אש מן־השמים

THE HEAVENLY FIRE
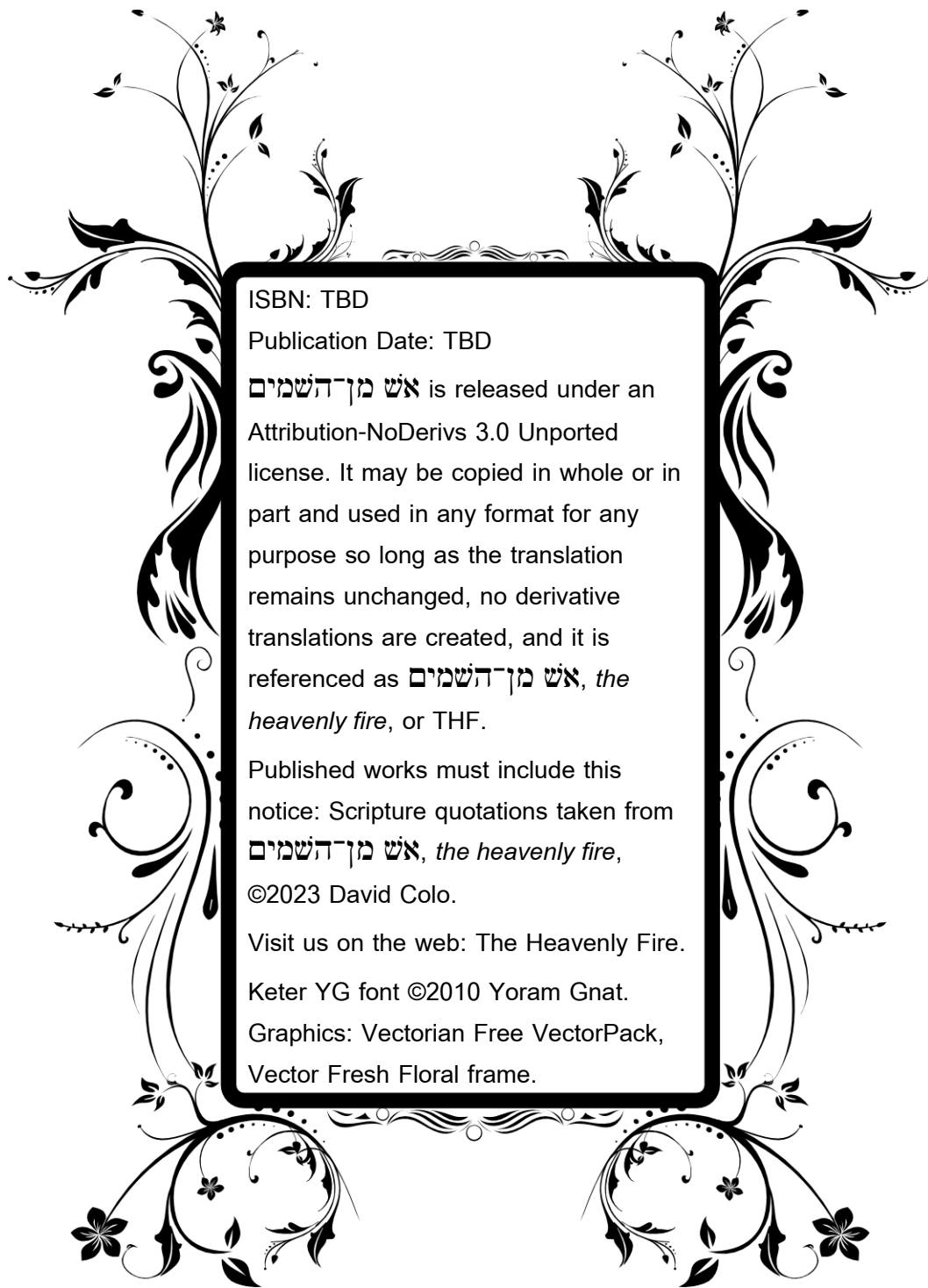
אש מן־השמים

the heavenly fire

THE HEAVENLY FIRE

Micah

version 0.621

DAVID COLO

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ר' יהודה אומר המתרגם פסוק כצורתו הרי זה בדאי
והמוסיף עליו הרי זה מחרף ומגדף

</div>

Rabbi Judah says: "The one who translates a verse equivalent to its form—
that person is a liar. But the one who adds to it—
that person is a reviler and defiler."
—*b. Kiddushin* 49a

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Sigla and Abbreviations

GENERAL

√	Verbal root
𝔊	Septuagint: Old Greek
𝔐ᴬ	Masoretic Text: Aleppo Codex (circa AD 950)
𝔐ᴮᴾ	Masoretic Text: Babylonicus Petropolitanus Codex (AD 916)
𝔐ᴸ	Masoretic Text: Leningrad Codex (AD 1008)
𝔐ᴾ	Masoretic Text: Cairo Codex of the Prophets (AD 896)
𝔖	Syriac Peshitta
𝔗	Targum: Pseudo-Jonathan
𝔙	Vulgate (Stuttgart)
σ´	Symmachus
θ´	Theodotion
1QpMic	Mikah *pesher* scroll from Qumran cave 1 (1ˢᵗ century BC)
3FP	third feminine plural
8ḤevXII gr	Greek Minor Prophets Scroll, Nahal Ḥever (50 BC–AD 50)
b.	Babylonian Talmud tractate
BH	Biblical Hebrew
DSS	Dead Sea Scroll(s)
HB	Hebrew Bible
m.	Mishnah Tractate
MH	Mishnaic Hebrew
Mik	Mikah
MT	Masoretic text
MurXII	Hebrew Minor Prophets Scroll, Wadi Murabba'at (AD 75–100)
NE	Near East
V-S-O	Verb-Subject-Object

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REFERENCE

AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Brigg's *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
BHQ	*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*
CAL	Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon project
GKC	Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar (28th Edition)
HALOT	Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner's *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
IBHS	Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor's *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow's *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*
JM	Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka's *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*
Kennicott	Benjamin Kennicott's *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus*
KAI	*Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: einschließlich der keilalphabetischen Texte außerhalb Ugarits. Teil 1, Transkription*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library

TRANSLATIONS

Alter	Robert Alter's *The Hebrew Bible* (2019)
ASV	American Standard Version
Bishops'	Bishops' Bible (1568)
ESV	English Standard Version
Fenton	Ferrar Fenton's *The Holy Bible In Modern English*
Geneva	Geneva Bible (1560)
Goldingay	John Goldingay's *The First Testament* (2018)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917)
KJV	King James Version
LEB	Lexham English Bible
Moffatt	*The Bible: James Moffatt Translation*
NAB	New American Bible (3rd Edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1997)
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation (NET Bible), 1st Edition
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPST	New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
Rotherham	Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible* (1902)
SET	Stone Edition Tanach

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Preface

X

Introduction

A translation is just that. We do not presume to replace the original text with our own. Yet we do not believe the original so lofty or sacrosanct that it cannot be represented vividly and accurately in another language. If the biblical texts are to be believed, YHWH both *spoke* and *wrote*—the purpose of which must surely be *understanding*. The Rabbis, without anticipating its greater application, left us a saying that illustrates this well: דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם, "Scripture speaks in human language." What follows, therefore, is a discussion of human language and its comprehension. We begin with a look at the various names and terms that are most pertinent.

(A) Names and Terminology

1. Of the Translation

אש מן־השמים (*ʾēš min-haššāmayim*) means "the fire from heaven," or, more simply, *the heavenly fire* (THF). Such language is drawn from theophanic imagery, which likens the presence of YHWH to various manifestations of fire, and from an ancient Jewish conception of YHWH's word as fire. Early Rabbinic tradition equated the fire that fell from heaven on Sinai with scripture itself. This can be seen, for instance, in the following midrash, which uses word-play to phonetically link "Torah" (תורה) with "its flame" (אורה): "*Because* YHWH *descended upon it in fire* (Exod 19:18). This shows that the Torah [is] fire, was given from fire, and is comparable to fire. . . . One can do nothing but warm himself [with] its flame" (*Mek. Bahodesh* 4).

2. Of the Israelite Deity

By way of piety and tradition, the scribes who placed vowel points in the Hebrew manuscripts obscured the name of God by placing under its consonants the vowels of words like Elohim (God), Adonai (My Sovereign/Lord), and Ha-Shem (The Name). Some translations create the hybrid "Jehovah" out of this heterogeneous mix, while others translate the vowels. Still others trace the name back to a hypothetical form of the verb "to be" (Yahweh). Like translations of other religious texts, THF replicates the deity's name when that name is used. Since, however, its pronunciation was lost, we render the name as we have it and how scribes have written it for the last three millennia: YHWH. Much like how ancient Jews might use the paleo-Hebrew script to indicate the name's sacred status, we use a font quite different than the rest of the text. So too we use "**Elohim**," "**El**," and "**Eloah**" instead of "God," but "**The One God**" when a definite article precedes it. Where the text intends to communicate something other than the deity's name or title, we follow intently.

3. Within Mikah

A number of specialized words, phrases, or literary devices occur in Mikah, which warrant initial comment. They are provided below with their English rendering as used herein and a discussion of their respective meanings.

TERMS	DESCRIPTION

לכן

The finding: — לכן is a descriptive term that identifies how one thing follows logically from another thing, which is why it is usually rendered "therefore" or "consequently." There are times, however, when the term is actually prescriptive; it helps to establish or bring about what should follow. In that case, לִכֵן functions as part of a "speech act." A speech act is a speech that actually does something—like when a baseball umpire yells "Safe!" or a bride and groom say "I do." Such statements do more than describe an event or assent to a truth—they create a new state of being. Speech acts typically consist of two parts: a "force indicator," which describes the kind of act being performed, and a "propositional indicator," which gives the content of the speech. In prophetic texts, לכן may be used prescriptively (as a force indicator) to introduce a decision or declaration that will now be issued from the heavenly courtroom (i.e., it marks a transition from something stated in the prophet's voice to a judicial decree by the divine voice). לֹכן does not function that way in narrative. Even in prophetic texts, it may have a purely descriptive function (note כה אמר יהוה in Mik 2:3, where לכן is descriptive and לכן כה אמר יהוה is the force indicator). The oracular function of לכן has not been appreciated by bible scholars, which is probably why English translators do not represent it. Yet there is movement in that direction. In his extensive study, March ("Lākēn: Its Functions and Meanings") showed that there are places where לכן announces God's final authoritative decision. Such research led Lux ("An Exegetical Study of Micah 1:8-16") to conclude that "In Mic 1:14 לֹכן indicates that a judgment of YHWH is about to be communicated." In fact, it seems that לכן was recognized as a marker of divine speech even in ancient Israel! When Jer 26:18 quotes Mik 3:12, the phrase כה־אמר יהוה צבאות (So says YHWH, [God] of legions) is substituted for לכן even though there is nothing else in the whole oracle (3:9-12) to suggest that YHWH himself is speaking. The transition from the voice of the prophet to the voice of the deity also explains the appearance of the first-person verb [אבי[א (I will bring/set) in Mik 1:15—a verb that scholars have often found problematic due to what they (wrongly) perceive as an inexplicable change in person. To represent its oracular function, we render לכן as "the finding" followed by a colon. For more on speech acts, see Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* and Searle's *Speech Acts*.

שארית

survivors/posterity/progeny — Typically rendered "remnant"—a technical term for "those who are left" in exile and who are expected to return from Babylon. In some cases, however, the word is used in other ways that are not always appreciated by translators. Wagenaar noted several instances where שארית is parallel with שם and both refer to "descendants" or "offspring."[1] He also pointed to Gen 45:7, which

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1   2 Sam 14:7 and Isa 14:22 in 1QIsaᵃ. Jan A. Wagenaar, *Judgement and Salvation. The Composition and Redaction of Micah 2-5*. SVT 85. Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 146-7.

uses שְׁאֵרִית alone with that sense: "Elohim sent me before you in order to secure a posterity (שְׁאֵרִית) for you in the land." In one particular oracle (Mik 4:14-5:8), the term is linked specifically to a singular ruler who descends from Jacob. In other cases, שְׁאֵרִית refers to "those who are left" after a tragedy that doesn't specifically involve or imply the Babylonian exile. In those cases, such people are better called "survivors": "the people who survive, with whom God will begin anew."[2]

| אַשּׁוּר | **Ashur** — Typically rendered "Assyria." XXX |

DEVICES

A non-alphabetic acrostic?

When it comes to the oracle in Mik 1:10-16, "The long inventory of place-names, with similar titles (*bat-* and *yôšebet*), and the puns on these names point to a planned, sustained literary work. . . . And this starting point invites the search for an overall structure in the arrangement, for some sustained message in this theme."[3] The "overall structure" was identified by Moor: "Most strophes . . . are kept together by identical first letters."[4] Those repeated, strophe-initial letters are בּ (v. 10), כּ (v. 11), ר (v. 13), and ע (v. 15). Is there be a "sustained message" in that structure? Elsewhere in the HB, when successive verses and/or strophes in the same textual unit all begin with a particular letter, the purpose is to create an acrostic (typically alphabetic). The repetition of words and/or letters in this case is not alphabetic and may be nothing more than a mnemonic device. Nevertheless, the sequence בּ-כּ-ר-ע doesn't look like a random string of letters; it looks like a preposition prefixed to a participle or infinitive construct of the verb כרע, which is used in some places (like Isa 10:4) to reference the crouching or kneeling of a captive, and in others (like 1 Sam 4:19) to refer to a woman overcome by labor pains. If *bet* is read as a *bet* of manner, בכרע could mean "with bending," or more idiomatically, "in affliction/ subservience." It is curious that an oracle with lament or dirge-like features, which speaks of its subjects as feminine entities enduring traumatic experiences, and which is ultimately speaking about subjugation, should make conspicuous use of a group of consonants that, when read in the order of their occurrence, could convey a similar message (and, thereby, unify the whole). To make the structural pattern evident at a glance, we place each repeated, strophe-initial consonant in **bold**.

2   Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*. Continental Commentary. Trans. Gary Stansell. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990, p. 124.

3   Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 24E. New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 204.

4   Johannes C. de Moor, *Micah*. HCOT. Leuven: Peeters, 2020, p. 85.

(B) Format

1. Lineation

Lineation is the arrangement of the lines of a text according to content and/or strophes. Although, by the time of the Masoretes, many poetic texts were written in a special format, it was not so in antiquity. The lineation herein is an interpretive measure meant to differentiate poetry from prose and to better elucidate textual content. It usually follows the accentual divisions used by the medieval synagogues and documented by the Masoretes. When it does not (the accents were placed in the texts to aid in oral recitation, not to demarcate distinct units of poetry or narrative), the reason(s) for that deviation may be indicated in the Translation Notes.

2. Separation

Unlike narrative, which is grouped into paragraphs, prophetic texts are often composed of independent oracles and short segments of prophetic commentary stitched together. When these oracles and/or commentary segments contain a clear beginning and end, the text is separated so that each self-contained unit may be read on its own. Oracles may open, for example, with imperatives (as in 1:5) or interjections (as in 2:4 or 2:9, 12, 15, and 19).

Even though oracles and/or commentary segments were originally separate, they were arranged in an order that has its own internal logic. The opening prophetic commentary, for instance (1:2-4), asks YHWH why he "looks" and "watches" while wickedness and injustice occur. The first oracle (vv. 5-11) opens with the same terms ("to look" and "to watch"), which creates a sense of continuity between them. Continuity is likewise created between the first oracle (vv. 5-11) and the commentary that follows (vv. 12-17) by ending the former with "god" and starting the latter with a declaration about "god." Rubrics or explanations are not inserted between individual textual units so that we may not interrupt the flow of the composite whole. Chapter indicators or actual breaks in the text due to a change in genre (see, for example, the psalmic superscription in 3:1) are the only exception to this rule.

3. Versification

Versification refers to the division of the text into verses. That division is ancient, but it was oral long before it was written. The earliest Rabbinic literature utilized verse division. By the time of the Masoretes, verse divisions were already standardized. Copiers counted the verses within a text in order to guarantee that the text was copied precisely. THF follows the verse division as documented in the Hebrew manuscripts.

4. Italics

Italics are used primarily to identify and separate **superscriptions** from the body of a text. They are used secondarily to indicate **quotations** within a text. And thirdly, they may be used in rare instances to highlight words or phrases with special significance (see Translation Notes).

5. Brackets

Square brackets indicate words that are not present in the Hebrew text itself, but which, nevertheless, are represented by the tone or context of the language, are required by English, or are included for reasons of style.

the heavenly fire

6. Forward Slashes

In extremely rare circumstances, where there is very good reason to believe that the Hebrew text has been corrupted, yet the non-corrupted text we propose has no manuscript or version support, we place the word between /forward slashes/ to reveal that we have altered the text from something that exists to something that does not. This is only done in rare circumstances because we recognize a tendency among previous generations of scholars to dissect, alter, and jettison large portions of biblical texts that they deemed unsuitable or unoriginal when, in fact, it was their own biases, prejudices, and assumptions that were problematic. The integrity of the consonantal text in the Masoretic tradition has proven itself reliable with time and textual discovery. Most alterations and emendations proposed by scholars before the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, were proven wrong when those scrolls either agreed with or showed the text in the Masoretic tradition to be even more ancient. At the same time, however, purposeful alteration is done by translators all the time. Sometimes that alteration is indicated by the use of footnotes or marginal notes. Most of the time, however, the reader of the English translation has no idea when the text is being intentionally manipulated. Since we do not wish to mislead our readers, we make such manipulations, however rare, very conspicuous.

7. Masoretic Notes

At the end of every text or scroll, the Masoretes kept notes of things such as the total number of verses, the number of sections according to the triennial reading cycle, or the number and types of paragraphs. These are called **Masorah Finalis**. Since each manuscript differs in the way it records that information, THF reproduces the notes at the end of every biblical text according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. For more on Masoretic notes, see Page H. Kelly, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford's *The Masorah of* Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*: Introduction and Annotated Glossary*.

Background

Justice, Loyalty, and Reverence

Mikah is a text crying against injustice. Leaders serve their own interests at their people's expense. Since their policies are cannibalistic, they will lose it all. Priests are idolatrous and concerned more with offerings than their people's plight. But YHWH does not require sacrifice and will crush their idols underfoot. Prophets deceive and favor the rich. Thus prophecy will fade and prophets become silent. Since righteousness and justice have vanished, Samaria will be furrowed and Jerusalem plowed. A future ruler, however, will rise up to set Assyria in its place, restore David's dominion, and bring the exiled Israelites home.

An Unpopular Prophet

Mikah (short for Mikaiah or Mikael) was a contemporary of Isaiah (mid-8th century) from a small Judahite town called "Moresheth." Scholars often say that Mikah spoke in defense of the poor, but "the poor" are never identified in his prophecies. Rather, Mikah was a small-town prophet who stood with "his people" in opposition to those in positions of authority and power in the capital cities of Israel and Judah. The many references to farming or agriculture in his oracles (threshing, plowing, leveling ground, planting vines, rainfall, farm animals, etc.) are a glimpse into his rural background. If Mikah was a defender, he was a defender of justice and of YHWH's sovereignty over the earth. Like any other Hebrew prophet, Mikah enacted some of his messages. "The act was not intended to be an illustration of the message, but rather an instrument of its fulfilment [sic]."[5] It is probable that, for a time, he walked around bound and naked, howling like an animal, in order to embody the captivity of his people and to pave the way for their cities to be overrun with wild beasts. Such actions would not have endeared him to those in power. In one place (2:6-11), he was compelled to defend the divine origin of his messages. Due to that and to a strong critique of prophets in general, it has become common for scholars to conclude that Mikah "did not consider himself to be a *nābî'* (prophet).[6] However, scholars of the past both overestimated their ability to peer into the ancient person's self-understanding and underestimated the role that sociology and/or anthropology can play in informing us about them. As argued most cogently by Overholt,[7] the role played by Mikah in Judean

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5   H. Wheeler Robinson, "Prophetic Symbolism." Page 6 in *Old Testament Essays. Papers Read before the Society for Old Testament Study at its Eighteenth Meeting. Held at Keble College, Oxford, Sept. 27th to 30th, 1927.* London: Charles Griffin and Company, Ltd., 1927.

6   John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004, p. 323. Parenthetical added.

7   See, for example, "Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of Intermediation." *JSOT* 48.15 (1990): 3-29.

socity was clearly "prophetic" in that he interacted in a special way with the divine (he claimed to be empowered by the deity's spirit), brought a message from the deity to a person and/or people-group, and received feedback about his intermediation. So whether Mikah would have called himself "prophet" or not, both his speech and his behavior identified him as such in his society. Mikah's biting sarcasm (see, for example, 2:11, 4:9, and 6:7), the hyperbolic way that he put words into the mouths of those he criticized (the quotations in his oracles do not reflect an unimpassioned report of what people really said), and other rhetorical methods that he used to inveigh against political and religious authorities, explain why he was not well-liked. Nevertheless, he must have been respected among the lower echelons since what he "ordained" was passed on among local elders (see Jer 26:17-19). In fact, one of the primary reasons that his oracles were written down and preserved may have been so that God's word would eventually be recognized by those who, during Mikah's own time, did not want to listen to him.[8]

Form & Genre

Over the past century, Mikan scholarship has focused on what appear to be inconsistencies in theme or message. Oracles of judgment and restoration are intermixed. The situation in one oracle is reversed in the next. For example, "The transition from 3:12 to 4:1-4 is too abrupt; there Jerusalem lies waste, here it is the centre [sic] of pilgrimages from all parts of the world."[9] One way scholars have dealt with such issues is to say that the judgment oracles originated with Mikah while the redemptive ones came from a later prophet or redactor. However, scholars have now begun to concede that there is nothing contradictory about a prophet who both criticizes the present order and envisions a new one. A more ingenious solution was to read the so-called "conflicting" parts as a dialogue between Mikah and his antagonists (often called "false prophets").[10] However, "The fact that there are no indications in the text for a change of speakers implies that it can hardly be expected of the reader to read the text as a dialogue or dispute."[11] The problem with many scholarly assessments is the assumption "that the prophetic material must be read sequentially, and that when this cannot be done it must be rearranged in a 'logical' manner."[12]

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8   As noted by Walther Zimmerli with regard to Amos in "From Prophetic Word to Prophetic Book." Pages 419-42 in *The Place Is Too Small for Us. The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*. SBTS 5. Ed. Robert P. Gordon. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995. Translated by Andreas Köstenberger from "*Vom Prophetenwort zum Prophetenbuch*," *TLZ* 104.7 (1979): 481-96.

9   J. M. Powis Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Micah, Zephaniah, and Nahum*. ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911, p. 84.

10   First proposed by A. S. van der Woude in *Micha. De Prediking van het Oude Testament*. Nijkerk, Netherlands: Callenbach, 1976.

11   Eben S. Scheffler, "Micah 4:1-5: An Impasse in Exegesis?" *OTE* 3.1 (1985): 58.

12   John T. Willis, "Micah 4:14-5:5—A Unit." *VT* 18.4 (1968): 531.

The ancient scroll was more like a computer hard-drive or memory stick than a modern book; it stored as much material in the same place as possible until all the space was filled. In other words, "The scroll served as a deposit box for the text."[13] A user (scribe) would then find what parts to read for what purposes. Therefore, it is more likely that the oracles appear in the order we find them simply because it was easier to find an oracle if it was placed next to another with similar words. For example, it made sense to follow an oracle with a declaration about "Samaria" and the notion of "dumping" and "shrines" (1:2-5) with an oracle about "Samaria" that spoke of "dumping" and of cult objects found in a shrine (1:6-7). If there is another organizing principle, it can be found at the beginning and end of Mikah. In both places, we find references to sin and defiance (1:5, 13; 7:18); the text begins with a cry of lament and ends with a cry of joy. There is a conversational style in much of the text; elements natural to narrative are strewn throughout the poetry. The poetry itself is unusual in that terms or idioms that one would expect have been replaced with less usual ones. Instead of speaking against "kings and rulers," for example, Mikah speaks against "heads and leaders." Mikah shows a familiarity with stories of the Law rarely seen outside Psalms (it mentions slavery in Egypt, the exodus, wonders in the wilderness, Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, the Abrahamic promise, the blessing of Balaam, and the slaughter at Shittim). Jeremiah 26:18 quotes Mik 3:12—one of the few times a prophetic text explicitly references another. Mikah 4:1-3 features an oracle almost identical with one in Isaiah 2:2-4. Scholars tend to have a negative view about the text's preservation through the ages. "The Hebrew text of Micah is badly preserved, among the worst in the Bible."[14] Since, however, our earliest Hebrew witnesses support the traditional text and the differences among the ancient versions are best explained as translational choices, explanations, or misunderstandings, it is more likely that any discrepancy we find results from our own ignorance.[15]

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13   Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. London: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 23.

14   Delbert R. Hillers, "Micah, Book of." Page 809 in Vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman. 6 Vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992. We have found a tendency for scholars to make such statements about *any text* that presents multiple interpretative and translational issues. So far as we have seen, the traditional Hebrew text has been preserved far more accurately than most scholars are willing to admit.

15   We make only two conjectural emendations (3:12 and 5:2) and two contextual ones (1:2 and 4:6).

Mikah

Chapter 1   א

¹ *The oracle of* YHWH *that came to Mikah the Moreshetian during the reign of Judah's kings Jotham, 'Ahaz, [and] Yehezekiah, which he envisioned concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.*

² Listen, clans—every span!
    Pay attention, land—its populace as well!
Since Sovereign YHWH intends to be
    an incriminator of you—
        [you] sovereigns [in] his holy palace!
³ Watch now as YHWH emerges from his place
    to descend [and] upend [the] land's shrines;
⁴ as they melt, the mountains, under him,
    and the depressions disperse,
like wax before the flame,
    like water dumped on a descent.
⁵ Due to Jacob's defiance [is] all this—
    due, in fact, to the offenses of Israel's house!
What [is] Jacob's defiance?
    It is certainly Samaria!
And what [is] Judah's shrine [plot]?
    It is certainly Jerusalem!

⁶ "Therefore, I will sentence Samaria
    to be a rock pile [in] the field,
    to be the furrows of a vineyard.
I will dump into the valley her stones,
    and her foundations, expose.
⁷ Then all her statues will be smashed
    and all her offerings incinerated by fire.
        Yes, [for] all her figurines,
          will I render ruin.
Since a prostitute's offering, she collected,
    [what] amounts to a prostitute's offering,
        must they repay!"

⁸ Over that, I vow to cry and squall,
     crawl bound and naked;
    give a cry like the jackals—
        yes, a plaint like ostrich chicks
    ⁹ that lethal [is] the onslaught of her,
    that it penetrates as far as Judah;
        strikes as far as my people's gate—
          as far as Jerusalem!

¹⁰ In Gath, do not gab.
    Do not weepily weep!
In Dustville (Beth L'Aphrah),
    [with] dust, you are shrouded!
¹¹ Exchange for yourselves,
    who *dwells* [in] Splendor (Shaphir),
        lewd exposure.
She holes up within,
    who dwells [in] Za'anan.
[The] cry of TakeAwayville (Beth Ha-'etsel)
    [is] "He will deprive you of foundation!"
¹² Surely she groans for help,
    who dwells [in] Bitterness (Maroth)!
Surely harm descends from YHWH
    to the gate of CityPeace (Jerusalem)!
¹³ Fasten to each chariot a leash,
    whoever dwells [in] Lachish!
First [in] offense [was] her—that is, Lady Zion.
    Yet in you [too] are encountered
        the defiant [ways] of Israel!
¹⁴ The finding:
    "You must deliver a dismissal
        to Betrothal of Gath (Moreshet Gath),
    [surrender], my Lady, Deceit (Achzib)
        for [the] deceit [done] by Israel's kings.
    ¹⁵ As before, the dispossessor
        will I set against you
          who dwells [in] Possession (Mareshah).
    As far as Forevermore (Adullam)
        will Israel's glory set.
    ¹⁶ Crop and chop [your hair]
        over your cherished children.
    Increase your crop like the vulture
        because they are exiled from you!"

Chapter 2   ב

¹ Oh [no]!
    They devise crime—
        yes, prepare harm on their beds!
    With the light of dawn, they do it,
        since power is wielded [by] their hand.
    ² When they lust [for] fields, they steal;
        when houses, they displace.
    So they defraud a man and his house—
        yes, a fellow and his inheritance.

³ Therefore, so says YHWH,

    "I am now devising against this kindred
      a harm—
    one from which you [all] will never release
      your necks,
        nor ever go upright,
          such a harmful time it [will be]!"

⁴ On that day,
    one will conjure against you
      a mimicking [retaliation],
    will wail a wail:
      "Fulfilled was [the] declaration!
        Devastatingly devastated were we!
          My people's portion, he parceled out!
        How can he bring me release?
          By returning those fields of ours
            he reapportioned!"
  ⁵ Consequently, there will not be one of you
    casting [for] a boundary line by lot
      in YHWH's assembly.

⁶ "Do not ordain, [you all]!" they ordain.
    "They must not ordain for El!"
Certainly, he will be carried off [in] disgrace,
  ⁷ the one [in] Jacob's house who says,
    "Surely, YHWH has lost [his] breath.

      If these [are] his affairs, [may I be cursed]!"
Certainly, my oracles offer help
    for going the straight [way]!
  ⁸ "Yet, [as] before,
    my people rise up like a foe
      in opposition to [what is] peaceful.
    [What is] splendid, you [all] are ready to strip
      covertly from those passing [by]
        [as] acquisitions of war.
  ⁹ My people's women, you are ready to expel
    from the house of her cherished [ones].
    Away from her babes, you snatch
      the legacy I granted for perpetuity."
¹⁰ Rise up and go, [you all]!
    [I swear] that this [is] no longer the Sanctuary.
      Because it is defiled, it will be ravaged
        with ravage overwhelming!
¹¹ Suppose a man going [by] a spirit—
    but [one] *untrue*—had misled:

    "I hereby ordain for you wine and *brew*,"
      he would qualify
        [as] this people's ordainer!

¹² "I will really rally, Jacob, all of you—
    certainly assemble [your] survivors, Israel,
      together,
[but] will make him like sheep in distress—
    like a flock in the middle of its meadow
      that panic at a human [being]."
  ¹³ The one who breaches goes up before them.
    They breach and pass [through].
  [The] gateway—they march out through it.
    Their king passes before them—
      yes, YHWH [is] at their head!

Chapter 3   ג

¹ I said, "Listen up, heads of Jacob!
    Yes, leaders of Israel's house, [hear me]!
You are supposed to know what is just,
  ² [you] who detest help and love harm,
    who steal their skin off them—
      yes, their flesh off their bodies, [snatch]!"
³ Since, in fact, they devoured my people's flesh,
    and their skin, stripped off them,
    and their bodies, sliced and diced
      like that in the pot—
      yes, like meat in the middle of a caldron,
  ⁴ so they will cry to YHWH,

    but he will not answer them.
  Yes, he will hide his face from them at that time
    since they wrought harm [by] their affairs.

  ⁵ So says YHWH concerning the prophesiers,
the beguilers of my people, the ones who bite with
their incisors and proclaim [what is] peaceful, but
when one pays nothing for their speech, then they
portend for him [what is] antagonistic—⁶ the
finding:
    "Night is yours—without vision.
      It will be dark for you—without divining.
    The sun will set over the prophets.
      Yes, black over them will be the day."
  ⁷ The visioneers will be ashamed,
    the divineers disgraced.

They will muffle their mouth—all of them!—
     since there is no divine answer.
⁸ Nevertheless, I myself am powerfully filled
     with YHWH's breath and decree and might

          to announce to Jacob his defiance—
               yes, [declare] to Israel his offense!

⁹ Listen here, heads of Jacob's house!
     Yes, leaders of Israel's house, [hear me]!
          Such despisers of justice.
               Yes, every straight [way], they distort.
¹⁰ Building Zion through butchery—
     yes, Jerusalem with victimization.
¹¹ Its heads render judgment for a bribe,
     and its priests teach for money,
          and its prophets do divination for silver.

     Yet in YHWH they are confident,

          thinking, 'Certainly YHWH is among us.

          Harm will not come upon us.'
¹² Thanks to you [all], the finding [is]:
     "Zion will, [into] a field, be plowed.
          Yes, Jerusalem—rocky piles will it be,
               while the mount of the House
                    [is given] to forest /animals/."

Chapter 4   ד

¹ It will happen in future times
     [that] it will be—

     the mount of YHWH's house—

          founded on the crown of the mountains.
When it is [more] exalted by far than [any] hills,
     over it will mount populations—
          ² numerous nations will go.
They will say,
     'Let's go up to YHWH's mount—

          that is, to the house of Jacob's god—
               so he may teach us about his ways,
               so we may go in his paths'
     since out of Zion [his] teaching will emerge,
          YHWH's oracle as well out of Jerusalem.

³ He will judge among populations plenty—
     bring correction to nations mighty,
          however distant.

They will hammer their swords into mattocks
     and their spear [heads] into pruning [blades].
Nation to nation, they will raise no sword,
     nor train any more [for] battle.
⁴ They will abide instead,
     each [one] under his [grape] vine
     or under his fig [tree],
          since [the] intimidator has vanished."
[I swear] that the mouth of YHWH,
     [God] of Legions, has spoken.
⁵ Just as all the populations continue to go,
     each by the authority of its god,
so we ourselves must go
     by the authority of our god YHWH
          forever and ever!

⁶ "On that day,"
     —prophecy of YHWH—
     "I hereby will gather the crippled [woman].
          Yes, she [who] was scattered, will I rally,
               and make prosperous my shattered [one].
⁷ I will give the crippled [woman] posterity.
     Watch [me], in fact,
          [make] Leah into a mighty nation!"
     Then YHWH will rule over them
          on Mount Zion
               from that moment and forevermore.
⁸ And you, tower of [the] flock,
     mound of Lady Zion,
up to you, will it approach—
     will arrive the original rulership,
          the kingdom of Lady Jerusalem!

⁹ Now—
     why, [Lady], do you shout [with] a shout?
          Has kingship vanished among you?
               Did your plan-maker perish?
     Surely agony *has-ached-ya*—*
          like a laboring woman.
¹⁰ Burst out in agony, Lady Zion—
     like a laboring woman!
     Surely now you will emerge from [the] city
          [and] settle in the country—
               proceed as far as Babel—

*word-play: Hezekiah

אש מן־השמים

where you will be rescued,
  where YHWH will restore you
    from the grip of your enemies.

¹¹ And now—
  gathered against you are numerous nations
    who think, "Let her be [so] degraded
      that our eyes can leer at Zion!"
¹² But they—
  they neither know YHWH's conceptions,

    nor understand his plan:
    that he collects them
      like sheaves at a threshing-floor.
¹³ "Rise up and tread, Lady Zion,
  because your horn[s] will I make iron,
  and your hooves will I make bronze,
    that you may crush populations plenty."
  Then you may devote to YHWH

    their abundance—
    yes, their wealth
      to the Sovereign of the whole earth.

¹⁴ Now—
  band together, bandit-stricken Lady!
    A siege is set against us!
  With their scepter, they batter the face
    of Israel's protector!

Chapter 5   ה

¹ "But you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
  [who are] youthful enough
    to be in Judah's brigades,
  from you one will emerge on my behalf
    to be ruler in Israel,
  whose emergence, indeed, [is] legendary,
    from the fabled past."
² /Instruction/ will he give them
  as long as [the] laboring woman labors
  so that what remains of his brothers
    will be reunited with the family of Israel.
³ He will stand as shepherd
  by the strength of YHWH.

By the majestic authority of his god YHWH
  will they abide

since, this time, it will be magnified
  to earth's extent!
⁴ Then that [very] one
  will be [our] harmony [with] Ashur
    when it enters into our land—
      yes, when it marches into our citadels.
  (We will raise against it seven shepherds—
    yes, even more dominators of humankind!
⁵ They will shepherd Ashur's land
  with the sword—
    yes, Nimrod's land at its passes.
  [And] he will rescue from Ashur
    when it enters into our land—
      yes, when it marches onto our border.)
⁶ Then Jacob's progeny, amidst populations plenty,
  will be like dew brought by YHWH—

  like [what] splish-splashes on grass,
    which will not pause for a person
      nor suspend for human beings.
⁷ Then Jacob's progeny in the nations,
  amidst populations plenty,
    will be like a lion among forest animals—
    like a leopard among flocks of sheep,
      which, when it goes by, pounces and tears
      with none to rescue.
⁸ Supreme may your power be over your foes—
    yes, all your enemies cut down!

⁹ "When that day comes,"
  —prophecy of YHWH—

  "I will cut your horses down from your midst
    [and] wipe out your chariots.
¹⁰ I will cut down your country's cities
    [and] raze all your fortresses.
¹¹ I will cut off your practice of magic [arts]—
  yes, those who conjure
    will disappear among you.
¹² I will cut your statues and your stelas
  down from your midst
    so that you will never again bow
      to your handiwork.
¹³ I will uproot your totems
  from your midst
    [and] eradicate your talismans.

¹⁴ I will, by fierce heat, impose a consequence
  with [the help of] the nations
    [on] they who do not listen.”

Chapter 6   ו

¹ Listen now [to] what YHWH is saying:
  “Get up! Contend with the mountains!
    Let the hills hear your voice!”
² Listen, you mountains,
  [to] YHWH’s contention,
as well as you permanent
  foundations of earth,
for YHWH has a contention with his people,
  with Israel, he wishes to quarrel.
³ “My people,
  what have I done to you?
    [In] what [way] do I exhaust you?
      Answer me!
⁴ Did I not bring you up
  from the land of Egypt,
and from the house of slaves,
  ransom you?
I sent before you
  Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
⁵ My people,
  remember what Balak, Moab’s king,
    devised,
  and what Balaam, Beor’s son,
    answered him.”
  From the [region of] Shittim
    to the [site of] Gilgal,
  for the sake of understanding,
    [recall] YHWH’s righteousness!

⁶ With what should I greet YHWH,
  be bent to the god of the height?
Should I meet him
  with ascension [sacrifices],
    with one-year-old calves?
⁷ Will YHWH find pleasure
  in thousands of rams,
    in innumerable rivers of oil?
Should I hand over my firstborn

[in consequence of] my defiance,
[or forfeit] my body’s progeny
  [because of] my life’s offense?
⁸ It has been told to you people
  what [is] good.
What does YHWH seek from you
  except to enact justice, to love loyalty,
    and to walk reverently with your god?

⁹ Listen!
  Toward the city, YHWH calls.
    Prudent are they who fear your name.
  Listen [oh] tribe and its assembly!
¹⁰ “Is there still a wicked house
  [with] stores of injustice?
    Cursed is the meager measure!”
¹¹ Will I be clean-handed
  with fraudulent scales,
    with a pouch of dishonest weights?
¹² When its wealthy are full of violence
  and its inhabitants have spoken falsely?
When their tongues
  [have] deception in their mouth?
¹³ Yet [as for] me,
  I have just begun to strike you,
    to cause desolation
      on account of your offenses.
¹⁴ [As for] you,
  you will eat, but not have enough,
    with your kinsmen there among you.
You will carry off [the captive],
  but never bring release.
Whoever you may rescue,
  I will hand to the sword.
¹⁵ [As for] you,
  you will sow, but not reap.
[As for] you,
  you will tread olives,
    but never have oil to pour,
  you will press grapes,
    but never taste the wine.
¹⁶ Omri’s decree is kept,
  every practice of Ahab’s house,
    and you followed in their schemes,
  so that I must make you a horror
    and its inhabitants a hiss,

and the scorn of my people,
  you must bear.

Chapter 7   ז

1 Mercy me! Oh my!
  Yes, I am like fruit-gatherers,
    like grape-pickers,
  without a bunch for brunch,
    [or] the early fruit my appetite craves.
2 The faithful [one]
  disappeared from the land.
An upright [one] among the people
  is no more.
All of them lie in wait for blood[shed].
  Each [of them] hunt the other [with] a net
    3 because of the vileness of their hands.
To set [things] right,
  the prince and the judge ask
    for compensation,
  but [when] the powerful [one] demands
    the lust of his impulse [from] them,
      they concoct it.
4 Their good [is] like a briar,
  their straightness [is] a thorn-hedge.
[On] the day of your expectations,
  your punishment will arrive.
Then will come the advent
  of their perplexity.
5 Believe no friend.
  Trust no confidant.
With she who lays [by] your chest,
  watch [what] you say.
6 For son insults father.
  Daughter rises against her mother.
Daughter-in-law
  against her mother-in-law!
One's enemies
  [are] the members of their home!
7 Yet [it is] I, in YHWH,

  [who] will hereby be expectant,
  will hereby wait for the god who rescues me,
    he who hears me, the god of mine!

8 Do not rejoice, my enemy, over me.
  Though I have fallen, I will rise.

Though I dwell in the dark,
  YHWH [is] a light for me.
9 YHWH's indignation, I must bear—
  because I sinned against him—
until he contends my contention,
  upholds my cause.
He will release me into the light.
  I will see his vindication.
10 My enemy will see
  and shame will cover her—
she who said to me,
  "Where is he—YHWH your god?"
My eyes will see her
  when she becomes a trampling [ground],
    like mud [in] the streets.
11 The day for building your walls—
  that day will the boundary be boundless.
12 It [is] a time
  [when,] up to you, they will come
    from Assyria to the cities of Egypt,
    from Egypt to the River—
      both sea to sea and mount to mount.
13 The land will become a waste
  because of its inhabitants,
    as a consequence of their misdeeds.

14 Shepherd your people with your staff,
  the flock of your inheritance,
who dwell in isolation,
  a thicket in the midst of Carmel.
May they graze Bashan and Gilead
  as [in] days of yore.
15 Like the time you left the land of Egypt,
  "I will show him wonders."
16 Nations will see and be disgraced
  by all of their force.
They will cover up [their] mouth.
  Their ears will be deaf.
17 They will lick [at] the dust like a serpent,
  like earthen crawlers;
quivering from their dens
  toward our god YHWH,
    in fear and dread of you."

18 Who [is] a god like you,

who carries away [the] iniquity,
    who passes over [the] defiance
        of the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not stoke, continually, his rage,
    for [one] delighting [in] forbearance [is] he.
[19] He will again show us compassion,
    wash away our iniquities.
You will cast into the depths of the sea
    all their offenses.
[20] You will stay true to Jacob,
    faithful to Abraham,
which you promised to our ancestors
    since ancient times.

One hundred and five
verses.

NOTES

1:2   **every span!** — Or, "the whole lot!" Literally, "all of them!" Note that כלם is parallel to מלאה and both contain a third-person suffix. On כלם, the suffix is masculine plural; on מלאה, it is feminine singular. The shift in number and gender is an example of grammatical alternation between parallel cola typical in ancient Hebrew poetry. Even though the text of Mikah is substantiated by its quotation in both 1 Kgs 22:28 and 2 Chr 18:27, most English translators treat it as כלכם (all of you) instead. Notable exceptions include NEB (all together), SET (all of them), Mays (OTL), who rendered it as "every one," and Moor (HCOT), who explained it as "their totality." Translators probably avoid representing כלם because "The third-person suffix -*ām* clashes not only with the second person verbs, but also with -*kem* in v. 2b" (Andersen and Freedman, AYB). Nevertheless, the syntactic pattern in Mik 1:2 (a vocative modified by a word or phrase with a third-person referent) is not uncommon. Hillers (Hermeneia) referenced several examples (Isa 22:16; 44:23; 54:1; Ezek 21:30). In fact, כל + pronominal suffix typically functions as a marker of emphasis. Note, for example, Num 16:3 (The whole assembly—all of them!—[are] holy) and Isaiah 64:8 (Please have regard now [for] your people—all of us!). In Psalm 8:8, it is said that God made mankind to rule over "flock and herds—all of them!" (that is, "the whole lot!"). Waltke (*A Commentary on Micah*) pointed to Yob 17:10 as proof that כלם could be used in direct discourse. Both there (אולם כלם) and here (עמים כלם), *kullām* alliterates with an immediately preceding word (repetition of word-final *mem*). Therefore, the use of כלם in Mikah is not just purposeful, but *poetically emphatic and alliterative*, and English translators should do everything they can to represent it. To mimic that alliteration, we render עמים and כלם as "clans" and "every span," respectively. For more on grammatical alternation, see Watson's *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*.

   [you] sovereigns [in] his holy palace — As the text currently stands, it reads "[the] sovereign from the palace of his holiness." If this is talking about God, then his "holy palace" is either heaven or the temple. But in the very next verse, God leaves "his place." So he can't possibly witness against them "from" there. That inconsistency seems to escape virtually all interpreters. Andersen and Freedman noted that "There is . . . a fissure between v. 2bA and v. 2bB. There is nothing in the preceding text for . . . *from his holy temple*, to modify." Waltke believed that "The verb *min* . . . implies a verb of motion," but there is none. Wolff (*Micah the Prophet*) supplied what he thought was the missing verb: "speaking." If, however, we redivide the text (move *mem* from the start of היכל to the end of אדני), we end up with אדנים היכל קדשו ([you] lords [in] his holy palace), which would continue the vocative sense of the verse and end up with two powerful word-plays: the *sovereigns* of the land have come into conflict with the *Sovereign* of the earth, therefore, YHWH will leave *his place* (heaven) to act against those in *his holy palace* (the temple). In this way, Mikah starts out with a denouncement not just of royal personages, which explains the list of royal names in the immediately preceding superscription, but of cultic spaces, which includes the Jerusalem Temple where they have congregated.

1:3   **shrines** — One of the best discussions of במה (or במות in the plural) comes from Whitney ("'Bamoth' in the Old Testament"). He showed that במה had two primary senses; one referred to the "heights/summits" (i.e., the "ridges" or "flanks" of the land) on which someone in a position of power and authority might ride or stride in triumph and another referred to sites of

<div align="right">אש מן־השמים</div>

cultic and/or religious activity. Although translators often refer to the second as "high places," Whitney pointed out that "The term 'high place,' . . . is not particularly exact." In fact, "Many types of cult centre (sic) were thought of as *bamoth* – small gate shrines, royal centres (sic) to foreign gods, large public shrines, local rustic shrines and even Topheth. Their situations are as varied as their cults – on hills, in cities and settlements, by the city gate and in a valley." In other words, "במות often means no more than 'local shrines.'" The question, therefore, is whether במותי ארץ refers to "the heights of the earth" or "the shrines of the land" (the phrase's inherent definiteness is explicit in 1QpMic: הארץ). In v. 5, it is evident that במות is a reference to Judah's most sacred site (a *pluralis intensivus*). Therefore, במותי probably participates in that sense. A rendering like Smith-Christopher's (OTL) is preferable: "sacred places." Note that the tradition of recitation (Qere) seems to have read the text as במתי, from בֹּמֶת. The written text (Ketiv) represents the plural of בָּמָה. If בָּמָה and בֹּמֶת once communicated different things, there is no discernible semantic difference between them now. How does one make sense of the final *yod* on במותי? In a case like Hab 3:19, it is probably a dialectical formation of an absolute plural (see Svi Rin's "י.. as an absolute Plural Ending"). In this case, however, it is probably a contracted form of the ancient case-ending (-*tayyi* would have become -*tay* when the oblique short-i was dropped).

1:7   Translators of this verse are continually confounded by *min* and עד. It is clear that *min* serves as a complementizer for קבצה (she gathered/collected). The question is what sense it was meant to convey. Typically, prepositional *min* is ablative—it signifies separation "out of," motion "away from," or the origin "from" which something comes. If used that way here, the text would say that Samaria gathered "from" or "out of" a whore's payment—an interpretation reflected by 𝔊 (εκ) and 8ḤevXII gr (εγ). But scholars have rightly questioned that interpretation. "It is empty to say that she gathered her prostitute's fees from a prostitute's fee" (Andersen and Freedman, AYB). Some try to solve the problem by rendering the *min* as instrumental. Note, for example, Henderson (for *with* the reward of a harlot she collected them). In other words, she gathered her idols "by means of" the fees she collected for her sexual favors. But if that were the case, one would expect *bet*, not *min*. Others try to solve the problem by giving the preposition a sense of similitude. Note, for example, NRSV (for *as* the wages of a prostitute she gathered them). In other words, the gathering of idols is likened to receiving payment for sexual services. The problem is that *min* does not otherwise convey that sense; one would expect *lamed* or *kaf*. Clearly, there is a failure to understand how the preposition is functioning. Although the Masoretes vocalized it as a Piel, Prov 13:11 shows that the same verb in the Qal stem can indicate the acquisition of wealth. In the same verse, *min* indicates the *source* of one's wealth: הון מֵהֶבֶל יִמְעָט וְקֹבֵץ עַל־יָד יַרְבֶּה (Wealth <u>earned from</u> nothing will dwindle, whereas the <u>gathering</u> of [one's] hand will increase). If read the same way here, *min* would indicate the source of the gathered revenue and the presence of the preposition would be obscured by a good English translation (because it would treat *min* as an integral part of the verbal thought). Notice also how NRSV completed the statement: "and *as* the wages of a prostitute they shall again be used." But if such objects will be smashed, burned, and rendered a ruin (the threefold description indicates *complete destruction*), how can they be used again *as* payment for sexual services? Most English translators render עד as "to" in the sense of

"direction toward": "and they shall return *to* the hire of a harlot" (KJV). Others render it "for" (see, for instance, HCSB). Translators render it that way because they first interpret *min* as "from" or "out of" and the final colon presents a reversal of that situation. But if the sense were "to" or "for," one would expect אֶל עַל, or *lamed*. Furthermore, the same problem exists: if such objects will be completely destroyed, how can they be used *for* payment or be given *to* someone as payment? עַד conveys a sense of degree or extent. That degree or extent may be temporal (until/before). It may indicate distance or show progressive movement (up to/as far as). It can express "how much" something is like in the phrases עַד־מְאֹד (very much) and עַד־אֶחָד (a single one). Sometimes it conveys equivalency. Note, for example, עַד־בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה (equal to the Judahites) in 1 Chr 4:27 or עַד־הַשְּׁלֹשָׁה (equal to the three) in 2 Sam 23:19. We suggest that the last sense is pertinent here: since Samaria gathered a prostitute's wage, "the equivalent of" a prostitute's wage (or "what amounts to" it) must be repaid. In this case, Samaria's "prostitution" is not limited to or defined by idolatry; either it involves her willingness to abandon the ways of Israel's god (and embrace the ways of foreign nations) so that she could identify and align with them (i.e., ALLIANCE IS PROSTITUTION) or it speaks of the plundering of resources for the benefit of the wealthy in the capital cities and to the detriment of the common people (i.e., TAXATION IS PROSTITUTION). In either case, the metaphor is different than what we find in texts like Hosea (IDOLATRY IS PROSTITUTION). In other words, the divine voice in this oracle is stating that *whatever Samaria accrued through her alliances/taxation will be taken from her*. Smith-Christopher (OTL) came to a similar conclusion; either "Micah is here condemning political alliances that have morally corrupted Samaria and Judah" or "Micah's focus on the central cities is far more suggestive of the *political* corruption in the use of commodities through taxation" (italics original).

1:8   **bound** — Or "captive." We agree with virtually all interpreters that שִׁילֹל is either a scribal error for שׁוֹלֵל (accidental *waw-yod* interchange) or a variation of the same term. The question is what it means. 𝕲 rendered it "barefoot" (ανυποδετος)—a rendering that is followed by most English translators. However, "barefoot" is יָחֵף (see, for example, 2 Sam 15:30 and Jer 2:25). Since "barefoot" is paired with "naked" in Isa 20:2-4 (עָרוֹם וְיָחֵף), and occurs with the verb "to go/walk/march," many think that the phrase here (שִׁילֹל וְעָרוֹם), which also occurs with the verb "to walk/go/march," has the same meaning. However, an author signals to their audience that a different meaning is intended *by using a different word*. The root of שִׁילֹל (or שׁוֹלֵל) is שָׁלַל, which is typically given the meaning "to pull out" or "withdraw" in Hebrew lexicons (see HALOT or BDB). If that were true, the word could refer to a removal/withdrawal of one's sandal (i.e., being "barefoot"). However, that nuance is based on a similar verb in Arabic (Arabian branch of Central Semitic), which may or may not be related. Furthermore, there is no evidence for such a verb in BH. The verb שָׁלַל occurs several times in the HB and always means "to seize/take/plunder." In Ruth 2:16, for example, Boaz tells his workers, "Please seize (שֹׁל־תָּשֹׁלּוּ) for her some of the takings." In fact, שָׁלַל has the same meaning in Akkadian (East Semitic) and Ugaritic (Northwest Semitic): *šalālu* (CAD) and *šll* (DUL). In late (post-Biblical) Hebrew, the verb still conveys the older meaning: "to carry off/ capture/transfer" (Jastrow). Since, in biblical Hebrew, the nominal form (שָׁלָל) is

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"booty/plunder/spoil," we should expect a meaning along those lines. Some scholars note the close proximity between שׁילל and ערום and presume that they are synonymous. If so, שׁילל could denote being "robbed of clothing." From that interpretation come renderings like "stripped" (the most common), "bare" (Alter), and "without clothes" (Geneva). While that interpretation is better, it leaves something to be desired. In the other instances of שׁולל in the HB (Yob 12:17 and 19), there is nothing else that indicates nakedness. In the surrounding context, however, we find Yob talking about God "shutting in" or "imprisoning" people (12:14) along with "freeing" some people from their bonds while "binding" others (12:18). It seems clear that שׁולל occurs in the context of *captivity*, which matches the sense of the verb (to seize/take/plunder). Therefore, something like "bound/seized/captured" (or, perhaps, "ravished") would be more likely. 𝕮 conveys that sense: בשׁישׁלן, "in chains" (CAL). Jerome represented the word with *spoliatus* (robbed/plundered/deprived). McKane (*The Book of Micah*) and REB translated it "despoiled" (although it is hard to imagine how someone could voluntarily walk around "despoiled"). The point of the imagery is that Mikah will march like a captive as a sign act to represent what could or would happen to his people. A few think that שׁלל means "to be distraught" or "go mad." Rashi pointed to Ps 76:6 and Isa 59:15 as examples of that meaning. NEB preferred that interpretation (naked and *distraught*). If that is a valid sense, it would be limited to verbs in the Hithpolel stem (as in Ps 76:6 and Isa 59:15).

1:10   **you are shrouded** — Because the Ketib (התפלשׁתי) looks like a first-person perfect, which doesn't make sense in this context (see, however, ASV!), most translators render it as a feminine singular imperative (by dropping the *tav*) in line with the Qere (roll yourself) or alter the form entirely to a masculine plural imperative (roll yourselves). However, the *-ti* ending is simply an archaic second-person feminine singular as explained in JM §42f: "The primitive form (of the 2FS Qal perfect) is *qatalti* with short *i*" (see also GKC §44h). Blau (*Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction*) made that evident by comparing the 2FS ending in Hebrew with the 2FS ending in other branches of Semitic: the Akkadian stative (*-āti*), Ge'ez (*-kī*), Arabic (*-ti*), Aramaic (*-tī*), and Hebrew (*-t*). The only differences between them are Ethiopic's use of consonantal k instead of consonantal t and the absence, in Hebrew, of a terminal i-vowel, which shows that the early Semitic 2FS form contained a consonantal t terminating in an i-vowel. Although that vowel fell out of use in Classical Hebrew, it may still be found in poetry. In the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:7), for instance, we find עד שׁקמתי דבורה שׁקמתי אם בישׁראל (till the time <u>you rose up</u>, Deborah—the time <u>you rose up</u>, Matriarch of Israel). English translators often erroneously render it as "until <u>I</u>, Deborah, rose up." The archaic ending is also preserved in 2FS perfects with pronominal suffixes. Blau provided an example from 1 Sam 19:17: רִמִּיתִנִי (you [2FS] deceived me). In Mikah, the vocalization represents a modernization and/or correction of the more ancient form preserved in the written text that was no longer spoken or not well understood. If the form of פלשׁ is not puzzling, its meaning certainly is! 𝕾 rendered it as a synonym of זרק (to sprinkle/scatter). Few English translations follow that sense (note, however NEB and REB!). Typically, English translators render the verb as "to roll oneself." However, "The traditional meaning 'roll around' is not certain; and it is not suitable. . . . There is no evidence that a person was expected to roll in the dirt" (Andersen and Freedman, AYB). One would expect a Hithpolel of גלל (to roll).

Others propose "wallow" (SET) or "grovel" (Moffatt). Considering the context in which the verb occurs elsewhere in the HB, we agree with Haupt ("The Book of Micah") that the sense is "not *roll* or *wallow*, but *burrow*, *bury thyself*, *lie concealed*" (italics original). In other words, mourners associated themselves with the realm of death by "covering" themselves or symbolically "burying" themselves with dirt/dust/ashes. We represent that with "to shroud oneself." 𝕮 put it more simply: "cover your heads."

1:11 **Exchange** — English translators who don't alter the Hebrew text ubiquitously interpret עברי as something like "pass on!" or "pass by!" (that is, "hit the road!"). In other words, the imperative is almost always interpreted as physical travel or displacement. However, עבר has a very wide semantic range. Following the lead of Duhm (*Anmerkungen zu den zwölf Propheten*), some scholars alter the text to reflect the sense of עבר in Lev 25:9, which means "to send across" a shophar blast (that is, "to sound" one abroad). עבר can also refer to the "passing" of something from one person to another (in 2 Sam 3:10, for instance, it describes the "transfer" of Saul's kingdom to David). Mikah 7:8 says that God "passes over" defiance (that is, "disregards" or "abrogates" it). In that case, עבר would refer to a change in action. Hosea 6:7 says that people "pass over" the covenant (that is, "transgress" it). In that case, עבר would refer to a change in people's devotion. עבר can also refer to a change in circumstance (Zeph 2:2 says "[before] like chaff, time passes") or in the character of someone (Hab 1:11 says "then courage vanishes, passes [away]"). Jeremiah 11:15 uses עבר with *min* to question whether one's many disgraces will "pass away" from people due to consecrated meat. In other words, עבר indicates a change or transformation in one's moral standing. In Mik 1:11, we believe that the same situation applies; עבר indicates a change/transformation from one status/standing to another. In other words, they have "transferred/exchanged" their "splendor" for "lewd exposure." David Kimḥi (Radak) came to the same conclusion: והנה הפכו עריה בשת כי גלוי, "but look, they have been transformed [into] naked shame because they have gone into exile!"

dwells . . . lewd — Note the fantastic sound-play woven in this verse between יושבת (*yôšebet*) and בשת (*bōšet*). The words don't have similar meanings, yet both contain almost the exact same consonants and ring with phonetic assonance. Therefore, even though some people consider בשת a gloss (and either ignore or delete it), it is clear that we are dealing with a sophisticated word-play that uses sound to help bind the first half of the verse together. To mimic that word-play, we use "dwells" and "lewd," which contain virtually identical consonants, and put them in italics to make their relationship evident.

"He will deprive you of foundation!" — Or "he will take from you steadfastness." עמדתו is a well-known crux. Although some might agree that "Nobody knows what v. 11bC means" (Andersen and Freedman, AYB), we think that there are two good options: either the *waw* is an old accusative case ending (see JM §93r) or תו- represents an instance of accidental metathesis (עמדות became עמדתו). If we go with the first, then עמדת probably refers to a structural "foundation" or "base." If we go with the second, then עמדות could be utilizing the ות- ending to create a more abstract concept (like מרות, "bitterness," in v. 12). In that case,

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עמדות could refer to "steadfastness" or "stability." Either way, there would be no pronominal suffix either to account for or to emend. Some might argue that the case ending is too archaic to appear in a text like this. However, the previous verse already utilized what appears to be a very ancient ending for the second-person feminine perfect (see **you are shrouded** above). If so, it stands to reason that we would find another strangely archaic ending in the text. Others might argue that a "structural" sense seems unlikely. For instance, Hillers (Hermeneia) said, "עֹמֶד or עֶמְדָה or מַעֲמָד are used literally only of persons, never of cities." Nevertheless, not only is the root well-suited to such usage (note, for example, עַמּוּד, "pillar/post/column"), but the cities here in Mikah are, in some sense, *personified*. The lingering question, therefore, is how the final phrase relates to what came before. We believe that this phrase expresses the substance of the "cry/lament" (מספד) and that it relates directly back to what was said about the people of Za'anan: "you who hold fast within your walls, thinking that they will protect you, he will take those walls away." Who is "he"? Either the invader or YHWH (or both!).

1:13   **First [in] offense [was] her—that is, Lady Zion. —** The interpretative issues in this colon are manifold. For ראשית, there is a question whether it refers to that which is first in rank/quality (foremost/primary/choicest) or in time. One must also decide on its syntactic relationship with the rest of the clause. Second, one must determine the referent of the demonstrative pronoun. Third, one has to interpret the prefixed prepositional *lamed*. Fourth, one must determine how to represent בת־ציון. Depending on the type of translation, one must decide if they need to take the unique structural patterning of this oracle seriously (see **A non-alphabetic acrostic?** in section A3). Finally, one has to determine what message the phrase was intended to convey. Let us look at a few different translations to see how they dealt with those issues.

    HCSB: "This was the beginning of sin for Daughter Zion."

      This translation conveys ראשית as a construct noun with a temporal reference, בת־ציון as a familial/hereditary personification, the *lamed* as dative of (dis)advantage, and "chariot(ry)" as the feminine referent of היא. By beginning the phrase with "This" and the verse with "Harness," no attempt is made to mimic the unique oracular form. The sense of the phrase would seem to be close to Waltke's assessment: "Dependence upon military might destroys covenant faith."

    NASB: "She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion."

      This translation conveys ראשית as a construct noun with a temporal reference, בת־ציון as a collective referent to the women of Zion, who are a synecdoche for the whole population, the *lamed* as estimative, and the "dweller" of Lachish as the feminine referent of היא. By beginning the phrase with "She" and the verse with "Harness," no attempt is made to mimic the unique oracular form. The sense of the phrase would seem to be close to Wessels' assessment ("Micah 1, an Apt Introduction to Power Talks"): "Verse 13 concerns Lachish. This town is singled out for harsh condemnation for it was this city which seduced Jerusalem and Israel to rebellion."

    Powis Smith (ICC): "She is the chief sin of the daughter of Zion."

      This translation conveys ראשית as an absolute noun with a rank/quality reference, בת־ציון as a collective referent to the women of Zion, who are a synecdoche for the

whole population, the *lamed* as a genitive marker, and the "dweller" of Lachish as the feminine referent of היא. By beginning the phrase with "She" and the verse with "Bind," no attempt is made to mimic the unique oracular form. Powis Smith explained his reasoning this way: "It may be that this is the prophetic opinion regarding the tribute sent by Hezekiah to Sennacherib at Lachish."

Since we agree with Schwantes ("Critical Notes on Micah 1:10-16") that "There is no line in the prophets ascribing any greater guilt to Lachish than to other cities," we find it difficult to accept the idea that Lachish was "greater" in offense than anyone else. Yet even if we accept the sense "first (in time)" for ראשית, what sin was Lachish "first" to engage in? Although dependence on military might is denounced in other texts, there is no clear denunciation of that here, nor any indication elsewhere that Lachish was first to promote it. And if we suppose that some form of idolatry is meant, Innes ("Some Notes on Micah, Chapter I") rightly said, "We have no record that Israelite idolatry took root first at Lachish." Powis Smith (ICC) admitted, "Nothing at all is known as to the reason for this judgment." It is clear at the start of Mikah that this collection of oracles is ultimately concerned with what is going on in Samaria and Jerusalem. In fact, the same two terms used there (חטאות and פשע) are repeated here. Therefore, while Lachish is certainly being included in Jerusalem's guilt, it is evident that interpreters are putting the "chariot" (Lachish) before the "steed" (Zion). Andersen and Freedman (AYB) agreed: "The comment highlights the responsibility of the capital cities for national disasters." We are led to conclude that this colon is assigning "first" or "foremost" blame to Zion and then following up with an adversative כי (however/but!) to indicate that Lachish shares in that blame because of its own defiance. So we interpret ראשית as an absolute noun (for another instance of ראשית as an absolute noun, see Gen 1:1), חטאת as a dative with a poetically elided *bet* (for similar expressions in later NT Greek, see John 9:34 and Rom 6:1), the demonstrative pronoun as an emphatic marker, which was used instead of the more prosaic חטאתה (her sin) in order to call attention to the feminine perpetrator (בת־ציון), the *lamed* as an appositional marker that identifies more precisely whose sin the pronoun refers to (for several examples—particularly from prophetic texts—see IBHS §11.2.10h), and בת־ציון as a personification of the city without any familial or hereditary links. The result is "First [in] offense [was] her—that is, Lady Zion." By beginning the phrase with "First" and the verse with "Fasten," we do what no English translation before us has done: mimic the unique oracular form.

1:14 **[surrender], my Lady, —** The second half of this verse features a poetic structure often seen in ancient Semitic texts called "verb gapping" or "verbal elision"; instead of repeating the previous verb or offering a synonym of it in a parallel colon, the verb in the first colon is made to govern both cola (some say that it does "double duty"). In this colon, however, נתן means "to hand over/surrender." Note, for example, 𝔗: "The houses of Achzib will be handed over to the nations." As vocalized by the Masoretes, בָּתֵּי means "houses of." The same consonants, however, can be read as בִּתִּי (my daughter), which refers back to "Lady Zion" (בת־ציון). If interpreted that way, both halves of this verse end up addressing the last two subjects; the first half (the "you" of תתני) would address Lachish and then, by inserting "my Lady," the second half would shift the address to Zion. Any other suggestion for בתי—whether "houses,"

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"fortifications," "factories," or something else—is puzzling and/or troubling. For more on verb gapping, see Watson or Miller's "The Relation of Coordination to Verb Gapping in Biblical Poetry."

2:3   **such a harmful time it [will be]!** — Or "how harmful a time it [will be]!" Bible scholars and translators tend to treat biblical texts as merely descriptive entities (i.e., they exist only to provide information). The final statement in this oracle is a good example. Most read it as purely descriptive: "because it will be an evil time." If that was all the phrase intended to convey, it is difficult to disagree with Mays (OTL): "It is rather anticlimactic and explanatory." However, we think that the phrase wraps the oracle in rhetorical force and brings it to an emphatic end. The phrase begins with כִּי, which is sometimes used at the end of a statement or sentence not to *explain* what is happening, but to *exclaim* something significant about it. An adjectival word or phrase follows in order to draw attention to that important detail. In Gen 1, for example, the refrain כִּי־טוֹב is not descriptive (that it was good); it is emphatically rhetorical: "how excellent it was!" Likewise, the phrases כִּי־רַבָּה and כִּי כָבְדָה מְאֹד in Gen 18:20 are not descriptive ("that it is great," "that it is very grave"), but rhetorical: "how vociferous!", "how utterly extreme!" (see Albright's "The Refrain 'And God saw Ki Tob' in Genesis"). Therefore, the point of כִּי עֵת רָעָה הִיא is not to describe the prophesied time as bad, but to strike fear into the hearts of hearers about how bad a time it will be. Moffatt (so evil is the time) is one of the few English translators who recognized the rhetorical power of the statement.

2:4   **conjure . . . a mimicking [retaliation]** — The fact that a *mashal* is not well understood can be seen by looking at how the term is translated. Three different renderings are typical: those that stress the poetic or lyrical quality of the expression (such as NJPST's "poem" or REB's "verse"), those that treat the term as a specific sort of wise saying (such as KJV's "parable" or NKJV's "proverb"), and those that believe that the term refers to an utterance of mockery (such as NASB's "taunt," Rotherham's "by-word," or NJB's "satire"). Occasionally, two of the three are combined (as in NRSV's "taunt song"). The three typical renderings are derived from the three contexts in which the *mashal* is found in the HB (Wisdom literature, prophetic literature, and poetic songs or discourses). All three are in some sense correct. It is true, for instance, that a *mashal* is composed in an elevated, poetic language, but not all texts with elevated, poetic language (like prophetic texts) are *mashals*. It is also true that a *mashal*, like a proverb, can teach people how to behave by revealing the consequences of inappropriate behavior, but not all *mashals* are meant to instruct or influence behavior. Finally, a *mashal* can contain a negative statement about a person or group, but there is nothing to suggest that its purpose was to make fun of someone. Ultimately, therefore, something more specific is required if translators are going to adequately capture the sense of the term in Mik. *Mashal* comes from √מָשַׁל, which means "to be/become like," "resemble," or "mimic." Undertaking a study of words based on the root is tricky because such words can look identical to those that are based on a different root meaning "to rule," "reign," "govern," or "have dominion." Nevertheless, there is enough evidence both in Hebrew and in other Semitic languages (like Arabic and Akkadian) to show that S. R. Driver (*The Minor Prophets*) was correct to say that *mashal* "means properly a *likeness* or *representation*" (italics original). It is for good reason, therefore, that YLT rendered it as "simile." But what does it mean to "lift up" a prophetic "likeness"? Although Allen Godbey ("The Hebrew *Mašal*") was overeager when he sought to explain virtually all symbolic

acts performed by the prophets as a *mashal*, to presume some act of "war-medicine" behind almost every reference to a *mashal*, or to reinterpret almost every instance of the verb "to rule" (מָשַׁל) as "to represent/become like," his understanding of African cultures and sociology led him to an important observation that has not been appreciated by most interpreters: a *mashal* is not just an utterance, but an act with transformative power. It is, in fact, a speech act. The point of the prophetic *mashal* is to call out wrongdoing and call forth its "likeness" in divine retribution. In other words, by speaking the prophetic *mashal*, one is actively engaging in its realization. What makes the *mashal* different from other prophetic utterances is how its judgment "mimics" the behavior that is condemned (in this case, the ones who took away the fields and properties of others will have their own fields or properties taken away). To use the label "taunt" for this kind of utterance is to severely distort what this utterance is *doing* (for a similar problem recognizing the rhetorical power of language, see **such a harmful time it [will be]!** in the previous verse). The verb נָשָׂא (to lift up) is used idiomatically alongside *mashal*. In Wisdom texts, the verb probably means "to recite." In poetic songs or discourses, it probably means "to chant." In prophetic texts, where the utterance creates a reciprocal likeness, the verb probably means "to enact." To capture the sense of the whole phrase, we render it "to conjure a mimicking [retaliation]." In some situations, a symbolic action is part of the *mashal* as seen in Ezek 24:3: מְשֹׁל אֶל־בֵּית־הַמֶּרִי מָשָׁל, "mimic before the House of Obstinacy a mimicking [retaliation]." In that case, what the prophet does or what the prophet has the people do is then explained as a "representation" of what will happen to them. Godbey was correct to say that "Such men as Ezekiel were powerful magicians, who were not simply warning of ruin but performing terrible incantations to bring it about."

Fulfilled was the declaration! — Both נִהְיָה and אָמַר have baffled interpreters. נִהְיָה looks like a masculine singular Niphal perfect (from √היה) meaning "it has been done/accomplished." Henderson thought that the harshness of that rendering was proof against it. Many others agree. A few read נִהְיָה as a feminine form of נְהִי and believe that the use of both forms creates an emphatic or superlative sense (as in KJV's "doleful lamentation," NRSV's "bitter lamentation," or Rotherham's fantastically alliterative "lamentable lamentation"). Since, however, the creation of a nominal superlative involves repeating the exact same noun, using a singular and a plural form of the same noun together, placing two different, but synonymous nouns together, or using two different words from the same stem together (see GKC §133i), and we could find no other instance of a noun being repeated with both gender markers to create an emphatic or superlative statement, that interpretation is quite dubious. Therefore, virtually all English translators either delete נִהְיָה or pretend like it isn't there. אָמַר is either a masculine singular perfect (he/one said), a participle (one says), or the noun אֹמֶר (thing/speech). However, a masculine singular perfect or participle doesn't fit the context. So English translators almost always alter it—either by adding a *lamed* to turn it into the common speech indicator לֵאמֹר (saying) or by adding a *waw* to turn it into the inverted perfect וְאָמַר ("one will say" or "and say"). If one reads אָמַר as a noun, it could be the masculine singular subject of נִהְיָה. In that case, the phrase would say "the speech/thing has been done." But what does *that* mean? In Prov 13:19, נִהְיָה refers to a desire that has been "fulfilled." Therefore, נִהְיָה אָמַר could be taken as a unified expression indicating that Mikah's foretelling had actually come to pass. Duhm

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interpreted the text the same way: "*erfüllt ist das Wort!*" Orelli waxed mournfully about it: "It has happened, befallen, the unspeakable and intolerable!" Considering that the alternatives involve changing or ignoring either one or both words, our interpretation not only does less damage to the text, but seems far more probable.

By returning — שׁוֹבֵב is typically interpreted as a noun referring to a "faithless/rebellious" person—either a foreign conquer or native Israelites (with the prefixed *lamed* indicating that the fields were reapportioned "to" such persons). However, that reading doesn't make much sense. Neither Assyria nor Babylon would be considered "rebellious/faithless." Furthermore, since the wail is also a prophetic *mashal*, its purpose was to create a retribution that "mimicked" the crime (see note above). Therefore, the "rebellious/faithless" are precisely those to whom such misery is supposed to befall (not those bringing such misery about). So it is better to interpret לְשׁוֹבֵב as a Polel infinitive construct (as in Isa 49:5) with the typical nuance of "returning/restoring" (and the *lamed* as a marker of means). That interpretation is supported by 𝕲's του αποστρεψαι (to turn away) and σ´ and θ´'s του επιστρεψαι (to turn around). As Andersen and Freedman (AYB) noted, "The ten or so verbs of this *binyān* in the Hebrew Bible are causative in meaning and are mainly used to describe Yahweh bringing people back from exile or captivity." Even though לְשׁוֹבֵב would seem describe the restoration of property, there was probably conceptual blending going on here (i.e., the notion of one's portion/house being taken was merging with the notion of one's family and/or kinship group being taken). If so, it would be appropriate to link one's "release" with the restoration of their "portion" or "house" (see Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think*).

2:6   **for El." Certainly —** We believe that the original text was לְאֵל הֲלֹא ("for El/God. Will not?"), which was then accidentally altered to לָאֵלֶּה לֹא (about these. Not) due to the influence of אֵלֶּה in the next verse. The same was proposed by Duhm over a century ago. There are many reasons to prefer לְאֵל הֲלֹא. First, the oracle terminates in v. 11 with the verb נטף followed by a *lamed* prefixed to the person or entity "to" or "for" which the verbal action is done: אַטִּף לְךָ (let me ordain to/for you). If the oracle originally opened with לֹא־יִטְּפוּ לְאֵל (Do not ordain for El/God), it would create a framework around the whole not only with matching words and syntax, but with a logical movement from the claim that they do not want a prophet who tells them what *God* wants, to the claim that they only want a prophet who tells them what *they* want. Second, the use of interrogatives generally and הֲלוֹא specifically in the opening section of this oracle supports an original הֲלוֹא (written defectively). In fact, if v. 6 begins the interrogative questions with הֲלוֹא, it would form an *inclusio* with the same interrogative that ends v. 7. Suddenly we have a parallel structure, which opens with הֲלוֹא, mentions movement backwards in disgrace by means of the words of Judah's people, and then finishes with הֲלוֹא and movement forwards in rightness by means of the words of Mikah. In the center would be the second quotation of Mikah's audience, which begins with another interrogative and brings the total to three, which symbolically signals the completion of the thought and matches the threefold use of נטף. A careful observer will also notice that Mikah uses הֲלוֹא in other places with the same rhetorical sense (1:5; 3:1, 11). Finally, the same sort of situation is described in 3:6-7 (the ceasing of divine speech in the mouth of the prophets). If this verse describes the

wish of the people (to stop hearing prophets speak the word of God), 3:6-7 would be its ironic fulfillment (the prophets will stop speaking the word of God because of their own wickedness, not because the people don't want to hear it). Nevertheless, just as Mikah will continue to speak for God in this oracle (v. 7), so Mikah will continue to speak for God in ch. 3's oracle (v. 8). Some might fault our textual redivision on the grounds that Mikah characteristically uses the divine name for the deity. However, 2:6 is the only place where it would make sense to change the deity's designation because (1) it occurs in the context of other people's words, which makes a shift in language more likely, (2) when Mikah refers to the same sort of situation in 3:6-7, he uses "Elohim" instead of "YHWH," and (3) the context of not speaking God's word is the only other instance in Mikah where a shift in reference to the deity is found. Therefore, there is good reason to expect "El" or "Elohim" with the sense we propose. The only remaining question is how to understand the interrogatives. Although most translators treat them as a genuine inquiry, it seems evident that the questions are rhetorical; the speaker knows the answer and is framing the question in an emphatic way to elicit the desired response. In fact, הלוא is often used rhetorically to produce statements of affirmation (it is so) or assurance (surely/of truth/rightly). For multiple examples, see GKC §150e. In this case, we think that the point is to make an emphatic statement of assurance. Therefore, we render הלוא as "certainly" and the rhetorical *heh* as "surely." Others might argue against our textual redivision because it would make it unlikely that the presumed speakers are prophets. "It has been argued that the false prophets are the ones opposing Micah and are the ones quoted in 2:6" (Jacobs, *The Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Micah*). However, Jacobs rightly noted that "The fact that they oppose the message is not in itself indicative of their role. They are not necessarily false prophets and may not even be prophets." Wolff (*Micah: A Commentary*) agreed: "All evidence suggests that 'they' refers to the authorities, indicted in vv. 1-2 and threatened with disaster in vv. 3-4, who oppress the small landholders." The only reason to think that the speakers of the quotation were prophets is נטף, which functions like נבא in some places (see Ezek 21:2 and Amos 7:16). In fact, some translators of Mik 2:6 render נטף as "to prophesy" (see NIV, KJV, or YLT). Nevertheless, the verb is also used for speech that is clearly not prophetic (as in Yob 29:22 and Prov 5:3), which means that even if נטף is directly parallel with נבא, it doesn't convey the same sense. Most likely, נטף just refers to a forceful or authoritative pronouncement (perhaps one that is also eloquent and/or rhetorical), which could come from a prophet or someone else entirely. "The strict demand for silence in v. 6 is most likely to be expected from those in a position of 'authority'" (Wolff) like those in 2:1 who wield power in their hand. Therefore, most translators now render the verb "to preach." We render it "ordain" (i.e., "to decree, enact, or authorize") in order to avoid any potential anachronism (there were no "preachers" in Mikah's day).

be carried off — That is, "to be withdrawn/removed/displaced" (a Niphal of סוג). In texts like Deut 19:14 and 27:17, the verb refers to boundary stones that are "taken away/removed." In this place, it refers to people (probably a poetic way of saying "to be taken captive"). 𝕲 interpreted the verb as a Hiphil of סוג (he will remove). In Mik 6:14, סוג appears in the Hiphil and is parallel with פלט in the Hiphil ("to escape"). Scholars and translators often say that the verb in both places should be read as נשׂג (to overtake). A *sin-samekh* confusion is not

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unlikely. However, when נשׂג is used with the sense "catch up with/overtake," it takes an object and occurs in the Hiphil stem. Therefore, those who prefer that rendering in Mik 2:6 are forced to create an object suffix and alter the stem: יַשִּׂיגֵנוּ (it will overtake us). Some scholars argue that an object isn't always required for נשׂג. They may point to 1 Sam 30:8 as an example. In that case, since the text first uses a form of the verb with an object suffix, it can then repeat the verbal statement without indicating an object (the object was already stated). Exodus 15:9 may also be identified as an example. In that verse, the object is delayed—נשׂג is part of a string of verbs, one after another, that culminate in an object. Others may point to Psalm 7:6. In that place, the Masoretes accent נשׂג so that it is an addendum to the previous statement. If we follow the accents, נשׂג would still have an object because it shares an object with the previous verb: "May an enemy go after my being—yes, may he overtake" (that is, "may he overtake *my being*"). If we disregard the accents, we could read נשׂג with what follows: "Yes, may he overtake [and] trample to the earth my life" (that is, "may he overtake *my life*"). So even in the case of commonly referenced exceptions, an object is already identified, delayed, or shared. Therefore, the only way to read the verb as נשׂג is to read כלמות as the object (he/it will not overtake disgrace), which makes no sense. Although Andersen and Freedman (AYB) claimed that "There is no subject for the verb *yissag*, 'he will depart (or departed),' available in the immediate vicinity," we think that the participle at the start of the next verse works well as its subject. The translators of 𝔊 agreed. If one is not satisfied with the text as it stands, a better emendation would be the one proposed by Moor (HCOT): "The well-attested reading יַסֵּג might be an aural error for יַסֵּךְ*, imperfect Hiphil of √נסך 'to pour out.' The advantage of this reading is that it produces a nice parallelism with √נטף Hiphil 'to let drip, preach.'"

**the use of this verb works well with "get up and go" in v. 10 – voice of the prophet

2:7   **YHWH has lost [his] breath!** — An idiomatic phrasing of "YHWH's breath has dwindled!" It is clear in some places (like Prov 14:29) that the expression קצר רוח functions as an antonym of ארך אפים, meaning "long-suffering" or "imperturbable." If the text had that meaning here, we would expect a rendering like in NAB (Is the LORD short of patience?) or NRSV (Is the LORD's patience exhausted?). Nevertheless, many translators retain רוח as "spirit" and treat קצר as though it meant "to be impatient" (NASB) or "angry" (NIV)—a sense that it simply does not possess. Smith-Christopher (OTL) noted that "The operant term *qaṣar* is commonly used to speak of 'reaping' (Lev 23:10, 22) and thus is used to speak of something being 'cut short' as well." In fact, קצר means "to reap" elsewhere in Mikah (6:5). Andersen and Freedmen (AYB) also noted that "When *qsr*, 'to be short,' is used . . . with 'soul,' 'spirit,' or 'hand' as the grammatical subject, it means to have insufficient resources for a task, or to have reached the limit of one's capacity." For Mikah, in other words, "The issue probably does not concern Yahweh's temperament, but the spirit of Yahweh active in prophecy . . . the power of his words." Henderson agreed: "As קְצַר רוּחַ, *short of breath* or *spirit*, is contrasted with אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, *long-suffering*, Prov 14:29, and is obviously equivalent to קְצַר אַפַּיִם, v. 17, (comp. קְצֹר רוּחַ, Exod 6:9), most of the moderns render in the present instance, *Is Jehovah prone to*

anger? but prophecy being the subject to which reference had just been made, it is more natural to understand רוּחַ יְהוָֹה, *the Spirit of Jehovah*, in its appropriated meaning, as designating the Divine Author of prophetic communications; and to take the verb in the sense of *weakness* or *inability*" (italics original). It is for good reason, therefore, that KJV rendered the term as "straitened" and NKJV updated the language to "restricted." Wood ("Speech and Action in Micah's Prophecy") preferred "constrained." The sense is that YHWH's breath/spirit, i.e., the divine voice through his prophet, has "dwindled" or been "cut off." In other words, he has "lost his breath" or "has no words to speak." Note that this is one of many examples in the HB where רוח is grammatically masculine.

If such [are] his deeds, [may I be cursed]! — אִם is almost universally interpreted as a particle that continues the sense of a previous interrogative. The result is a rendering like NRSV: "Are these his doings?" Instead, we think that אִם introduces a negative oath statement. In his study of oaths in the HB, Conklin (*Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew*) noted that oaths appear most frequently in the form of a conditional sentence with elided negative apodosis. Although there are exceptions, the primary order is protasis to apodosis. The protasis of positive oaths begins with אִם־לֹא (if not) and that of negative oaths begins with אִם (if so). The full conditional content would, therefore, look something like "If X does not happen, may I be cursed" (a positive oath) or "If X happens, may I be cursed" (a negative oath). The use of אִם to initiate a negative oath statement is a common feature of BH—particularly in prophetic texts, which teem with elevated, rhetorical, and promissory language. Nevertheless, such usage is rarely recognized. Habaqquq 2:3 is one example. The second half says אִם־יִתְמַהְמָהּ חַכֵּה־לֹו כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יְאַחֵר, which is usually understood as "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (KJV). The discord created by that reading is extreme; yet instead of re-examining the use of אִם, scholars and translators try to get around the problem either by explaining it away—it only "seems" to be late, for instance, but will not *actually* be late—or by fudging one or both verbs. But when אִם is interpreted as a negative oath, the whole statement makes sense; YHWH is not saying to wait around for something that may be delayed, he is emphatically declaring that it won't: "If it dilly-dallies, [may I be cursed]!" We are aware of only one other person who has ever recognized an oath statement in that text (see Haring's "He will certainly not hesitate, wait for him!": Evidence for an Unrecognized Oath in Habakkuk 2:3b and its Implications for Interpreting Habakkuk 2:2-4"). The reason that no one recognizes an oath in Mik 2:7 is due to their interpretation of הֶאָמוּר. If one follows the Masoretic vocalization (as virtually all translators do), then one is left with an interrogative *heh* followed by a passive participle: "Is it said?" (although some might agree with Neiderhiser, in "Micah 2:6-11: Considerations on the Nature of the Discourse," who thought that "The passive participle acts as a noun, 'a saying' or 'that which is said'"). If the verse begins with an interrogative *heh*, then it is quite possible that אִם continues that sense (as in Mik 4:9). Yet everyone agrees that such a reading is problematic—not just because there is no other instance of אמר as a Qal passive participle in the HB, but because "normally the *nip'al* is used for impersonal 'it is said'" (Andersen and Freedman). Proposals either to emend the sense of the verb or its root are no less problematic. In "A Note on Micah 2:7," for instance, Ehrman

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unconvincingly argued not only that אמר sometimes means "to curse," but that Mik 2:7 and Yob 3:3 were examples of that sense. Cheyne (*Micah, with Notes and Introduction*) read the verb in the sense of "naming" or "being named" and then interpreted the *heh* as a vocative: "O thou that art named." G. R. Driver ("Linguistic and Textual Problems: Minor Prophets 2") argued for the metathesis of *aleph* and *mem*, so that the text would have originally featured the Hophal participle מוּאָר from √ארר (to curse). Some read אמר as a first-person imperfect of מור, meaning "to change/exchange" (see, for example, JPS). While that would work well at the beginning and end of the verse ("Do I change, house of Jacob? . . . Do not my oracles bring help for the rightly walking one?"), not only would it leave the middle of the verse disassociated, but it would result in an almost whiplash-like alternation between the divine and prophetic voices. One reading that is rarely mentioned is one that enjoys the most ancient attestation. The translators of 𝕲 (ο λεγων) and 𝖁 (*dicit*) read the opening statement as הָאֹמֵר, an active participle with definite article meaning "the one who says"—a fairly standard expression in BH. Willis ("Micah 2:6-8 and the 'People of God' in Micah") concluded that "The original reading was probably הָאֹמֵר." When read that way, not only does the text provide us with a subject for יִסַּג in the previous verse (see **be carried off** above), but the verse would both open (האמר) and close (הישר הולך) with expressions featuring a definite article and active participle, thereby providing a powerful poetic symmetry to the whole. The *waw* in האמור would have been added by later scribes, who are to blame for the present conundrum: "The vowel letter probably would not have been used in Micah's day; the spelling of word-internal *û* with *waw* begins to appear in the inscriptions only at the end of the eighth century" (Andersen and Freedman). Such a reading enables אם to carry a sense that is not predetermined by a preceding interrogative.

2:8-9   We think that vv. 8-9 are a response by the deity, which we indicate by means of indentation and quotation marks. We are not the first to think so. Neiderhiser, for example, said, "It should be noted that in verses 8-9 . . . it is the Lord who is the speaker." Moor (HCOT) pointed out that "The scroll of the Twelve Prophets from Wadi Murabba'at (second century) inserts a Petuḥah between v. 7 and v. 8. Probably the scribe perceived the change of speaker here" (parenthetical original). Some of the reasons for thinking that the deity is speaking were laid out by Andersen and Freedman (AYB). First, "The conjunction *and* marks a transition to another constituent in the unit, a transition from questions to statements" (italics original). Second, "The double reference to 'my people' (vv. 8, 9) suggests that this could be a speech of Yahweh." Third, the "opening time reference is balanced by *lĕʿôlām* at the end of the unit." In other words, אתמול (in the past), which opens the statement, and לעולם (perpetually), which closes the statement, provide a structural framework for everything in-between. Furthermore, it would make little sense for the prophet to use a first-person pronominal suffix (v. 9) to speak of his own glory: "The pronoun makes best sense if Yahweh is the speaker." Finally, the use of two words with such similar meanings and sounds (אדר and הדר) would make sense of a shared speaker. The fact that there is a transition back to the prophet's voice in vv. 10-11 is indicated by shared words and notions. Just as the prophet ended by talking about the one who "goes" (from the verb הלך), so he begins again by telling people to "go" (from the verb הלך). Just as the

prophet denounced people who speak against YHWH's "spirit/breath" (רוח) in v. 7, so he speaks about people that go along with a deceptive "spirit/breath" (רוח) in v. 11. Finally, the notion of "ordaining" (נטף) in v. 11 brings everything back to the statement that the prophet used at the start of the oracle.

2:8   The textual issues in this verse are well-known and we admit to a sense of frustration with many of them. There are, however, a number of things about which we are certain. Although most English translators (following Wellhausen in *Die kleinen Propheten*) emend אתמול (before/ yesterday/previously) to אתם על (you against), not only does the present text make that extremely unlikely (יקומם, which is supported by MurXII, presumes a third-person singular reference), but the presence of אתמול at the start and לעולם at the end of vv. 8-9 is evidence of scribal/oral craftsmanship (see above). Therefore, אתמול should be retained. Some translators read עמי as the object of the verb. Shaw (*The Speeches of Micah: A Rhetorical-Historical Analysis*) pointed out that "All the versions read 'my people' not as the object, but as the subject." While it is certainly possible that the ancient translators were wrong, the argument that the subject could not be "my people" because "my people" are victims as opposed to perpetrators displays a lack of linguistic sophistication. Willis ("Micah 2:6-8 and the 'People of God' in Micah") said it well: "Here 'my people' refers to only a part of 'Israel' . . . , i.e., it divides Israel into two groups, viz., those who claim to be God's people but are not, and those who are genuinely God's people." In other words, "Micah felt himself responsible to two types of people: Israel as a whole, which must be punished, and a handful of innocent sufferers whose cause Yahweh had espoused." ממול indicates that someone takes a position "to the front of" or "in opposition to" something or someone. Since that makes no sense of *śalmāh*, most translators either ignore ממול or alter it to מעל (from/off). However, מול is clearly visible in MurXII and the use of both ממול and אתמול creates poetic assonance (literary artistry). Therefore, ממול should be retained. Some English translators treat אדר as an adjectival modifier of שלמה. Note, for example, HCSB (the splendid robe) and NIV (the rich robe). Such readings ignore the discord between their grammatical genders. Others view אדר and שלמה as synonymous expressions (or a doublet), which ignores their semantic differences. As noted by Moor (HCOT), "אֶדֶר has a meaning similar to the etymologically related noun הָדָר, 'glory.'" To get around the problem, many take the *tav* from תפשטון and shift it to the end of אדר. However, the *nun* on תפשטון is a remnant of the ancient Semitic *yaqtulu* form—the original indicative as opposed to the jussive-preterit *yaqtul* or volitive *yaqtula*. It now exists as a marked expression of the non-jussive, non-volitive imperfect (see JM §44e-f and Garr's "The Paragogic nun in Rhetorical Perspective"). Therefore, the *tav* on תפשטון should be retained (although one could propose a loss of *tav* on אדר due to haplography). Ultimately, many of the difficulties at this point arise from trying to "emend the text to fit the general sense that the rich take the garments of the poor. But Micah does not represent the people as economically poor. He represents the men as stalwart landowners (2:2), their homes as delightful (2:9a), and their children as displaying a glory (2:9b)" (Waltke). Perhaps Wolff ("Micah the Moreshite — The

Prophet and his Background") made it even clearer: "It is striking that Micah never once calls his tormented compatriots poor (אביון), helpless (דל), or oppressed (עני), as is quite often done by Amos (Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4, 6) and not infrequently by Isaiah (Isa 3:14-15; 10:2; 14:32), although Micah sees, just as those prophets, that they are being overpowered and punished to the point of bleeding." It seems certain, therefore, that אדר should not be altered to reflect the sense of שׁלמה. Instead, we should question the use of שׁלמה. Although most would change it to שׁלם or שׁלמים, it makes better sense to retain the consonantal text, which is supported by MurXII, and repoint it as the feminine adjective שְׁלֵמָה, meaning "perfect," "accurate," "whole," or "peaceful" (see, for example, Deut 25:15, Ruth 2:12, or Amos 1:6). Haupt ("Critical Notes on Micah") came to same conclusion: "שׁלמה must be pointed שְׁלֵמָה." Such a reading is probably attested by 𝔊 and 𝔖.

covertly — There is little question about the meaning of בֶּטַח. The question is how it should apply: to the state of those passing by or to how the act of stripping others takes place? A similar question exists in Gen 34:25. Does ויבאו על־העיר בֶּטַח mean they went into "the unsuspecting city" or they went into the city "unsuspectingly"—i.e., does בֶּטַח tell us about the state of the city or about how the act of going in takes place? Every commentary, article, and translation we could find on Mik 2:8 seems to agree with Waltke: "*beṭaḥ* . . . is an adverbial accusative modifying the state of the passers-by" (italics original). In order that we are not misled by the facile way in which בטח appears to function in Mik 2:8, it would be beneficial to look at the usage of בטח throughout the HB. When בטח modifies a noun, pronoun, or substantive participle, not only is it always vocalized as a participle, but it always agrees in gender and number with what it modifies. In Deut 28:52, since "you" is masculine and singular, בטח takes the form of a masculine singular participle: אַתָּה בֹּטֵחַ. In Judg 18:10, since "people" is masculine and singular, בטח takes the form of a masculine singular participle: עַם בֹּטֵחַ. In Ps 21:8, since "the king" is masculine and singular, בטח takes the form of a masculine singular participle: הַמֶּלֶךְ בֹּטֵחַ. In 2 Chr 32:10, since "you [all]" is masculine plural, בטח takes the form of a masculine plural participle: אַתֶּם בֹּטְחִים. In Prov 11:15, since the substantive participle "he who hates" is masculine singular, בטח takes the form of a masculine singular participle: שֹׂנֵא בֹּטֵחַ. When, however, בטח modifies a verb (as opposed to a noun, pronoun, or substantive participle), it always takes the form בֶּטַח regardless of the gender and number of the verb (see, for example, Deut 12:10, 1 Sam 12:11, or Prov 1:33). So if Mik 2:8 meant to say "those who pass by unsuspectingly," בטח would take the form of a masculine plural participle. Likewise, if Gen 34:25 meant to say that the people went into "the unsuspecting city," בטח would take the form of a feminine singular participle. So even though בֶּטַח is separated from the verb it modifies in Mik 2:8, the form makes it evident that it modifies the verb תפשׁטון: "you strip covertly/unsuspectingly." Likewise, even though בֶּטַח is separated from the verb it modifies in Gen 34:25, the form makes it evident that it modifies the verb ויבאו: "they went in covertly/unsuspectingly."

2:9   **cherished [ones]** — Virtually all translators understand this (plural) term as describing the house itself. However, תענג is always applied to people—never material objects (it refers to a fool in Prov 19:10, concubines in Qoh 2:8, the female lover in Song 7:7, and children in Mik 1:16). In this case, therefore, it must refer to the "babes" of the next line, with which it is parallel, to the men who are no longer there, or both.

　　　the legacy I granted — The use of הדרי here is peculiar. Although most would interpret the term in a literal sense, it probably doesn't refer to God's *actual* glory. As noted by Waltke, the noun is a *metonym*. Furthermore, the suffix does not provide a possessive sense (the glory God has), but poetically creates a subjective genitive (the glory God brings about). But how should we understand its metonymic sense? Alter thought, "It would have to indicate something like security and prosperity." English translators provide several possibilities: "mine excellent gifts" (Bishops'), "my blessing" (NIV), "the honor I gave them" (NAB), and "their prized inheritance" (NET). We believe that "the glory God brings about" has to do with God giving the Israelites a possession in the land, which was meant to last perpetually. Allen ("Micah's Social Concern") agreed: "The formulation of Micah's accusation recalls the divine right of inheritance already encountered in verse 2. The estates their fathers had farmed should by rights pass to them. But 'my glory' was being taken away from them, declared God through the prophet. The term is to be compared with a word of similar meaning used of the God-given land in Jer 3:19 'a heritage most beautious of the nations.' Micah echoes a theme which must have been dear to the heart of every Israelite, the high value set upon his native soil as a prized possession given to his nation by God Himself." Whereas the "glory" of Israel was likened to a setting sun in 1:15, it is likened to a stolen inheritance in this verse. To capture that metonymic sense, we render הדרי as "the legacy I granted."

2:12 **in distress** — The Masoretes vocalize בצרה as the place-name "Bozrah," which "is not in itself nonsensical" (Hillers, Hermeneia). There are, however, difficulties with that reading. First, if this truly were "Bozrah," we would expect to find "Edom" mentioned as well since the two function as a common poetic word-pair (see, for example, Amos 1:11-12, Isa 34:6; 63:1; Jer 49:22). Although some argue that מֵאָדָם should be repointed as מֵאֱדֹם (from Edom), such an argument only increases the interpretative difficulties (for example, no ancient version understood either בצרה as "Bozrah" or אדם as "Edom"). It is more common, therefore, for scholars to say that *bet* is a preposition and צרה is a noun that makes good sense as a parallel to דבר—perhaps "pen" or "fold" (see 𝒱 and 𝒯). There are, however, several problems with that reading. First, the meaning of דבר is based entirely on a statement in Isa 5:17, which is, itself, not well understood (and may be corrupt). The second problem is that "*bŏtsrah* does not have the meaning 'fold' elsewhere" and it "cannot be assigned to any root that yields such a sense" (Powis Smith, ICC). The third problem is that Mikah tends to omit *bet* before the noun that it modifies more often than include it. Some scholars claim that צרה is a bi-form of טירה (encampment/settlement). Those who support that reading presume that the sounds of *tsade* and *tet* would be easily interchanged by the speaker of this oracle. But Haupt ("Critical Notes on Micah") rightly objected that if טירה is used in so many other places, "We can hardly expect צירה in the present passage" as the one and only instance of its alternate form. Ultimately, we are not convinced that either "fold/pen" or "encampment/enclosure" is any less

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problematic than "Bozrah." In the last line of the text, we find תהימנה, a 3FP of הום, meaning "they will panic/scramble." Although it is typically altered to תהמינה (they will raise a ruckus) from המה, such emendation is not necessary. Many scholars have pointed out (with additional reference to אהימה in Psa 55:3) that the verb is being patterned after II-*yod* verbs. 𝕲's εξαλουνται (they will jump up) gives a good explanation of the sense. In other words, these flocks/herds are *afraid*. If that is the case, then there is good reason to read בצרה as "in distress," which is precisely how 𝕲 read the text. Other translators who prefer that sense include Shaw and Rotherham. Such a reading would presume, of course, that the pronominal suffix "him" reflects a different referent than the one that began the oracle (Jacob/Israel), which is why we begin the second half of the verse with an adversative (but). Due to the fragmentary nature of the oracle, it is impossible to tell who the referent of the second half of the verse was supposed to be. As in Micaiah ben Imlah's vision of sheep scattered without a shepherd (1 Kgs 22), those who are described as "sheep" are in a perilous state, which makes it unlikely that they are the same ones who YHWH "gathered" and "assembled."

3:4   **so** — Virtually all English translators prefer אז's typical temporal sense (then). Some propose that אז has the conditional sense "when/if." Others treat it like אזי (in Ps 124:3-5), which lost its *yod* due to haplography with יזעקו. In that case, the particle would refer to the outcome of a hypothetical condition (introduced in Ps 124 with לולי). What scholars and translators seem to miss is the syntactic connection between אשר in the previous verse and אז in this one. The expression אשר . . . אז means "Because X, so Y." Note, for example, Josh 22:31: "Since (אשר) you did not betray YHWH [with] such betrayal, so (אז) you have rescued the Israelites from YHWH's subjugation." In other words, אז conveys a sense of consequence, which is reflected perfectly by 𝕲 (ουτως). Although Waltke preferred the temporal sense, he agreed that "it probably also contains a nuance of logical consequence." The expression is overlooked in Mikah because it is conversational—it belongs to prose, not poetry. Although many will admit to a disconnect between the typical function of אז and its use at this point, as well as the perplexing use of ואמר at the start (some scholars simply excise it), it seems that few, if any, have noticed the *shift in Mikah's style*. Not one object marker appeared in chs. 1-2, yet there are three in this oracle alone! Ancient Hebrew poetry tends to elide those markers. Although the *waw* conjunction occurs throughout Mikah's oracles, it is used almost gratuitously in v. 3 (five times!). Ancient Hebrew poetry tends to elide the *waw* conjunction. Although אשר occurred only once in the first two chapters (2:3), it appears three times in this oracle alone! Ancient Hebrew poetry tends to elide אשר. Ancient Hebrew poetry tends to limit lexical repetition except to create word-plays or sound-plays, but vv. 2-4 repeat many terms for no poetic purpose: עור, מעל, שאר, עצמות, and כאשר. Ancient Hebrew poetry also tends to avoid unnecessary or extraneous details, which is one reason why the "originality" of ואמר and/or בעת ההיא (in v. 4) is often denied. The exorbitant use of object markers, conjunctions, and relative markers, the presence of terms and/or constructions more common in narrative than poetry, descriptions that shift from the terse to the verbose, and the increase in lexical

repetition for no poetic purpose are signals of a movement away from the classical poetry of chs. 1-2 into a kind of *poetic prose*. Once we understand that this new literary environment contains an increase in narrative elements, not only does that caution us from emending the text or excising those parts that seem problematic (some scholars prefer the term "redactional"), but it enables us to recognize less poetic formulations like אשר . . . אז (Because . . . so), which we would neither expect to find, nor be inclined to accept if we found them.

3:8　**YHWH's breath and decree and might** — Those who read כה as the thing that "fills" the speaker are bound to find either "YHWH's spirit/breath" or "and decree and might" problematic. If, however, כה is read adverbially like in Isa 40:9 (הרימי בכח קולך, "raise your voice *powerfully*"), then this allows the preposition את to supply, uninterrupted, a threefold list of the things "with" which he is filled: YHWH's "spirit/breath," his "decree," and his "might" (in other words, את־רוח יהוה ואת־משפט יהוה ואת־גבורת יהוה has been poetically elided to את־רוח יהוה ומשפט וגבורה). Because the previous oracle used משפט to refer to "justice," many render it "justice" in this oracle too, but the sense of the term changes between oracles. The context of the previous oracle made it evident that משפט involved right versus wrong. In this oracle, משפט is clearly about a divine judgment, answer, or decree; although all the other prophets will have nothing to say, Mikah has been empowered with YHWH's *decree*. For the משפט יהוה, see Jer 5:4-5, 8:7, and 2 Chr 19:8. For רוח as "breath," see Mik 2:7. For the גבורת יהוה, see Ps 21:14; 71:18, and 1 Chr 29:11.

3:12　**/animals/** — Some scholars argue that this term is problematic because the plural construct of במה is usually במותי. Since, however, Mikah uses במות in 1:5, the spelling is unremarkable. What *is* remarkable is the usage. The phrase "ridges/shrines of the forest" (either במות יער or במותי יער) does not appear anywhere else in the HB (except, of course, in the quotation of this verse in Jer 26:18). The sense is also remarkable. It makes no sense to say that the Temple should be turned into a pagan shrine. But what about "forest ridges" or "wooded heights"? What sense does that make? It is especially jarring to see such a phrase put in parallel with one that describes the *leveling* of Zion! Those familiar with the biblical prophets will at once be reminded of a common theme in oracles of judgment: when a city or land is doomed to destruction, it is often described as being the haunt of wild creatures. "That wild animals should live in the deserted city is a frequent theme in biblical literature . . . and also in other ancient Near Eastern literature" (Hillers, Hermeneia). Some animals frequently associated with ruinous cities/lands in Hebrew prophecy are jackals and ostriches—both of which Mikah is said to imitate when he laments the fall of Samaria and its effects on Jerusalem in 1:8. If we look elsewhere in Mikah, we see that virtually the exact same phrase occurs in 5:7, but with one crucial difference: בהמות יער (animals/beasts of the forest). Therefore, it seems likely that במות יער is a corruption of בהמות יער. One can only guess at the cause. Perhaps an early copiest, influenced by במות in 1:5, accidentally wrote במות instead of בהמות in this verse. Perhaps the corruption began with Jeremiah's quotation and then the text in Mikah was harmonized with it. Ehrlich (*Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*) was one of the first scholars to suggest what we have proposed. He has been followed by others like Hillers, Wolff, and

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Wagenaar (*Judgement and Salvation*). For a dissenting view, see Waltke. For our use of forward slashes, see section B6.

4:1 **will mount** — וְנָהֲרוּ is an inverted perfect that seems to be a denominative of נהר (stream/river), which is why virtually all English translators render it "to stream/flow." However, we must be cautious about falling into what Barr (*The Semantics of Biblical Language*) called the "root fallacy": presuming that every root has some basic or original sense that lies behind any term that comes from it. Just because נהר refers to a stream or river doesn't actually tell us anything about the sense of the verb. Rather, meaning is determined by usage. In this case, the verb is quite rare. Apart from its use in this oracle (and its doublet in Isa 2), it appears again only in Jer 51:44 (maybe Jer 31:22 as well). In such places, there is a clear sense of movement, but what sort of movement is difficult to say. The fact that the versions give different nuances to it shows that its meaning could not, even in ancient times, be taken for granted. What *can* be said is that water is not known to "flow/stream" uphill, which is the situation in this oracle, and that the verb itself was chosen to create poetic assonance with the multiple instances of "mount/mountain" (הר) both in this verse and those around it—a situation that does not seem to be appreciated by almost any commentator. Therefore, it seems best to chose a rendering that works well with upward movement and directly mimics the poetic assonance (like "to mount").

4:5 **authority** — Typically rendered "name." In the ancient NE, one's name was an indicator of their character, nature, and existence. To erase one's "name," for example, would mean that one was putting an end to their very being. To "go/walk" in the name of someone was either to take on their "authority/prestige/power" or to conduct oneself in the same "manner/character/role." Henderson agreed: "*To walk in the name of any one*, means to frame one's conduct according to his will, to act by his authority, and in accordance with his character." So what sense is meant here? Standing alone, we might say that this is about acting according to the "manner" or "character" of the deity (his "ways/paths"). However, very similar language is employed in another oracle (4:14-5:3), where the idea of "power/authority/prestige" is more pertinent. Since the two oracles have been incorporated into a whole, we feel that a synchronic translation is best. Therefore, we interpret "name" as "authority" in both places.

4:6 **and make prosperous my shattered [one]** — The current text looks like a conjunction attached to a relative particle, followed by a first-person perfect in the Hiphil of רעע (to harm/injure/treat badly). Together, the phrase would mean something like "and those who I injured." 𝔊 has και ους απωσαμην (and who I rejected/expelled), which agrees with MT's use of the relative, but does not reflect the verb. We get a strong sense—both thematically and textually—that something is amiss. The commentary for *BHQ*'s critical apparatus speaks of an "apparent abruptness," but there is far more to it than that. The previous parts of the verse contained two cohortatives and two feminine singular participles—each with dramatic figurative and literary qualities. To then conclude with a relative clause and first-person perfect would break rather forcefully from that. For what purpose? To emphasize YHWH's part in the people's sorrowful state? Is that what this oracle is about? Those who try to get around such difficulties by means of conjectural emendation often produce a text that is more problematic than the one with which they are dealing. The trick, therefore, is to provide a less problematic reading that retains the consonantal text. One way to do so is to divide the words differently. If we shift the *heh* from the start of הרעתי to the end of ואשר, we end up with ואשרה רעתי, which contains a

third cohortative form (from אשר) and a third feminine singular participle (from רעע). The verb אשר typically occurs in the D-stem with a declarative sense: "to consider happy/fortunate/ prosperous." In this case, however, it would have a factitive sense (since YHWH is speaking): "The **factitive** denotes the generation of a state of quality actually and physically," while "the **declarative-estimative** does so mentally or verbally" (JM §52d, bold text original). The Qal feminine singular participle of רעע appears in Prov 25:19 (רֹעָה) with the meaning "broken." The author(s) of GKC (§67s) thought that it could be a contracted form of רֹעֲעָה. However, the biliteral form is more common for terms that describe a state (as opposed to an action). Furthermore, scholars tend to think that biliteral forms are more ancient and that they were often "augmented" into triliteral forms to look more like other verbs and participles out there. Halper ("The Participial Formations of the Geminate Verbs, Part 1") concluded that "the most natural and only possible explanation" is to read רֹעָה as the unaugmented form of "the ordinary passive participle in Hebrew, and it would then = רְעוּעָה" (see his article for further examples). When one adds the first-person suffix to the participle, רעה becomes רעתי. The end result would be "and I hereby will make prosperous my broken/shattered [one]." Such a statement doesn't deny that YHWH contributed to Israel's sorry state, but it does emphasize that he is going to bring about Israel's restoration, which is clearly what this oracle is about. By redividing the text in such a way, not only do we preserve the consonantal text, which is supported by our most ancient witnesses, but we add meaning, rhetorical force, and greater consistency—not just to the verse itself, but to the oracle as a whole.

4:7   **Watch [me make] Leah** — Or "Look: Leah [will be]." הנהלאה is a well-known crux. The ancient versions show no awareness of its meaning. 𝕲 rendered it "the rejected/expelled one." 𝕮 rendered it "crushed/dashed/smashed." 𝒱 rendered it "her that labored/was distressed/ troubled." Modern scholars are no less clueless. Those who try to retain the present text explain it as a Niphal participle of הלא, which they say is a denominative verb of the adverb הלאה (to there, farther, further, beyond). Such interpretations can be see in translations like HCSB (those far removed), NASB (the outcasts), KJV (her that was cast far off), NJB (the far-flung), NAB (those driven far off), and NJPST (the expelled). Williamson ("Marginalia in Micah") noted, "This is dubious, however: no such verb is attested elsewhere, to call it 'denominative' is questionable, and had the Masoretes intended this we might have expected them to vocalize with initial *ṣere*." Williamson didn't put the matter strongly enough. To say that הנהלאה is a denominative of הלאה is a claim based on nothing. Furthermore, this oracle is concerned with *the restoration of Israel*—not people in Babylon, Greece, or Libya. To say that God will make "those far removed" or "her that is cast far off" into a great nation is to miss the whole point. The two most popular conjectural emendations originate with Graetz (*Emendationes in plerosque Sacrae Scripturae Veteris Testamenti Libros*) and Wellhausen. Wellhausen suggested that we drop the *aleph* and turn the second *heh* into *ḥet*. The result is הנחלה—a Niphal feminine participle of חלה, meaning "the weak/tired/sick one." Graetz thought that the second *heh* should be dropped, resulting in הנלאה—a Niphal feminine participle of לאה, meaning "the weary/exhausted/weak one." While such proposals are considerably better, they require us

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to view the present text as a corruption. Is there a way to retain the consonantal text without resorting to arbitrary lexical judgments or explanations that do no justice to the content of the oracle? There have been instances already where, by dividing words differently, the text makes far more sense (see 1:2 and 4:6). If we split הנהלאה into הנה לאה, we end up with the presentative particle הנה (look!/here is!) and the name "Leah." Leah was one of Jacob's wives. She (and her slave-woman through her) was remembered in Israelite tradition as one who, by her progeny, built the people of Israel (see Ruth 4:11). If this oracle is all about gathering together and rebuilding Israel (particularly Judah, whose eponymous ancestor was Leah's son), and all of the previous participles are feminine, then "Leah" would be the ideal subject. As noted by many scholars, the verb is gapped in the second colon, which means that the verb in the first colon does "double duty" for both cola (for another example, see 1:14). The notion conveyed by a verb that means "to do/make" and prepositional *lamed* prefixed to the noun phrase גוי עצום occurs elsewhere with specific reference to the people that God raises up through a special ancestral line (see Gen 18:8 and Num 14:12), which makes it likely that someone from that ancestral line would be named in this verse. Through the prophet's continual use of the phrase "my people" and his attacks against rulers and leaders in the capital cities, it is clear that "Micah . . . sees primary loyalties to family, clan, and region, rather than identifying completely with the fate of the 'national' elite in a dominant city" (Smith-Christopher, OTL). Considering the prophet's self-identification, it makes even more sense for him to name someone important in his people's ancestral lineage. It would not be the only time he does so; Abraham is mentioned in 7:20 (no other "minor prophet" mentions Abraham). The fact that the women in Israel's founding tales were important to the prophet can be seen in Mik 6:4, which mentions Miriam alongside Moses and Aaron (instead of just mentioning Moses and Aaron). Finally, it is important to remember that this oracle shares its content with the final oracle in Zeph. Zephaniah 3:19 begins with the phrase הנני עשה ("look at what I do" or "watch me make"), which is pretty much what we propose for this verse except that the verb has been gapped. We have *good reason*, therefore, to think that what began as two words was conflated and everyone thereafter has been trying to make sense of it as one word. Some might argue that the subject of the feminine participles couldn't be "Leah" because the terms are meant to describe sheep. We agree with McKane: "That the returning exiles are being likened to a herd of sheep is an unnecessary assumption. . . . It is more probable that vv. 6-7a refer to the gathering of the dispersed of Israel directly rather than by means of a metaphor." Others might say that the feminine subject should be identified with the feminine "city," that is, "Lady Zion/Jerusalem." If v. 8 was originally part of this oracle (see the note on that verse below), we would point out that the language and point-of-reference shifts, showing a transition from the divine voice to the prophet's voice. Therefore, what begins as a reference to the feminine "Leah" in the divine utterance would move into a reference to a masculine "you" (the "tower" and "mound," not "Lady Zion/Jerusalem").

4:9   *has-ached-ya* — Since the level of sarcasm here is so strong, Mikah has a propensity for plays on names, and this oracle is directly addressing the presence of Judah's king (the answer to his rhetorical question "Have you no king?" is "Of course we do!"), there is good reason to think that Mikah used the particular language here to create a word-play with Hezekiah's name. Moor (HCOT) thought similarly: "Since Micah was fond of wordplay כִּי־הֶחֱזִיקֵךְ might hint at the name of the prince . . . (יְחִזְקִיָּה, 'Hezekiah')." Since, however, the word-play is not made

obvious by actual reference to his name (no king is mentioned by name anywhere in Mikah's oracles), we make the word-play evident by phrasing the verb in a way that makes it sound like the king's name, by placing it in italics to make it stand out, and then putting a note next to it. Some scholars would not accept a Hezekian reference because they think that the mention of "Babylon" in the next verse makes this oracle either exilic or post-exilic. In 2 Kgs 17:24, however, we find it said that the King of Assyria moved people from the Northern Kingdom to places as far away as "Babylon." If such a thing could happen to the Northern Kingdom in Mikah's time, there is no reason to suppose it could not happen to the Southern Kingdom. Then in 2 Kgs 20, we hear a story about Hezekiah receiving emissaries from Babylon and showing them all the glories of his capital (and how the prophet Isaiah told him that such glories would some day be taken away to Babylon). If emissaries from Babylon could have come to Hezekiah (we don't have reason to think it couldn't happen), there is no reason why a prophet during his time (like Micah or Isaiah) could not have associated him and Jerusalem with Babylon.

4:10 **Burst out** — That is, "give an outburst." The feminine singular imperative גֹּחִי comes from גיח, which typically describes the "surging/gushing/bursting" of the sea or of armies. And, as noted by Waltke, "There are good Semitic parallels for *gyḥ*/*gwḥ* meaning 'to gush' (Arabic), 'to burst forth' (Syriac)." G. R. Driver ("Hebrew Notes on Prophets and Proverbs") differentiated between two different senses: "(*a*) of bursting forth with a thing . . . and (*b*) of a thing bursting forth" (italics original). The second option does not fit the context (Lady Zion is not being told to "burst out" of her land or "surge forth" against her enemies). Therefore, we are left with "the bursting forth with a thing." Some interpret that to mean the birthing of a child. Note, for the example, NASB (labor to give birth), KJV (labour to bring forth), and Rotherham (bear). Wagenaar justified that sense by appealing to a DSS (1QH) where a man was said to "burst out" of his mother's womb. Even if we presume (against probability) that the sense of the term didn't change between the eighth or seventh century and the second century, it is clear that the verbal action is being performed by the newborn child, not the birthing mother (יגיח is third-person *masculine*). Therefore, Powis Smith (ICC), was correct to say, "'Bring forth,' *i.e.*, in childbirth, is very doubtful" (italics original). Weiser (*Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, Band 1*) thought that it meant *Brich aus in Wehen* (Break out in labor pains). That is certainly one option. Another way to interpret it is as a vocal outburst. Renderings that reflect that sense include "scream" (Moffatt, NJPST, and Goldingay) and "cry out/aloud" (HCSB and NJB). Hiller's "gasp" (Hermeneia) captures the sense of a burst of air, but is directed inward. Alter, ESV, and LEB seem to take the imperative from גנח, which means "to groan/moan" in MH (see Jastrow). However, there is no evidence of גנח in BH. Horgan (*Pesharim*) thought that גֹּחִי came from נגח and meant "to push." However, נגח means "to gore/butt/knock down/collide with/charge at." It primarily describes what a bull does with its horns, which could hardly be equated with the pushing out of offspring! Perhaps גֹּחִי is a corruption of נהִי (Wail!) from נהה (see Mik 2:4). Geneva's rendering (mourn) would seem to presume such a text. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for a textual corruption.

4:14 **bandit-stricken Lady** — Literally, "Lady of bandits," but the phrase is difficult to understand. Does it mean that the Lady (a personalized city) is composed of bandits or that she suffers from bandits (bandits continually come against her)? Since it is characteristic of Mikah to speak of Israel's capital cities as "lady" and what immediately follows this phrase is a reference to "us," the latter seems more likely. In that case, this oracle is addressing those who are being

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attacked, not the attackers. Kimḥi agreed: יבא עליך גדודים לפי' תקראי בת גדוד, "Bandits come against you, which is why you are called 'Lady of bandits'" (for the use of "lady" instead of "daughter," see the discussion of "Lady Zion" in 1:13). Allen (NICOT) captured the sense well (but not the word-play): "Lady under attack."

protector — That the term שֹׁפֵט was specifically chosen to create a word-play with שֵׁבֶט was recognized long ago. See, for example, Henderson, Ewald (*Micah, with Notes and Introduction*), or Powis Smith (ICC). If poetic word-play was a significant impetus in the crafting of the text, English translators should follow suit. We mimic the word-play with "scepter" and "protector." "Protector" actually comes quite close to the sense of שֹׁפֵט. In "Judges," the "judges" were military deliverers/protectors (see also Ruth). That sense seems to be operative here as well. So by a stroke of luck, we end up capturing the sense of the term as well as its sound. Apparently, Moffatt couldn't mimic the word-play between those particular words and so chose לְחִי and שֹׁפֵט instead: "cheek" and "sheikh." SET took שֹׁפֵט as a plural (judges), presumably with *sandhi* of terminal *yod* (שֹׁפֵט יִשְׂרָאֵל would be an aural representation of שֹׁפְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). 𝕮 also rendered the term as a plural. For more on *sandhi* in the HB, see Tsumura's "Scribal Errors or Phonetic Spellings? Samuel as an Aural Text."

5:1   **[who are] youthful enough to be** — Scholars and translators don't seem to know what to do with צָעִיר לִהְיוֹת. The phrase has been variously described as "awkward" (Shaw), "ungrammatical" (Hillers, Hermeneia), and "poor Hebrew" (Powis Smith, ICC). Most scholars and translators emend the text—either by treating לִהְיוֹת as an accidental duplication (ignoring it) or by prefixing *heh* to צָעִיר to give it a superlative sense. Since, however, the present text is supported by the ancient versions, it should be retained. Attempts to read the *lamed* like a comparative *min* (too small to be) have rightly been rejected by many scholars. Likewise, Wagenaar rightly noted that "Bethlehem is not *too small* to be counted among the clans of Judah, nor *the smallest* in comparison to the other clans of Judah" (italics original). In other words, even if such a reading made grammatical sense, it would be factually incorrect, and, therefore, is an incoherent interpretation. Over a century ago, Henderson provided one of the best interpretations of the text as we have it: "צָעִיר לִהְיוֹת is literally *little in respect to being*, *little to exist*, or *be reckoned*" (italics original). Yet even that interpretation leaves much to be desired (the infinitive adds nothing of substance to the statement). Therefore, we propose that *lamed* + infinitive actually indicates degree: "enough to be." Note, for example, the following:

—Deut 9:20: וּבְאַהֲרֹן הִתְאַנַּף יְהוָה מְאֹד לְהַשְׁמִידוֹ

"Even with Aharon, YHWH was so very angry—enough to annihilate him!")

—2 Kgs 20:1: חָלָה חִזְקִיָּהוּ לָמוּת

"Hezekiah was sick enough to die"

—Hab 2:18: כִּי בָטַח יֹצֵר יִצְרוֹ עָלָיו לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלִילִים אִלְּמִים

Yet he who forms its form trusts in it enough to make idiotic idols!

Likewise, we propose that the sense of צָעִיר is not "small" or "young," but "youthful"—that is, strong, bold, or full of life. It is common for words that speak of age to convey both positive and negative nuances because people at all times can readily identify both positive and negative things about different categories of age. In Hebrew, there are several places where צָעִיר

indicates weakness or inferiority—i.e., negative attributes of youth (Gen 25:23; Judg 6:15; Ps 119:141). Since צעיר can convey a negative sense, there is good reason to think it can convey a positive sense as well. In fact, צעיר appears to functions that way in Jer 48. In that collection of oracles, we find a verse that says "Moab is shattered. Her young ones (צעירים) give a blaring cry" (v. 4). Although there are significant differences between the Hebrew and Greek, if we presume that the Hebrew text was preserved because it made sense, then we have to ask what sense it makes. Why would it be significant to say the "young" give a blaring cry? The translators of 𝕮 thought that this was about "rulers," but that doesn't seem likely. Waltke thought that the term was used with a negative sense: "The 'young' are defenseless." Unfortunately, there isn't anything in the immediate vicinity to help explain the sense. One interesting phenomena about ch. 48, however, is that ideas are often repeated. If we can find similar things elsewhere, that might give us an idea about what is going on in v. 4. In Jer 48:15, we find it said that Moab's "young men (בחורים) have gone down to the slaughter." Presumably, they have "gone down" because they are "warriors" and "strong fighting men" (as described in v. 14). In other words, the term "young men" is being used as a positive reference to their boldness, strength, or vigor. Yet instead of gaining victory, these young men go to their death. Then, in Jer 48:41, we find it said that "The core of Moab's warriors, on that day, will be like the core of a woman strongly held [by labor pains]." That verse features מצרה instead of יולדה (laboring woman) in order to create a word-play with מצדות (strongholds). Nevertheless, the idea is the same: the suffering experienced by Moab's warriors will be like a travailing woman—a pain that is known to cause *cries of agony*. If we view the statement in v. 4 in terms of what we see in vv. 14-15 and 41, then we can explain the rhetorical reason why Moab's "young ones" (צעירים) give a *blaring cry*: to emphasize that even the most strong and capable (the young) will be devastated. That is a far more powerful statement than one that says the "defenseless" will cry out (per Waltke). We would not, however, agree with those who think that צעיר can refer both to "littleness" and "greatness," which is a transparent exegetical maneuver intended to harmonize the Hebrew of Mikah either with the Aramaic (Tanḥum, כתאב אלביאן) or the Greek of Matthew (Pococke, *A Commentary on the Prophecy of Micah*). Moving back to Mik 5:1, we agree with Smith-Christopher (OTL) that "the use of 'little' or 'small' . . . seems to mean significance instead of size" and propose that the significance involves positive attributes of young age like "boldness," "strength," or "vigor." The term would then begin a headless relative clause: "[who are] youthful enough to be." The point of the whole, therefore, is not to create a comparison with the "thousands of Judah," but to indicate something more about Bethlehem (*the youth* have what it takes to turn things around in Israel, as opposed to the current establishment, which is too mired in its ways—one might say too "old"—to change).

5:2   **/Instruction/** — The Hebrew text begins this verse with לכן. The problem, however, is that לכן is customarily used to create a link between what came before it and what comes after it, but "The logical link between vv. 1 and 2 is far from apparent" (Andersen and Freedman, AYB). Allen (NICOT) claimed that לכן was used in Mik 5:2 "to indicate transition . . . from divine promise to prophetic application." The oracle certainly transitions that way, but it does not need לכן to do so. Furthermore, we are aware of no other place in the HB where לכן itself marks a

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transition from the divine voice to the prophetic voice. As noted in Section A3, לכן sometimes functions in the opposite manner (to introduce a divine judgment), but that is not the case here. Jacobs thought that לכן "indicates that the present distress is already factored into the promise." One wonders how a single particle could convey such an elaborate sense! Waltke said that it "introduces a cogent conclusion," but v. 2 is not the conclusion of this oracle! Willis ("Micah 4:14-5:5—A Unit") argued that לכן points to what comes after it, not what comes before. In his extensive study of the particle, March noted that there are times when it is used "to begin a statement that is in no way connected with what has preceded." That may happen, for example, when לכן is followed by יען (because). In such instances, the reason for a judgment is rhetorically given before the judgment is pronounced (as in Amos 5:10-11). But that is not the case here. לכן may also function as an "attention getter" to introduce something new (see Isa 5:13 and 14). Willis, however, did not treat it that way in Mikah. Ultimately, therefore, we find Willis' argument specious. There are times when לכן is used to emphasize a response to what has already been stated. In such cases, one could render it "with that said" or "given that." However, to give it that sense in Mik seems rather arbitrary. Henderson preferred to render לכן as "nevertheless." However, we are not aware of any other place where לכן has that nuance. Wolff (*Micah: A Commentary*) thought that "The difficulty in understanding the connecting particle 'therefore' is best explained if we see in v. 2 an allusion to Isa 7:14." In other words, לכן was used in Mik not to point back to what was previously said in *this* oracle, but to point back to a specific thing in one of *Isaiah's* oracles. But if we look at Isa 7:14, we see several differences. First, לכן in Isa 7:14 means "in that case," which can't be the sense it has in Mik 5:2. Second, the verb "he will give" in Isa 7:14 includes a reference to the thing that will be given (a sign), whereas the present text of Mik says nothing about what will be given. Considering the ubiquitous use of לכן and נתן in the HB and the questionable assumptions behind the statement (presuming that the oracle in which we find Isa 7:14 came before the oracle in which we find Mik 5:2 or that the scribal artisan of this oracle wanted to subtly reference an oracle in the Isaianic corpus even though there are no other references to the Isaianc corpus in the rest of this oracle), it is difficult to believe that any such allusion is present. Some claim that לכן serves as a "bridge" between vv. 4:14 and 5:2, but we see no reason why. There is no shared language between them. Even though the "laboring woman" in 5:2 is probably the same as the feminine "you" who is directly addressed in 4:14, the shift in focus to a coming "ruler" from Bethlehem in 5:1 and the reference in 5:2 to "his" brothers indicates that we are speaking about a person who is going to change the situation that opened this oracle, not revisit it. In fact, the context makes us expect that the subject of יתנם will be the "ruler." When we peel back the interpretative assumptions, we find that the reason people interpret נתן as "surrender/hand over/give up" is because they can't make sense of it with לכן. S sidestepped the issue by using ܡܟܝܠ with the sense of "after this/henceforth" (CAL). But if such a sense was meant, we would expect אחרי־כן, not לכן. Some people treat the verse as a redactional insertion and put it in parentheses (see, for example, Moffatt). Yet relegating לכן to a secondary status still does not explain it. We provided this survey of arguments in order to

show that even though there is widespread acceptance of לָכֵן in Mik 5:2, virtually no two people agree on why it makes sense and the many explanations that are provided are highly questionable. We are left with one of two options: either the particle has a meaning in this instance that we still do not understand or the text is corrupt. Of those options, we think the latter is more probable. So instead of using a problematic term to understand the purpose and meaning of a common verb, we use the purpose and meaning of a common verb to understand what should be going on where we find the problematic term. The typical meaning of נתן is "to give/offer/present" (as in Mik 1:14; 6:7; 7:20). As noted above, we expect יתנם to be speaking about the ruler. The ruler is also the subject of the two verbs that begin the next verse (עמד and רעה). Both describe positive things that the ruler does for Israel. We expect, therefore, that something similar would occur here: "he will give them" something positive. If לָכֵן is a corrupted noun, there are only one or two nouns in BH that look or sound anything like it: לכד, "snare/trap," and לקח, "instruction/guidance/direction/leading." לקח is something that an influential person would provide (Deut 32:2, Prov 1:5 and 7:21, and Isa 29:24). Mikah already mentioned that "teaching" will go out from Zion in an envisioned future (4:2). Therefore, we propose that the earliest form of the oracle contained לקח as a direct object, fronted before the verb to create emphasis. There is really no way that לקח could have been altered to לָכֵן through normal scribal or transmission errors. Therefore, our proposal rests upon the possibility that the initial term was made illegible or, perhaps, destroyed, and had to be replaced. It was then written over (or "corrected") with a term of the same length and with the same initial letter that was known to begin oracular statements in Mikah. Our proposal can be faulted for having no textual evidence and no support from the ancient versions, but at least it makes sense, which is something that cannot be said about the evidence and the versions. For our use of forward slashes, see section B6.

5:3   **this time** — In this place, as in others (see Mik 7:10), עתה is placed in a future time. In other words, the present sense of the term (now) and its future location (then) are conveyed simultaneously. The English phrase "this time" also conveys both senses. NASB, NET, and SET (at that time) render it similarly. NJB preferred "henceforth," which more closely resembles S. NJPST's "lo!" (archaically used for הנה) is perplexing.

5:4-5   **(We will raise . . . into our territory)** — As many scholars and interpreters have noticed, there is dissonance in this oracle. Verse 4 mentions how "that very one will be [our] peace/harmony [with] Ashur"—a peculiar phrase that, if taken alone, requires some interpretation. But then we find it said in v. 5 that "he will rescue from Ashur"—a statement that seems to represent the sense more clearly. It is no wonder, therefore, that many scholars have suggested that we interpret the phrase in v. 4 in light of v. 5 and presume either a loss of *mem* through haplography or an instance of consonantal *sandhi* (if the same consonant both ends and begins two contiguous words, the scribe may elide one of its instances to mimic the way that the phrase *phonetically sounds*): "peace/harmony from Ashur." Then there is repetition of the phrases "when it enters into our" and "yes, when it marches into our," but lack of agreement on the noun that ends each part ("citadels" versus "territory"). Again, scholars and interpreters have been inclined to alter one of the nouns in order to create a more harmonious text. There is also lack of grammatical cohesion. In the first part of v. 5, seven shepherds and eight

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dominators perform a verbal action. In the second half of v. 5, however, the verbal action is carried out by only one person. To smooth over the transition, scholars and interpreters often alter the text (usually by changing the singular verb to a plural). Yet even when most agree that the oracle is composite, few agree on the boundaries of its redaction. Therefore, it is worth recalling an often-overlooked phenomenon of scribal editing: **repetitive resumption**: "Where an expansion causes an interruption in the flow of the text, the movement resumes with a repetition of the words found just before the expansion; the inserted text is thereby bracketed by two phrases that are very similar if not identical" (van der Toorn). By looking at vv. 4-5, it is clear that "[And] he will rescue from Ashur when it enters into our land—yes, when it marches onto our border" is a repetitive resumption of "Then that [very] one will be [our] harmony [with] Ashur when it enters into our land—yes, when it marches into our citadels." The differences arise from the fact that the scribal editor has subtly interpreted or clarified the text instead of repeating it verbatim. The insertion even has its own structural unity. It begins with a root-play, in which the "shepherds" (רֹעִים) that are raised up "will shepherd" (וְרָעוּ) the people, and ends by placing the "entrances/passes" (פְּתָחִים) of the enemy's land in parallel with the "border" (גְּבוּל) of the speaker's. Both perspectives exist side-by-side and should be preserved (not harmonized). To represent the scribal addition (not to place any value judgment upon it), we place it in parentheses.

5:6   **[what] splish-splashes** — Although *rebîbîm* refers to "raindrops," we try to mimic in English its reduplicative sound since other, non-alliterative terms (like גֶּשֶׁם) could have been used instead.

5:13   **totems . . . talismans** — Or "*asherah*s" and "*erus*." Unfortunately, the exact nature of both אֲשֵׁירִיךְ and עָרֶיךָ escape us. Scholars and translators generally refer to the *asherah* as a "sacred pole" or "tree." They do so because Deut 16:21 prohibits the "planting" of an *asherah* and follows that with a phrase that means "any tree" (כָּל־עֵץ) and because many of the verbs associated with *asherah*s (like "to plant" or "cut down") make sense of something that is both wooden and secured to the ground. However, there are plenty of other things in the HB that are said to be "cut down" or "planted" that have nothing to do poles or trees. From the appearance of verbs like "to build" or "make," it seems evident that these objects were *constructed*, but what form or shape they took is unknown. Perhaps the best that can be said is that the *asherah* was a wooden object in a shrine or temple from which one could secure blessing (i.e., a totem). One inscription from Kuntillet ʿAjrud (3.1) reads ברכת אתכם ליהוה שמרן ולאשרתה (I have blessed you [all] by YHWH of Samaria and by his *asherah*). Another (3.6) reads ברכתך ליהוה תמן ולאשרתה (I have blessed you by YHWH of Teman and by his *asherah*). That the object was probably wooden is unsurprising since wood had special priestly and divinatory uses throughout Israel and the ancient NE. One wooden object that presumably had a prominent place in the Jerusalem temple was a staff belonging to the first high priest of the Israelite cult. Eichler ("The Priestly Asherah") argued convincingly that the story of Aharon's budding staff in Num 17:16-26 functioned as an etiology to explain the *asherah* in the Jerusalem temple. If so, the *asherah* is better called a "staff" than a "pole." Nevertheless, it is possible that the term was used for many kinds of objects—both those that were "offered" to a god (or gods) and the receptacle(s) that received them. North of Israel on the Phoenician coast, for example, "*asherah*" denoted a shrine or sanctuary, as seen in inscriptions like *KAI* §19: לעשתרת באשרת אל חמן ("For Ashtart, <u>in the shrine</u> of Ḥammon's god"). A similar sense

existed in Akkadian (see *aširtu* in CAD). For more on the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions, see Meshel's *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border*. For reasons why such those inscriptions reference a cultic object as opposed to a consort of YHWH, see Wiggins' *A Reassessment of Asherah*. If אשיריך remains ambiguous, עריך is baffling. It looks like "cities," but that doesn't sit well with interpreters (the cutting down of "cities" was already mentioned and "cities" doesn't form a parallel with "*asherahs*"). Among the numerous suggestions for emendation, we think that the shift from יעריך (your woods/groves) to עריך (your cities), due either to the initial *yod* being lost through haplography with והשמדתי or phonetic elision (*sandhi*), is the least objectionable. Nevertheless, due to our distance from the text, the firm attestation of the Hebrew textual tradition (Kennicott lists only one MS with a deviation from עריך), the agreement of 𝔊, and our own likelihood for error, we view conjectural emendation as a last resort. It is clear that some Jewish interpreters understood ער in the sense of the Biblical Aramaic word "opponent/enemy/foe" (as in Dan 4:16). Not only did the translators of 𝔗 prefer that sense, but the Masoretes noted in the margin of 𝔐ᴸ that this was one of eight places where ער had the sense of "enmity." Ginsburg (*The Massorah*) listed those places as 1 Sam 28:16, Ps 9:7 and 139:20, Isa 14:21, Mik 5:10 and 13, Dan 4:16, and Ezra 4:14. However, many of those examples are either unlikely or can be explained in other ways (the ער in Ps 139:40, for example, makes better sense as a mishearing of על). Furthermore, none of the other Masoretic MSS we checked (𝔐ᴬ, 𝔐ᴾ, and 𝔐ᴮᴾ) repeated the note, which may indicate that such an interpretation was not common among Masoretic scribes. If we were dealing with a very late biblical text, we would take more seriously the thought of Aramaic influence on the Hebrew. However, that is not the case with Mikah—let alone the oracle here. In fact, few English translations give it that sense (note, however, SET's "those who hate you," Geneva's "enemies," and Fenton's "assailants"). Yet even if we agreed on the possibility of "opponents" in Mik 5:13, such a meaning would not be better suited than "cities" as a parallel with *asherahs*. Although some scholars look to ġr in Ugaritic for a workaround, only one text mentions a ġr in the context of a sacred space (*KTU* 1.41, duplicated in 1.87) and exactly what it references is difficult to ascertain (Levine and Tarragon, in "The King Proclaims the Day," render it "ledge"). In our view, there are only two options worth considering. The first is that "city" is a metonym for those who live inside it: "residents/ populaces." In the same way, "*asherah*" could be a metonym for the god or gods that might dwell inside it. Second, several scholars have noted the similarity between Hebrew ער and Assyrian *eʾru* (*ēru*). According to CAD, sticks of *eʾru* were used in magical practices, sacred figurines were carved out of *eʾru* wood, gods had weapons fashioned out of it, and even shepherds had their staffs made from it. It is not hard to imagine that a foreigner would conceive of Aharon's staff as an *eʾru* wand or that a strict Yahwist could view any kind of staff-like object in a shrine or cultic center as a syncretistic representation of an *eʾru* stick. Zijl ("A Possible Explanation of Micah 5:13") suggested that our verse be translated: "And I will root out *your figurines* and destroy your *wood figures*" (italics original). Wagenaar pointed to other possible cognates: "Aramaic עָרָא, 'bay-tree,' 'pine tree,' and Arabic ġār, '(bay-)tree.'" A wooden object that confers supernatural power and/or protection (i.e., a talisman) would make a lot of sense of this text.

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5:14   **with [the help of]** — Translators unanimously treat את as a direct object marker—in other
       words, YHWH is supposed to be acting against "the nations that do not listen." But that makes
       no sense. Where has Mikah or the deity been speaking to "the nations"? When did Mikah or
       the deity say anything about the nations not listening to YHWH? Why *would* other nations
       listen to the national deity of Israel/Judah? The prophet already indicated—without any
       criticism—that the nations naturally follow their own gods (4:9). So why would there be a
       different expectation here? The extreme discord created by such an interpretation leads
       scholars to the conclusion that this verse must be an editorial insertion. Yet we agree with
       Crook ("The Promise in Micah 5") that v. 14 "is more probably the climax of an address
       against Israelite idolatry, than an editorial addition condemning the idolatrous heathen world."
       Therefore, we propose that את is a preposition of assistance/help as seen in places like Gen 4:1
       (I created a man את־יהוה, with YHWH's assistance). The final phrase in the oracle would be
       an independent relative clause indicating the ones on whom the consequence will be imposed:
       "they who will not listen." In other words, the deity is appealing to his own people to listen lest
       he use the nations against them. The purpose of the final verse, therefore, is not to shift the
       topic suddenly to the nations, who have not been part of the oracle up to that point, but to
       provide a climactic statement that explains what came before.

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