jer. 50:39. For *wəyāšābû* Vg, Tg imply *wəyāšûbû* “they will turn back” (cf. v. 3 [2]). [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. On *zeh šālôm*, see *IBHS* 19.5d. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. For MT *bə’armənôtēnû* LXX implies *bə’admātēnû* “into our land”; in MT, the second colon heightens and sharpens the first. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. LXX nicely implies *nōšəkȇ* “biters [of people]” for *nəsîkȇ*. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. David Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage) takes the verb to be *rā‘a‘* II “break” rather than *rā‘āh* I (cf. Ps. 2:9). [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. For *bipətāḥēhā*, Aq, Vg imply *bappətîḥāh* “with drawn sword,” which provides good parallelism (see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:650-53). [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. NRSV emends the singular verb to plural. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Tg adds negatives: “and it will not come/make its way.” [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. “Showers on the grass” (TNIV) underestimates the implications of both *rəbîbîm* and *‘ēśeb* (see BDB). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. See the note on 3:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. LXX, Vg imply yiqtol *tārûm* rather than MT’s jussive *tārôm*. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. “Vengeance” (TNIV) gives a misleading impression; *nāqām* denotes proper recompense for wrongdoing rather than “revenge to satisfy a wounded ego” (Mays, *Micah*, 127), though the line indicates that strong feelings can properly be involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Woff, *Micah*, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 123 (he is referring to 4:8—5:2 [1]). [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Wolff, *Micah*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Cf. Johannes C. de Moor, “Jerusalem: Ninghmare and Daydream in Micah,” inMarjo C. A. Korpel and Lester L. Grabbe (eds.), *Open-mindedness in the Bible and Beyond* (Bob Becking Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 191-213 (192-96). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. MT (A) has 5:7 [6] and 5:8-15 [7-14]. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Cf. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:229-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Cf. McKane, *Micah*, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Cf. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Wolff, *Micah*, 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Wolff, *Micah*, 141-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Theodoret nicely compares Isa. 54:1 (*Twelve Prophets*, 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. E.g., Jerome (*In Michaeam Prophetam* PL 25, column 1201ab) identifies them with the patriarchs, prophets, and other saints of the First Testament, and with the apostles and subsequent servants of God. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. See Christopher B. Hays with Peter Machinist, “Assyria and the Assyrians,” in *The World Around the Old Testament* (eds. Bill T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 102-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Wolff, *Micah*, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Cf. Waltke in Baker/Alexander/Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Cf. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Jeremias, *Joel, Obadja, Jona, Micha*, 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Mays, *Micah*, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2:230. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:292. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Fretheim, *Hosea—Micah*, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. See e.g., Jerome, *In Michaeam Prophetam* PL 25, column 1197c. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. *Twelve Prophets*, 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:321. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:327. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. The verb is plural; Micah is addressing the Israelites. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. These verbs are singular; Micah is reporting Yahweh’s words to him. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. These verbs are now Micah’s biddings to the mountains, which he is reporting to the Israelites. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. LXX has “peoples,” which looks like a piece of interpretation based on 1:2 (cf. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 107). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. On the verb *‘ānāh*, see the note on Hos. 2:15 [17]. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. The similarity between *hel’atîkā* “did I exhaust you” and *he‘ĕlitîkā* “I got you up” draws attention to the difference in what they refer to. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Tg comes nearest to recognizing that v. 5b brings the subsection to a close with an anacoluthon: “for the sake of your acknowledging Yahweh’s acts of faithfulness” depends on “be mindful” and “from Shittim right to Gilgal” qualifies “acts of faithfulness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. JPSV takes the city to be Samaria, but there is no explicit pointer in that direction. V. 16 refers to its kings, but the point of the reference is that Jerusalem has followed their bad example. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. For MT *yir’eh* (literally, “see”) LXX, Vg, Tg imply a form of the root *yārē’* “fear/be in awe of.” [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. For this understanding of the colon, cf. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gədôlôt* on the passage; the words in square brackets carry over from the parallel colon. JPSV’s translation, reversing subject and object, is harder to fit into the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. “Clan” (LXX, Vg) is the common meaning of *maṭṭeh* in Numbers, Joshua, and Chronicles, in references to the twelve clans, but it doesn’t appear with this meaning in the Prophets and it doesn’t fit as well here unless one emends the next colon (so NRSV: see next note). [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. I follow JPSV’s translation of *yə‘ādāh*.LXX makes explicit that the feminine suffix must refer to the city. NRSV “and assembly of the city” implies *ûmô‘ēd hā‘îr* for MT *ûmî yə‘ādāh ‘ôd*. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. With JPSV I take *ha’iš* as short for *ha’iššeh* from *nāšāh*. LXX, Vg “fire” imply *ha’ēš*; Tg “are there [still in the house…]” understands *ha’iš* as equivalent to *ha’yēš*. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Vg “shall I acquit” implies the easier pointing as piel, *ha’ăzakkeh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. The suffix is again feminine singular, referring to the city. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. For the use of *gam*, see BDB 169b; *IBHS* 39.3.4d. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. For MT *heḥĕlȇtî* LXX, Vg “will begin/have begun” imply *haḥillôtî*. They take the qatal to refer to something Yahweh is going to do, but there is no particular pointer in this direction and past reference makes sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Again, LXX, Vg translate vv. 14-16 as future, but after the qatal verbs in v. 13 referring to what Yahweh has already done, more likely the yiqtol verbs refer to the situation as it now is. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. *Yešaḥ* comes only here and its meaning is a matter of guesswork from the context or from etymology. *DCH* has “dysentery,” *HALOT* “filth.” [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. On JPSV’s “you have been conceiving without bearing young,” see McKane, *Micah*, 198-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Whereas vv. vv. 13-14a and 15 address “you” in the masculine singular, v. 14b addresses “you” in the feminine singular. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. The expression involves hypallege or transferred epithet: one presses olives—treading applies to grapes. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Again, actually it is the grapes one treads—the new wine issues from that work. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. The verb is singular, but the subject plural. For *wəyištammēr* LXX, Vg, Tg “you have kept” suggest *wattišmōr*, an easier reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. This “you” is singular, but the “you” verbs on either side are plural: one meets “a great ballet of persons” at the end of this chapter (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:770). “Perhaps the alternation [between singular and plural]… is no more problematical here than in Deuteronomy,” where it is simply “a characteristic of parenesis” (Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 542): it addresses both the community as a whole and its individuals. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. For MT *‘ammî* LXX “the peoples” implies *‘ammîm*—an easier reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. McKane, *Micah*, 177, 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Wolff, *Micah*, 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Mays, *Micah*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Cf. Rodney R. Hutton, “What Happened from Shittim to Gilgal?” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 26 (1999) 94-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Esteban Voth, “What Does God Expect of Us?” *Review and Expositor* 108 (2011): 299-306 (303). [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. See Jan Joosten,“YHWH’s Farewell to Northern Israel (Micah 6,1-8),” *ZAW* 125 (2013): 448-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Cf. McKane, *Micah*, 177-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Weiser, *Kleinen Propheten* 1:251. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Cf. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 507-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 167, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Against Wolff, *Micah* 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. So Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets* 2:399. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. So Mays, *Micah*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 179, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* 3:758. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. See *DCH* for Qumran and Sirach, and *DTT* for later Jewish works. *DCH* and *HALOT* survey the several possible significances of the word. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Cf. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Cf. Jeremias, *Micha*, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Wolff, *Micah*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Jeremias, *Micha*, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Cf. Hillers, *Micah*, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Cf. Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Cf. Mays, *Micah*, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:357. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Kathleen O’Connor, “Reflections on Kindness As Fierce Tenderness*,” Journal for Preachers* 39/3 (2016): 32-36 (34). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Wolff, *Micah*, 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Walter Brueggemann, “Walk Humbly with Your God,” *Journal for Preachers* 33/4 (2010):14-19 (15, 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. The TNIV heading is “Israel’s Misery”; but Tg correctly makes explicit that it is the prophet who speaks. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. LXX, Vg “gatherer” implies *’ōsəpî* for MT *’ospȇ* (Gelston, BHQ, 107\*), an easier reading; they then take *qayiṣ* to have its more basic and frequent meaning, harvest-time, rather than fruit that is ready at harvest time. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. “Cluster to eat” is *’eškôl le’ĕkôl*. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Figs would be among the “ripe fruit” so these two lines work abb’a’: two outside cola referring to such fruit and two inside cola referring to grapes. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. V. 2a rounds off vv. 1b-2a by closing with the same negative as began v. 1b (*’ēn*/*’ayin*,“there’s not/there is none”). [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Micah’s hearers might think of the more common *ḥērem* I “devotion to destruction” (cf. 4:13) as well as or rather than *ḥērem* II “net” (cf. LXX, Vg, Tg), though the latter fits the image of hunting. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. *Kap* is the word translated “fist” in 4:10, and it implied fist in Jonah 3:8 (the only other occurrences in Hosea to Micah). [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Literally, “the official asks, and the person who makes a decision, for recompense.” [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. The *hû’* helps to indicate that *haggādôl dōbēr* is an extraposed clause (*TTH* 198) and thus to suggest how the line divides into two plausible cola. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. “‘Weave it,’ i.e. ‘wangle it’” (Cathcart/Gordon, *Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 126). The “it” (feminine) may be his desire, or may refer more generally to the things of which the verse speaks. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. That is, “the best of them”—but “good” follows up “good” and “bad” in v. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Vg “the day you looked out for” implies *miṣpȇkā* for MT *məṣappȇkā*. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Whereas the “your” in v. 4 is singular, the verbs in v. 5a are plural, but the “your” in v. 5b reverts to singular, so there seems to be no change in the addressees; the alternating again suggests both the community as a whole and its individuals (see the note on 6:16). Likewise “you” and “they” both refer to the community and its members. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Thorn hedge was *məsûkāh*, confounding is *məbûkāh*: as a result of being the first, they will experience the second. Listeners might also hear overtones from *bākāh* (cf. LXX “weeping”). [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Rather than “a person’s enemies are the people in his household” (cf. NRSV): see DG 49b. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Or “my God who delivers”; literally “the God of my deliverance.” *Lē’lōhȇ yiš‘î* leads neatly into *yišmā‘ēnî ’ĕlōhāy* “my God will listen to me”: “listening” and “delivering” go together. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Enemy is feminine, referring to the enemy’s capital city, which corresponds to the feminine gender for Zion. In v. 9 Tg makes explicit that Jerusalem speaks; it identifies the enemy city as Rome. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. LXX, Vg translate as future, on the assumption that Micah speaks of a future rising that is so certain that he can refer to it in the qatal as already actual, but the suddenness and isolation of this qatal makes that understanding unlikely. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Following on the previous colon, Vg’s present tense is more plausible than LXX’s future tense. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. LXX “my sentence/judgment” rightly specifies that the nouns and their suffixes in this line have negative implications [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. On the use of the jussive in such a context, see e.g., DG 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Literally, “decree” (cf. 6:16); “boundary” (NRSV) spells out the implication. “Your” in the first colon carries over into the second. JPSV takes *yirḥaq-ḥōq* as simply a reduplicated form of the verb and LXX understands the colon to declare that the day of restoration is far off. The next two verses would then be understood negatively: the peoples coming will be attackers and *hā’āreṣ* will be the country not the earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. LXX has a plural verb, which suggests people, and Tg refers explicitly to the exiles, but MT’s singular verb suggests that the antecedent is “that day,” or *“*authority*”* in the previous colon (Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 397). [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Whereas “you” in vv. 10-11 was feminine singular, referring to the city, it is now masculine singular, referring to the people. For MT *‘ādȇkā* “right to you” LXX “your cities” implies *‘ārȇkā*. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. *Māṣôr* as an alternative for *miṣrayim* (cf. Isa. 19:6; 37:25) usefully has a homonym meaning “siege” (5:1 [4:14]) which listeners could be expected to think of (cf. Vg). For the unfamiliar *māṣôr*, LXX “Tyre” implies *ṣôr*, an easier reading; LXX “misunderstands [*māṣôr*] everywhere” (BDB, 596). [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. The Euphrates. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. To take *karmel* to refer to Carmel the place (LXX, Vg, Tg) doesn’t fit the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. LXX, Vg take the verb as future, but jussive follows well on the opening imperative. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. The suffix is singular, apparently referring to Israel in another of the switches of person that characterize Micah—there is another in the next colon. JPSV takes “you” to be Yahweh, which follows naturally on v. 14, but the First Testament doesn’t elsewhere speak of Yahweh going out of Egypt, only of Israel doing so, and in v. 15b Yahweh is “I” not “you” (JPSV reorders the cola). [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. That is, Israel, agin. For MT *’ar’ennû* LXX “you will see” is “a free translation” (Hillers, *Micah*, 88); NRSV “show us” implies *har’ēnû*.. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. JPSV translates the verbs in vv. 16-17 as jussives; I take them as indicatives following on v. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. “Dens” (TNIV) apparently implies that the snake metaphor continues, but etymologically a fastness (*misgeret*) is simply a place that has been closed off (*sāgar*); the only other occurrence is Ps. 18:45 [46]. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Tg adds a reference to his “binding” of Isaac (Gen. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Luther, *Minor Prophets* 1:268. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Wolff, *Micah*, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 384. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. McKane, *Micah*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Jerome, *In Michaeam Prophetam* PL 25, column 1220d. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Rudolph, *Micah-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephanja*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 219-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. See Wolff, *Micah*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 577. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Cf. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Andersen/Freedman, *Micah*, 576. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Cf. Wolff, *Micah*, 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Cf. Fretheim, *Hosea-Micah*, 221. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Hermann Gunkel’s suggestion regarding vv. 7-20 in “The Close of Micah,” in Gunkel, *What Remains of the Old Testament* and Other Essays [New York: Macmillan, 1928], 115-49); see Ben Zvi’s critique, *Micah*, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Jerome, *In Micheam prophetam*, PL 25, column 1228d [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Waltke notes further links with Exod. 15 in Baker/Alexander/Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Mays, *Micah*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Cyril, *Twelve Prophets* 2: 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Barth, *CD* II, 1:387. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Calvin, *Minor Prophets* 3:400-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. See e.g., Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 284 [↑](#footnote-ref-376)