The book of Micah is enveloped in lamentation. In chapter 1, the Divine Warrior descends in theophanic display to fight, not for as expected, but against his dear daughters: Samaria, Zion, and their sister Shephelah cities. The result is not the traditionally and form-critically expected victory hymn of praise, but rather lamentation through one of the Hebrew Bible's most poignant dirges which functions and coheres through the techniques of paronomasia and wordplay. In chapter 7, form critically a lament, Daughter Zion wails alone, recalls the Exodus (v. 15) and hopes for the return of the Warrior to fight on her behalf. In between, a poet, perhaps the prophet himself, has redacted the oracles of Micah into what we call chapters 2–6. Employing the three unifying traditions from the envelope (lamentation, Divine Warrior, and personification of the people as a woman), he continues to use paronomasia and wordplay to create a cohesive composition.

Micah 2

Chapter 1 closes with a call to a woman to commence funeral rituals (feminine singular imperatives and pronominal suffixes).

Shave your head! Shear your scalp
in memory of your beloved children.

3. Space does not allow more than this summary of chapters 1 and 7 here. See Luker, pp. 135–65 and 188–217, and the forthcoming revision of that study.
Make yourself bald, bald as a vulture:
they are leaving you for exile.4

Chapter 2 opens with the funeral cry, יָה יִר ‘alas!’ ‘woe!’ 5 As employed by the prophets, יָה functions with the vocative, parallel to שמעי ‘hear!’ 6 Mic 1:2 summons international attention; Mic 2:1 summons the אֲשֵׁר ‘heads of society’ (3:1) and, alas, Judah/Israel herself, to their (her) funeral.

Chapter 2 is composed of three parts, vv. 1-5, 6-11, 12-13, though these parts are laced together. Part I (vv. 1-5) is a masterpiece of symmetry.

v. 1 Introduction: v. 3αβ-3b Response to introduction:
והי שבב עַל-המשפחתה רעדה
... לא לֵא מַחְסִים רעדה

v. 2 Dirge in qinah meter: v. 4 Reversal of dirge in “reverse qinah” meter:
The heads “lift” (נש) houses, The heads “lift” (נש) up a
seize fields (שדד), oppress lament, lose their fields (שדד),
another’s inheritance, and their apportioned property.
לַכנּו

It is held together by ש/מ alliteration, the backbone of which (see Allen) is: the nighttime plotters (משכבות, v. 1) composing such a family (משפחת, v. 3) who cannot escape (משים משמ, v. 3) the prophetic מְשָל (וַיְמֵיש מֵימִי, v. 4) which will remove (משים, v. 4) from them their inheritance and leave them without representation (משלי, v. 5) when it comes time for reapportionment. Numerous individual uses of מ and ש put sinew on this skeleton, and there are other alliterational appendages, the chief of which occur in v. 4, שדד וְשָדֵנָה; and in v. 5, where every word contains a ש except for the divine name and its etymon.

Part 2 (vv. 6-11) emerges gently, since the מ alliteration is continued into v. 6; but it has a certain autonomy of its own, framed as it is by plays on the verb נָפַס ‘to preach’, literally, ‘to dribble’ (vv. 6 and 12). The

4. Verse 16; translations are my own.
5. It is clear from 1 Kgs 13:30, Jer 22:18 (4 times), and 34:5 that יָה was a cry of lamentation for the dead. Cf. Amos 5 where the wailing cry, יָה יִר (v. 16) is followed by mourning (v. 17) and repetitions of יָה (v. 18 and 6:1). יָה is often an independent cry of grief, e.g., Isa 17:12 (cf. 11, 14) and Jer 30:7. See Brown, p. 222; Zobel, and the works listed in the latter, p. 359.
stanza expresses the mindset not only of the pseudo-prophets, but of the society they represent (cf. part 1). Within this primary *wordplay*, more subtle puns operate. The people should walk uprightly (יִהְיֶה, v. 7), but they have arisen as the enemy (חֲמוּם, v. 8); thus their punishment: הקָפָר לָנוּ, v. 10. They strip away the honor (חדָר) from the poor man’s cloak; so the honor (חדָר) will be taken from their (literally, Jerusalem’s) children (v. 9). These common people of the *cloak* are an opposed to the militarism of the upper class (v. 8). The latter delight in inebriating words (שְׁבָא) from their preachers, even though such speeches are lies (שָגֵשָג), v. 11.

This same type of internal paronomasia is carried on between part 2 (vv. 6–11) and part 1 (vv. 1–5) in two striking ways. Those simple poor whom society’s heads call the recreants (שְׁבָא, v. 4) are in fact those averse to the faithless militarism ( countryCode; שֵׁבֶר מִלָּחֵמָה, v. 8) rampant among the elite. And part 1’s conclusion, which centered on the lack of one to cast the *property-apportioning cord* (v. 5) for society’s presently landed gentry, forebodes the utter destruction (ָסַלְלָה תָּכֵל, v. 10) predicted in part 2.

Verse 12b bounces off "אֲמִיתָךְ (מֵאַמְיָךְ) of v. 11, but the primary unifying play here is the double meaning of the verb אֲמִיתָךְ: both “to gather” and “to remove,” often “to gather in order to take away and destroy.” Hence, “I will cull you, O Jacob.” But culling is also a selecting; and its meaning is refined through parallelism with בָּרוּךְ: “I will gather together a remnant from Israel.” This culled and gathered remnant will be divinely unified, made כָּרָד, as ideally it should be (v. 12b).

Verse 13 paints a portrait of exile, but in hues sufficiently pastel to convey double-entendre. מַלְאָךְ is a military term, and מַרְדּוֹק is regularly used for the Divine Warrior’s anger which breaks out on his enemy (cf. v. 8).  

7. Verse 8b, literally, “You strip away the honor from the cloak, from trusting passers-by averse to war,” should be translated, “You dishonor the cloak of trusting passers-by averse to war.” The accusation is the oppression (cf. v. 2) of the simple poor by the ruling class who ignore the laws regarding the poor man’s שֵׁמֶחַ taken in pledge (תֶּבַל), a cloak which, according to Torah, was to have honored status. See Exod 22:25–26; Deut 24:12-13; cf. Amos 2:8.

8. As in 1 Sam 15:6, Ezek 34:29, and with the infinitive absolute as here, Jer 8:13–14, Zeph 1:2. English “cull” approximates the ambiguity. The Greek versions use συνάγω which may carry a hostile sense, though it generally needs a noun to do so (see Liddell, p. 1691, l.3). In the New Testament συνάγω bears the sense of “take away for destruction” in Matt 3:12 par. Luke 3:17; Matt 13:30; and is ambiguous in Matt 13:47; 25:32; Luke 15:13.

9. On מַלְאָךְ see Brown, p. 748, #2e; Allen. On מַרְדּוֹק see Brown, p. 829, #6; cf. also Pss 80:13; 89:41.
At one level, the divine anger breaks out on his people (cf. the divinely commissioned שרי, l:15); so they break out and exit through the רשלום (cf. 1:9, 12, 13). This is no chance happening, no vagary of history. God has caused the breaking out (he is המן). Nor does the One who breaks out abandon his people. He accompanies them into exile; indeed, as Israel’s true מלך, he leads them (13b). Yet Judah/Jerusalem also has a human מלך, and in irony the poet pictures this messiah as leading the band of prisoners, behind only יהוה, into exile.

At a second, deeper level, this final stanza of chapter 2 offers hope. Certainly such is already implied in the first, present-oriented level of meaning just described, since יהוה accompanies his people to the place where they will be culled, gathered, and unified. But there is here a further, future-oriented vision of that flock in exile, alone in their unity like a flock in a fold (and in distress) or a herd in a pasture, huddling together for security, uneasy when aliens approach. From this exile, too, they shall break out. The divine will break down the gate of their prison-corral and help them to break out and exit with him. At this level the picture is one of return, a remnant culled and gathered, in procession back to Jerusalem. Their divine King leads them back just as he had lead them away. Their messiah-king is right behind him, though now a new and purified מלך, worthy to re-establish the divine rule (cf. 5:1–3).

Part 3 (vv. 12–13) continues the assonance in which our poet delights:

In addition, wordplay is used to lace this stanza to part 2. has already been mentioned. Root יְדָעָה sets up a gentle echo throughout both parts (עַד יְדָעָה, v. 8; עַד יְדָעָה וּעַד יְדָעָה, v. 10; עַד יְדָעָה וּעַד יְדָעָה, v. 13). The יְדָעָה in the pasture, v. 12c, recalls stolen רָד, v. 8 (and lost רד, v. 9).

The unifying traditions of chapter 1, summarized in the first paragraph of this essay, are continued through chapter 2: the Divine Warrior approaches, resulting in lamentation. Likewise, while most of this

10. Repoint יְדָעָה, assuming a Hebrew הָדָעָה ‘fold’ based on Arabic cognate siir ‘fold’. There is a clever wordplay here consonant with the ambiguity of this passage; יְדָעָה means “in distress,” exactly what LXX read, ἐν θλίψει. Cf. יְדָעָה, dearth, destruction.

11. In the last phrase of v. 12 the יְדָעָה is causal, giving the source of the disquietude as with verbs of fearing; cf. Brown, p. 540; Allen. Lit.: “They will show disquietude/murmur because of humans.” The picture is of a flock of sheep/herd of goats in the midst of a pasture, content until the alien human approaches.

12. Isa 30:27–33 and 31:1ff. reveal a similar editing: theophany followed by יוהダン oracle.
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poem is directed to the heads of society, in the midst of the audience sits Lady Jerusalem herself (v. 9): the "are not driven from "their homes," but out of "her beloved house"; nor is the divine glory removed from "their" children, but from "hers" (see Hillers, Micah).

Micah 3

Micah 3 is welded to 2:12–13 by means of a delightful wordplay on מַעַשֶּׁשׁ. Chapter 2 concluded with a vision of God leading his people מַעַשֶּׁשׁ ‘at their head’; but chapter 3 must address the unfortunate reality: Jacob’s current רָאִשִּׁים ‘heads’. Hence the last word of chapter 2 introduces the theme of chapter 3. It is clear from 3:9–12 that the "heads“ and "chiefs/pillars of society," קֹצֵי מָנוֹן, are a broader reference than governmental rulers; these embrace the entire spectrum of political, economic, and religious life. These have forsaken God, their True Head (2:13), and have made themselves Heads (3:1, 9, 11, passim), merely using God as a prop for their idolatry (3:11).

Further cementing of this connection between chapters 2 and 3 stems from the רָאִשִּׁים מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר ‘remnant of Israel’ assonance established in 2:12 and carried through chapter 3. An important concept for Micah, as for Isaiah his contemporary, is that the remnant is the result of the culling-gathering process. Disastrously, the heads of society must be discarded so as to preserve this remnant—what the prophet calls אָצְמַי ‘my (God’s) people’, those simple folk with whom the Morashtite was most at home. Hence, in the style of our poet, assonance is created to support and develop the conceptual continuity. Note how the introduction of the remnant concept leads naturally to need for the True Head; on to the bogus current heads; and to their deeds which will, in the end, exclude them from the remnant:

'I must cull ... a remnant of Israel'. מַעַשֶּׁשׁ ... מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר ... מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר 2:12

'YHWH as True Head'

ראָאִישׁ 2:13

'current Heads'

גּוֹרָאִישׁ ... מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר 3:1

'haters of good'

שֵׁנָא 3:2a

'rippers of flesh'

שַׁמֵּא 3:2b

'eaters of flesh'

שָׁאָר ... מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר 3:3a

'dividers of flesh' ...

רְפֵּחַ כִּבְּרַיָּא וּכְבָּרָר 3:3b

'resulting loss of True Head'

רְפֵּחַ ... כִּבְּרַיָּא ... מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר 3:4

This assonance is especially effective in joining 2:12–13 with 3:1–4, but it ricochets within the remainder of chapter 3: מֶשֶׁרֶשֶׁר (v. 5), כִּבְּרַיָּא (v. 8), יָשָׁר (v. 9), יָשָׁר (v. 10), יָשָׁר (v. 11), יָשָׁר (v. 12).
A third factor joining 2:12-13 to chapter 3 is the recurrence of the Jacob-Israel pair introduced in 2:12. It is a favorite of our prophet, employed already in 1:5, and now repeated in 2:12; 3:1, 8, 9 (and Micah *passim*), lending a stream of continuity through 2:12-3:12.

The making of human stew described in 3:2-4 is in many ways a metaphorical iteration of the sins of the heads as described more literally in chapter 2. These גל vertebral ‘tear away’ the skin in 3:2, and גל vertebral the fields in 2:2. They פשׁט vertebral ‘strip off’ the skin in 3:3, as they פשׁט the honor from the sacrosanct cloak of the poor man in 2:9. In 2:7 the heads questioned God’s מִכְּלָל ‘deeds’, but in 3:4 there is no question about the corruption of their מִכְּלָל מִכְּלָלֶים which excoriate מִכְּלָל. In this context of deeds, the True Head “causes good” (hiphil of מְכַלֶּה, 2:7) while the current heads “cause evil” (hiphil of מְכַלֶּה, 3:4). Or (the poet gets more precise) the divine message will cause good to the יושב ‘upright’ (2:7); but the heads מְכַלֶּה ‘practice oppression’ (2:2) and everything מְכַלֶּה ‘upright’ (3:9) they מְכַלֶּה ‘twist’ (3:9, in parallelism with the abhorrence of מְכַלֶּה, which in Hebrew law equals oppression).

Even the “prophets” get into this act of oppression, מְכַלֶּה (2:2). מְכַלֶּה ‘They bite with their teeth’ (3:5) at base means, “Feed them and they’ll say all is well.” But מְכַלֶּה also means ‘pay interest’, and מְכַלֶּה is ‘usury’. (Recall that מְכַלֶּה is often used of the bite of the cunning snake.) All the heads are involved in using “my people” (and in using God as well, 3:11). 13

Of course there is also a pleasant unity within the chapter itself, with wordplay and assonance too numerous to mention comprehensively. 3:9 repeats 3:1, with the Jacob-Israel pair standing in 3:8 as transition. The prophets lead people astray, מֵהְמַעֲשֶׁם (3:5) while political and economic heads specialize in abhorring justice, מֵהְמַעֲשֶׁם (3:9). Verse 11 expands the vocabulary of vv. 5–7.

In the midst of the chapter stands v. 8, the prophet’s personal confession, in stark contrast to the deceptive and inebriating words of the popular windbags (2:11). Here he returns to his unifying traditions: in the context of mourning (vv. 4, 7) the Divine עֲנָם נִבְּרָה speaks through the mouth of his prophet (עֲנָם נִבְּרָה). The poet revives the lamentation in two ways: by the use of עֲנָם (v. 4), common to cries for help in laments, and the gesture of mourning (covering the lip) in v. 7. In both cases the divine response is a surprise analogous to that in chapter 1: rather than coming to the rescue, the Deliverer refuses to answer. Surely it is a calamitous time, עֲנָם (2:3) when Israel’s Protector hides his face

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(3:4) and, contrary to expectation, ้ ‘calamity’ (3:14b) will befall.

The Divine Warrior reaches his ultimate destination, Jerusalem, in 3:12, and the attack is described in language reminiscent of the opening theophanic descent (1:5–6). The central 3:8 had prepared the listener by repeating the original השדה יראל/فعעי יראק pair from 1:5. The Warrior’s first stop had been Lady Samaria, who had been made an עי יראק where grapes are planted. Likewise, Lady Jerusalem now becomes עי יראק and a נר is to be plowed. But the author’s most brilliant pun is saved for the final phrase of the chapter. In chapter 1’s theophany, having begun his descent to הימה יראל (1:3–4), the Divine Warrior wreaked havoc on these, then destroyed Samaria midst ominous mention that Jerusalem, too, was merely a series of נר (1:5). So now in chapter 3, as he reaches Mount Zion (הר הבית), she in fact is reduced to במות יرهاب מברכת ‘thicketed high places’ (3:12).

Through all this, Mother Zion watches. We assume that she grieves, but for the moment she is reticent. She is present nonetheless, aware of “her” rulers, “her” priests, and “her” prophets (feminine pronominal suffixes, v. 11) who are bringing her to ruin (v. 12). Later she will mourning openly and then burst into song in the book’s closing lament (chapter 7). But for now she is quiet, though the focus of attention; for this is her funeral.

Micah 4:1–5:3

Chapter 3 concluded with the Divine Warrior’s goal, the subject for 4:1–5:3: הים יראל (הר הבית), 3:12; מזרחי ימיה, 4:1. Once again our poet has used wordplay to unite two sections of his work. This play continues throughout the first poem of this section (4:1–7) with ברים קדש ידידיה (v. 1), בית עקר אלעזר עקר (v. 2), which also recalls 3:9, בית עקר, concluding with הוה יראק (v. 7). Thus this first poem is framed by Mount Zion, with which the previous poem concluded. In addition, קדש ידידיה (v. 1) continues the קדש-play from chapter 3 (vv. 1, 9, 11).

The poem peers beyond the imminent warfare but is still centered on the same divine mountain. It is a reversal of the theophany in 1:2–4 where mountains were melted; here the Mountain is raised. It points beyond 3:12 where Zion is left desolate; here she is a repopulated and international center of true religion as Micah understood it. Likewise, it is the same Divine Warrior who approaches, as his title, ידיד יראה קדש.

14. All suggestions to emend this final phrase of the chapter miss the point entirely. It is perhaps no coincidence that in 1 Kgs 7:2 Solomon’s palace is termed בתי יראק ילבנן.
(v. 4) and the references to his "day" (vv. 1 and 6)\(^\text{15}\) make clear. But מלחמה (2:8; 3:5; 4:3) has become מלחמה. The militarism of 1:10–16 and 3:5 has been overcome. In short, the השלחני—people ‘the people of the cloak’ (2:8) have been vindicated.

With this vindication comes מטפשים. מטפשים (3:1), but they abhor it (3:9) and administer it for a bribe (מטפשים, 3:11) which is no administration at all. The prophet is filled with it (3:8) by Divine enabling; similarly when Zion is made יצרן (4:1) by divine fiat, God will rule (4:7), and right judgment will return (מטפשים, 4:3; cf. 4:14 and below). This proper judgment (מטפשים) is in contrast to the injurious stripping (מטפשים, 2:8; 3:3) perpetrated by the false השלחני. מטפשים comes והזה (2:8), perverted by priests in 3:11 (ריים) but restored in the purified Zion מטפשים (4:2).

Hence, 4:1–7 is intimately tied thematically to the foregoing, and in the well-established custom of our poet, these thematic links are reinforced with wordplay.

As we have become accustomed to expect, other repetitions of root and sound abound within the poem itself. When true and pure Zion becomes primary (ARATION, 4:1), the nations cease to fight (ARATION, 4:3). The repopulated mountain is a veritable stampede of walkers (הלא, three times in v. 2, two times in v. 5). Verse 5 repeats מטפשים from v. 4. The restored and reunified Israel will be a מטפשים (v. 7) with authority among the other מטפשים (v. 3), authority based on her own divine rule. The future-oriented and eternal nature of this vision is emphasized by the iteration of מטפשים (v. 5), מטפשים (v. 7).

Part 2 (4:8–5:3) continues the subject of Zion, personifying her as a woman (note the feminine verbs and pronouns).\(^\text{16}\) תכש (v. 7, part 1) introduces מְלֹא (v. 8, part 2) who is nicknamed (through synecdoche)\(^\text{17}\) מְלֹא (v. 8), a reference to the הַעֲלוֹת section (v. 8) of the old city of David. The sobriquet extends the shepherding imagery with which the poem will end (5:3) by also pointing to the messianic shepherd who will be born of Mother Zion. מְלֹא (v. 8) and מְלֹא (v. 10) must shriek and cry out מְלֹא (vv. 9, 10; 5:2). It is a time of pain, but the necessary

\(^{15}\) מלחמה. While specifies of the term’s origin may be debated, the tradition’s intimate connection with holy war and theophany (chapter 1) is not.

\(^{16}\) The framing oracles of the poem, 4:8 and 5:1, address sections of greater Jerusalem in the masculine mode under the influence of מְלֹא (4:8), a military metaphor, and מְלֹא (5:1), the village of King David. תכש is also necessary for assonance with מְלֹא. See below.

\(^{17}\) As Hillers (Micah) correctly notes, p. 56, nn. b and c (the Nehemiah reference is 11:21, not 17:21). See also Allen for a good discussion.
pain will bear the future in which the tables will be turned. הָעַרְצָן (v. 13) will tread down her assailants who are described in v. 11b in terms of men taking advantage of a woman. Another nickname recalls the present unfortunate reality of misdirected militarism and consequent lamentation: לֶהָרַגָד (v. 14). But Lady-of-the-Troops' funeral ritual is part of the lancination which precedes the joy. There is a house of plenty in greater Jerusalem, הבֵית־לוֹחַ (5:1) by name, from which this Lady in labor, ילדָה (5:2, cf. 4:9, 10) will bear one fit to be מֶלֶךְ וְיֵשֵׁב (4:9) and to rule for the Shepherd of the flock in the age of peace to come (5:3, continuing the theme of part 1, 4:1–7).

The structure of part 2 (4:8–5:3) is founded on the wordplay and assonance between לֶהָרַגָד and לָעָה which initiates the poem's six individual oracles. לָעָה provides the frame by opening the first and final oracles (4:8 and 5:1), and לֶהָרַגָד begins each of the four oracles in the poem's center (4:9, 10b, 11, 14). This construction holds the listener's attention, as it was meant to capture Lady Zion's. Providing the transition from part 1 to part 2 is מֶתֶה of 4:7b, and yielding the climactic conclusion is רְצוֹתָה of 5:3b. In summary:

מֶתֶה . . . (4:7b), transition from part 1 (4:1–7) to part 2 (4:8–5:3)

. . . רְצוֹתָה (4:8)
. . . לָעָה (4:9)
. . . רְצוֹתָה (4:10b)
. . . לָעָה (4:11)
. . . לָעָה (4:14)
. . . רְצוֹתָה (5:1)

רְצוֹתָה . . . (5:3b), climax/conclusion to part 2.

A wordplay encases the collection: the introductory address to לֵעָל (4:8a) and the concluding hope that לֵעָל (5:3b); as does the pastoral reference: לֵעָל in 4:8 and רְצוֹתָה in 5:3. There is likewise a conceptual symmetry: the opening 4:8–9 introduce a crying הבֵית־רְצוֹת with allusions of hope from the old fortified city of David, the לֵעָל; the final two oracles,

18. The verse should be translated, "Now you are lancing yourself, Daughter of lancers. . . ." The brilliant pun is that לֶהָרַג (hithpolel) means both "to cut oneself" (a well-known mourning ritual) and "to gather or go in bands or troops," and the denominative לֶהָרְצָה means both "cutting" (a sign of mourning in Jer 48:37) and "band or troop"; see Brown, p. 151. Thus at one level, "Now you are cutting yourself (or may you cut yourself), Daughter of Cutting"; and at a second level, "Now you are gathering in troops (or may you gather in troops), Daughter of Troops." Lance/lancers, in the above translation, captures the pun fairly well.
4:14, 5:1, present a mourning מourners whose hope lies in the city of מֵדַי, מַלְכַּת. Internal assonance abounds; some examples:

4:8
- בְּאֵר תַּעְלָל
- הַמֶּשֶׁל הַרְאוּשָׁה מָמלְכָּת
9
- יִרְאֵה עַז
9–10
- כִּי הָחְדִיקֵךְ חָזִיל כִּיְדָה כִּיְדָה כִּי
11
- יָחֵן רְחָח
14
- שָׁמֶש שָׁמֶש
- תִּהְדֵי הָבְנֵדִיד
- יִכְו עִלָּהוֹת
5:1
- יִצְאָה/מֵאֶדְצָאָה
2
- ויִלְדוּ לִלְדוֹת

The poem nears its conclusion by ending and binding successive parallel bicola with the thrice-repeated לִשְׁרוּאַל:

4:14
- לִשְׁרוּאַל
5:1
- מֵאֵדְרָאָל
2
- בִּנְיִלְשָׁרוּאַל

This is the same technique employed by the poet to close his initial poem (1:13–15).

A number of features serve to connect this poem with part 1 and with previous poems. As a foil to Lady Zion throughout parts 1 and 2 are the כִּי וְלֵבַם (4:2, 3, [5], 11, 13). Mic 4:7 (part 1) reintroduces the concept of the לִשְׁרוּאַל from 2:12, while 5:2 (part 2) extends it with רֶז; and as the image of the לִשְׁרוּאַל כְּרֵדֶר defined the לִשְׁרוּאַל כְּרֵדֶר in 2:12, so recall of the לִשְׁרוּאַל כְּרֵדֶר in 4:7 (part 1) prompts mention of the כְּרֵדֶר in v. 8 (part 2). Both 4:4 and 5:3 (parts 1 and 2) present a vision in which one may כְּרֵדֶר in safety, and both visions have an עָלַל quality (4:5, 7; 5:1). Meanwhile, the author continues his affection for pairing euphonic imperatives: 1:16; 2:10; 4:10, (11), 13, (4:2); cf. 6:1.

Mic 4:6–7 (part 1) repeated the כַּפַּן/כְּפֵן pair in the context of the לִשְׁרוּאַל as introduced in 2:12. The latter was quite ambiguous in its double-entendre; the current oracle is more clearly positive, though not without its own somber, sober truth: “her” who limps, “her” the outcast, “her” the exiled, “her” whom I have hurt. The equivocal pair is employed consistently in 4:11–12 (part 2) where the Divine stands behind the

19. Implication that humble beginnings offer more hope than fortifications is probable, and certainly congruent with Micah’s thought elsewhere.
niphal אָסְף (v. 11), now gathering the הָרָכִים as an instrument of discipline for Lady Zion but, as part of the greater scheme of things, planning that these nations too will be gathered, כְּבָר (v. 12), and punished.

The ancient traditions of Zion and David are prevalent in this entire section (4:1–5:3). The vision is of a day when God will rule from his holy mountain; the rule will be complete and universal, as the opening theophany in chapter 1 had suggested it should be (1:2–5) and the intervening chapters have proved it is not. The instrument of his rule will be his king, a son of David. With his royal שָׂבָט he will be Israel’s שֶׁפֶט (4:14) ruling for the Divine Chief Justice, שֶׁפֶט (4:3), and establishing the מְשַׁמֵּשׁ that has heretofore been missing (3:1, 8, 9, 11; 4:3; [2:8; 3:3]; see above). The entire passage holds together well and progresses logically from the restoration of Zion (4:1–7) to the establishment of the rule of YHWH (4:7) to Davidic allusions (4:8; מְצוּאָתִין מָכוֹם מֵימִי עֶבֶר, 5:1), and appearance of the ideal shepherd (5:3).

This kingdom of God will mark the end of war and the need for it (4:1–5) since the Divine Warrior will be now the peaceful לֵוֶּדֶד (4:13). His presence in his mountain house will attract the nations, not terrify them (as in 1:2–5). Yet this is a distant vision of hope; the language of holy war remains: exile from the city (4:10), gathering of foreign armies (4:11), collection for destruction (4:12), treading and threshing by the armored ox (4:13), the הָרָכִים (4:13), the gathered troops, the siege, the smitten king (4:14).

So also do anguish and lamentation persist. Recurrent are the cries of the woman in labor (4:9, 10; 5:2), a conventional Hebrew metaphor for reaction to disaster (cf. Allen, p. 333) used here, similar to Jer 6:24–26, in the context of mourning, as the funerary lacerations of 4:14 make explicit.

Micah 5:4–14

As the previous section was a series of oracles introduced by רָאָה, so this section is a collection of four oracles inaugurated by רָאוֹת (v v. 4, 6, 7, 9). Together they continue the vision of the age to come, though as above, not without their own reminder of imminent judgment.

The previous section concluded (5:3) with a picture of the ideal Davidic king shepherding (רַעֲשָׂהוּ) his flock in the universal empire of a future age, an age of שָׁלוֹם—security, salvation, universal wholeness; ideally peace (4:1–4), though the prophet evidently understood it as a kind of Pax Israelitica, a world-wide peace achieved by the Divine
Warrior and maintained by his new King David from Mount Zion, hence 4:5, 13; 5:4–8.²⁰

Thus the first הוהי oracle (5:4–5) and those which follow describe this שלום age. The tables will be turned. In this new age (contrary to the present), should Assyria attack, Israel will be victorious. The reference to the seven or eight human rulers is a general one which envisions a renewal of the Davidic empire when Zion and her king held sway over surrounding tribes and states.²¹ In this new age, “he” (the new David allied with God) will save; “he” will deliver (נצל, v. 5).²² The oracle is closely tied to the foregoing verbally and conceptually by the continuation of the הוהי imagery (ויהי, 5:3; רוח, 4; ירח, 5, possibly punning with ירה ‘break’) and the vision of the ארא (international, 5:3; ‘our land’, 4; ‘their land, Assyria’, 5a; ‘our land’, 5b), and is strikingly symmetrical:

... אסתר יראת באיצורים וי jade composes Israel in the שלום age. In the style of our poet’s assonantal wordplay, אש for, thrice repeated in oracle one, gives way to אש for vv. 6–7, helping to bind these three הוהי oracles together. These latter two oracles are also symmetrical. Their opening lines are virtually identical,

²⁰. Cf. Mowinckel, “Having this endowment [the spirit of God] he [the messiah] can display superhuman, heroic strength as a warrior in the defense of land and people (Isa. ix, 5), for early Judaism did not think of the blissful age of restoration as free from the need of defense against foreign hostility and envy (Mic. v, 3f.),” p. 176; and re: Zech 9:10 but in the same context of Micah and Isaiah, “But the ‘peace’ (שלום) of which the prophet speaks here, comprises more than the mere prevention of war and victory over enemies. The word also includes all good fortune and well-being, safety and security, good order and morality in the nation, fellowship (wholeness) and brotherhood, in short whatever may be described as material well-being and sound social and moral conditions,” p. 177. A number of scholars, e.g., Mowinckel, p. 176, Harrelson, p. 159, and Hillers (Micah) understand Mic 5:4a as the conclusion to the foregoing messianic oracle (“and this one will be peace,” cf. Isa 9:5), and they are probably correct. At the same time, parallelism with vv. 6, 7, and 9 insists that the phrase serve also as the introduction to the series describing the messianic age to come (“and this will be peace”). It is a well-known characteristic of Hebrew poetry that such a line is used to serve double duty in order to create continuity; here, as the conclusion to the messianic oracle (5:1–3) and the introduction to the Age-of-Peace oracle (5:4–14).

²¹. See Hillers (Micah) though, emendation of זרע to זרע is not necessary.

²². If רום, common to theophanies and battle language, is original to 1:3, there may be an implication here that any nation who treads (לך, vv. 4–5) on Israel in the future will have to deal with the Divine Treader, though 1:3 is distant for such a verbal link without further support for it in the present context.
with only the slight twist our poet is fond of making for variety. (See the example of vv. 4a and 5b above.) Each opening line is then followed by a double simile, and the little poem is concluded with a statement of trust which will introduce the final oracle (vv. 9–14).

Hence the dew simile is parallel to the lion simile and is threatening, as in 2 Sam 17:12 (see McKeating; Rudolf; Hillers). The point is not only that the dew (i.e., divine rule) is pervasive, but that it is parallel to the lion simile and is threatening, as in 2 Sam 17:12 (see McKeating; Rudolf; Hillers). The point is not only that the dew (i.e., divine rule) is pervasive, but that it is not controlled by the new age may employ (v. 4), but it is not controlled by the new age may employ (v. 4), but it is not controlled by (v. 6). This picture of the new age is consistent with 2:12 where the flock "bleats uneasily when draws near," and with 4:4 where all rest secure, and no man will terrify. Likewise, the lion simile likens the to an linking the oracle to 4:8 and 2:12. This lion who rules among the will be a welcomed reversal of Zion who is destined to become (3:12). The little flock is still among the as she was in the previous section (cf. 4:2, 3, 5, 11, 13, and above); and as the first oracle ended with a reminder that only "he" will deliver, (v. 5), the third reminds that without him there is none to deliver, (v. 7).

The fourth oracle derives its organization and cohesion from the last word of oracle three, (v. 5), which gives way to a rhythmic series of verdicts beginning I will cut off (vv. 9b, 10, 11, 12). At first hearing, this divine assault seems incongruous with the foregoing description of the age. But we meet again the consistently bifocal vision of our prophet. The (vv. 6–7) who rules (v. 13), idols of all sorts which claim divinity in place of the Divine. In short, there will be no until the flock is culled and gathered, purified, purged; or to use the language of this oracle, until all her idols are "cut off." Such is the task of the Divine Warrior who, ironically, must wage war to destroy militarism. Yet the age is impossible until Israel (the pronouns are masculine singular here), especially its current head(s), recognizes the divine rule and ceases from the worship of militarism as well as the more conventional idols and false objects of faith. Thus, the theme of this fourth oracle is quite similar to the destruction of handmade gods (1:7) and fortified cities (1:10–16) in chapter 1; and here as in chapter 1 the focus narrows to the , a motif which will be pursued in chapter 6.

The rhyme and assonance of this final oracle are intense, as the series in vv. 4–14 builds to its climax. The repetition of (vv. 9, 12, 13) rebounds from the echoed in the previous two oracles (v. 6 parallel v. 7 parallel): "Israel, for you to rule you must remove, or have removed, the false gods."
Consistent with the poet's international perspective, Israel could be called in 4:7 a הָעָרָה and is here too a הָעָרָה among שְׁמַע who hear, (1:2; 3:1, 9), the universal, theophanic warning yet will not listen, שְׁמַע (5:14).

Micah 6

The clever and arresting link between chapters 5 and 6 is clear to any hearer of the text and, as usual, works on two levels. (1) There is conceptual continuity with the typical Micah twist. Chapter 5 ends with "X will happen to those nations who do not listen"; chapter 6 opens addressing Israel in covenant language: "So you listen now..." (2) This conceptual link is soldered with a metaphonic wordplay: the last word of chapter 5 is שם and the first word of chapter 6 is שם and the first word of chapter 6 is שם (both verbs used with שומש). The latter שומש introduces a ריב which renews the theme of 1:2. Now the Divine Warrior is enthroned as King and Judge (see Cross, pp. 188ff.). In a cosmic call similar to chapter 1, the נבשון, הרומס, and נבשון אֱלֹהִים are addressed to be witnesses, as אֱלֹהִים נבשון (v. 6, the attribute used to describe the enthroned Divine Warrior in Pss 68:19 and 144:7) indicts his people for breach of contract. Link with the more serene 4:1, where the same נבשון/רומס pair is employed, is also evident. Again the נבשון/רומס duo recurs from 1:5: the result for Samaria was a שומש (1:7); “the City” here addressed will meet the same fate, שומש (6:13), שומש (6:16). Gaining maximum rhetorical mileage from the שומש-play, the poet repeats the verb in vv. 1b and 2, and renews its call with כל ויהו (v. 9a) and a third repetition in v. 9b.

Many have argued that vv. 6–8 are part of the ריב, which generally includes an exhortation to reformed conduct or a judgment or both. Our poem is similar to Psalm 50 where theophany yields a court scene including recommended reform (vv. 14–15), though announcement of a verdict is more common, as in Deuteronomy 32 (vv. 19ff.; see below).23 We have both in Micah 6. In addition, vv. 1–8 are held together rhetorically by repeated play with המל:

What have I done to you, v. 3a
What have I done to make you tired of me? Answer me! v. 3b
Remember what Balak plotted, v. 5aα
and what Balam answered! v. 5αβ
With what shall I come before יְהֹוָה . . . ? v. 6α
He has told you what is good, v. 8α
and what does יְהֹוָה require of you, except . . . ? v. 8b

23. Micah 6 contains both and is a form-critical unity. That the language of vv. 6–8 is “Deuteronomic” is far from clear. See the apt comments of Hillers (Micah), p. 79.
Again concept, form, and wordplay support each other. Repetition of מַעֲשֶׂה (vv. 3, 5) reinforces the מַעֲשֶׂה-play. "How have I wearied you?" (v. 3) gives way to מַעֲשֶׂה "On the contrary, I brought you up from Egypt" (v. 4). Verse 5 ends with מַעֲשֶׂה תַשְׁרוּת, while vv. 6–8 describe a רִיב.

Nor do vv. 6–8 lack a place within the greater scheme of the author. Lack of priestly torah (3:11; 4:2) required this “prophetic torah” at the core of which is מַעֲשֶׂה, currently missing in the people’s conduct (see 3:1, 8, 9, 11; 4:3; [2:8; 3:3] and above).

וַיִּרֵאֵם the rib in v. 9, with the prophet speaking for the Divine Judge to the Tribe and the City (vv. 9–12). As one who has been witness to the heavenly court, the prophet is then obligated to bring to earth the verdict (vv. 13–16; see Cross, pp. 186–90).

Verses 9–12 are united with a sibilant alliteration in which רִיב is prominent; again sound supports sense. The opening summons to the City, v. 9, gives way to two rhetorical questions, vv. 10–11, until the City is once more addressed in v. 12. Hence the section is framed by reference to the City whose inhabitants are the antithesis of מַעֲשֶׂה both in word and deed; they use weights which are מַעֲשֶׂה (v. 11) and their tongues are מַעֲשֶׂה (v. 12). Such reference to the City not only recalls previous oracles, but ties this passage specifically to chapter 5 where the term מַעֲשֶׂה was introduced (5:10, 13; 6:9, 10; cf. the concluding feminine reference, v. 16b). Once again a Lady is addressed, this time unnamed. Perhaps she is Jerusalem, perhaps Samaria, perhaps another of Israel’s prostitutes; chapter 1 made it clear that there was no shortage of doomed cities, and the referent is likely indefinite by intent.

The Warrior-King’s judgment on sin, תָּאָשָׁה (vv. 7, 13) is rendered in the chapter’s concluding section, vv. 13–16. The I-Thou volley, structurally reminiscent of the You-Now volley of 4:8–5:3, reverses the normal I-Thou exchange of covenant language (e.g., Joshua 24):

"וַיִּרְאֶה v. 13 I
 תָּאָשָׁה v. 14a thou"

24. The first word of v. 10, מַעֲשֶׂה, should be read מַעֲשֶׂה as the final word of v. 9 (see LXX and Elliger) and the phrase translated, “The City—who has named her for destruction?” Cf. Jer 47:7. For the grammar of a pronominal suffix followed by the defining noun, see Kautzsch, 131 m. מַעֲשֶׂה and the feminine pronominal suffix of v. 10 then bring the listener back to the City introduced in v. 9; English requires repetition of the noun: “O City, whose rich are full of violent wrong, whose inhabitants are speakers of lies with mouths caging treacherous tongues.” These verses are not out of order as is commonly argued. The structure is: the מַעֲשֶׂה (vv. 9 and 12), with inserted description of the מַעֲשֶׂה (vv. 10–11), held together with sibilant alliteration, wordplay, and repetition of roots. Meanwhile, there is subtle linear development of thought.
The predominant alliteration shifts from sibilant to dental ("t"), a harsh, piercing tone commensurate with the verdict.

A curse from Lev 26:26 touches off a series of rhythmic and symmetric bicola which reverse the covenant promise of prosperity in the promised land. "From Shittim to Gilgal" (v. 5) is a poignant reminder of the Divine Warrior's leading of his people in Holy War across the Jordan into Canaan (Cross, p. 141), and it is significant that mention is made of the prophetess Miriam (v. 4) whose role it was to sing the victory song. Here, however, the land is vanquished. The citizens are still the covenantal יִש­ר­י­ים (vv. 2, 3, 5, 16), but their City is a wasteland (vv. 13, 16) pillaged by war at the hand of the Warrior and devoid of food, farms, fertility. Hence she lifts up no song of victory, but consistent with the rest of the book of Micah, breaks forth into lamentation: וְוָא ָלֵילוּי לֹא 'Woe is me!' (7:1ff.). Chapter 7 is her lament.

This lone lamenting lady of chapter 7 cries out in the barren land described in 6:13–16, such that the poet builds on the harvest imagery of 4:12–13, and she expresses her נִשָּׁפְתָה 'reproach' (6:16) in the context of נֵאוֹר 'harvest'.工程技术 (7:1) echoes נִשָּׁפְתָה (6:14) and דְבִּי (7:1) recalls נֵאוֹר (6:15). Lack of a נָשָׁפֶת (7:2) explains the lack in harvest (6:13–7:4), for נָשָׁפֶת is precisely what God requires (6:8); fortunately the Divine is filled with it (7:18) and will share it with his covenant people (7:20). Similarly, נָשָׁפֶת was lacking but required in the נָשָׁפֶת of chapter 6; while in 7:9 confidence is expressed that there will someday be a נָשָׁפֶת in which Israel is defended and אֶת נָשָׁפֶת established. Then the הנִשָּׁפְתָה/הנָשָׁפֶת pair from 6:7 and previously in the book (1:5a, 13; 3:8) will be forgiven and wiped out (7:18–19, cf. v. 9). All this is because, though Israel, like the nations, could not listen, נָשָׁפֶת (6:1 and Micah passim), her God can and does and will, נָשָׁפֶת (7:7). This God's דְּבִּי and Conquest are recalled in 6:4–5 and 7:15 as the basis for a new דָּרְשַׁת יִשְׂרָאֵל (7:9), and the covenant language so prevalent in chapter 6 recurs in chapter 7's conclusion (vv. 18–20).

Within the enveloping context of a woman who laments due to the approach of the Divine Warrior (Mic 1 and 7) stand chapters 2–6 which cohere because of the same tripartite imagery. In an "un-English" but Hebrew style, wordplay and paronomasias have been used by the redactor to cement the prophetic oracles around these three traditions.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


