I. AUTHOR

A. Little is known about the prophet Micah beyond what can be learned from the book itself and Jeremiah 26:18.

1. “Micah” means “Who is like Yah?”

2. Micah was from the town of Moresheth (1:1), probably Moresheth Gath (1:14) in southern Judah.
   a. Moresheth-Gath, the home-town of the prophet Micah (Mi. 1:1; Je. 26:18) was near the Philistine territory of Gath (Mi. 1:14); probably the modern Tell ej-Judeieh, 32 km SW of Jerusalem and 10 km NE of Lachish.
   b. Moresheth-gath (Mi. 1:14) is one of twelve cities listed by the prophet Micah, whose names are by word-play associated with the form of their imminent judgment through invasion.
   c. Lachish, so to speak, will have to give a parting bridal-gift or dowry (cf. 1 Ki. 9:16) to Moresheth (mōrešēṯ, which sounds like mēʾōrešēṯ betrothed), as that city is lost to the enemy
B. Micah does not recount his initial call (as do Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 2, and Amos 7).

1. 1:1 indicates that the “word of the Lord” came in a “vision,” making him the Lord’s messenger.

2. In contrast to the false prophets, who were filled with ambition, Micah informs his readers that he was filled with the Lord’s Spirit
   a. Micah 3:8 But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.
   b. He is not merely a megaphone, for he, like Jeremiah, was deeply affected by his message.

(1) Micah 1:9-10 For her wound is incurable. It has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. 10 Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all; in Beth-leaphrah roll yourselves in the dust.

(2) Micah 6:1-8 ¶ Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. 2 Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. 3 "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD." 6 "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?" 8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
"He preached with Amos’s passion against injustice and Hosea’s heart of love." (Waltke, 592).

C. Though a southern prophet, Micah had much in common with his northern counterparts, Amos and Hosea, betraying his deep sensitivity to the social ills of his day, especially as they affected the small towns and villages of his homeland.

1. Micah sympathized with the oppressed from those in power.
   a. He championed their cause, 2:1-11, often being called “the prophet of the poor”
   b. More correctly, he is the prophet of the oppressed middle class, 2:6-11.

2. Specific sins he mention include:
   a. The people were losing their land and self-determination, 2:1-5, 8-10
   b. False weights were used, 6:9ff; cf. Amos 8:4-6
   c. Prophets, priests and ministers had become corrupt (7:3), thinking nothing of shedding blood for their own advantage, 3:10; 7:2
   d. Family bonds were weakening, 7:5f.
   e. None in the country were leading a straightforward life, 7:2; 3:9
   f. The country was crypto-cannibalistic, 3:1-2

3. מִשְׁפָּט, mišpāṭ, was being replaced by what was hateful, 3:9

II. DATE

A. Micah prophesied sometime between 750 and 686 BC during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah

1. NRS Micah 1:1 ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
2. **NRS Jeremiah 26:18** "Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah [see below], said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'

B. He was therefore a contemporary of Isaiah (Isa 1:1) and Hosea (Hos 1:1).

1. **NRS Isaiah 1:1** ¶ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2. **NRS Hosea 1:1** ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel.

C. Micah predicted the fall of Samaria (1:6), which took place in 722-721 — **NRS Micah 1:6** Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour down her stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations.

D. This would place his early ministry in the reigns of Jotham (750-732) and Ahaz (735-715), which overlapped by 3 years.

E. Micah's message reflects social conditions prior to the religious reforms under Hezekiah (715-686), whose reign seems to have overlapped with Ahaz from c. 729 to 715 (2Kgs 18:9)

III. BACKGROUND

A. The background of the book is the same as that found in the earlier portions of Isaiah, though Micah does not exhibit the same knowledge of Jerusalem's political life as Isaiah does.

B. During the reigns of Jotham (742-735) and Hezekiah (715-686) while Assyria was ascending

1. **Tiglath-pileser III (744-727):**
   

b. Marched through Philistia and reached the Wadi el-'Arish in Sinai,
2 Kgs 16; 2 Chron 28; Isa 7-8

c. Defeated Damascus in 732, occupied Galilee and Transjordan, confirmed Hoshea as king in Israel.

2. **Shalmaneser V (726-722):**

   a. Attacked Samaria (725-722), **Sargon II** (722-705) finally taking it in 721, 2 Kgs 17; Micah 1:2-7

   b. Assyria deported Israel’s upper classes replacing them with other nationalities.

3. **Sennacherib (704-681):**

   a. Periodic rebellions kept Assyria on Guard

      (1) Upon Senn’s accession, Hezekiah joined a coalition of several states, which included Merodach-baladan of Babylon

      (2) **NRS 2 Kings 18:7-14** The LORD was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. 8 He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city. 9 ¶ In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against Samaria, besieged it, 10 and at the end of three years, took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11 The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria, settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant-- all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; they neither listened nor obeyed. 13 ¶ In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 14 King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty
talents of gold.

(3) Senn responded in 701, rushing through Syria, Phoenicia, and Joppa, he took 46 cities, including those mentioned in Micah 1:10-15, and the city of Lachish where excavations reveal 1500 bodies among the Assyrian Garbage dump.

(4) While there he sent an army which surrounded Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:17; 2 Chron 32:9).

b. Hezekiah repented and prayed for God intervention and deliverance, which had been predicted by both Isaiah and Micah, 2 Kgs 18:17-19:34; 2 Chron 32:1-23; Micah 2:13.

c. “Because of Hezekiah’s folly in joining Merodach-baladan, his succumbing to the blandishments of the of the Babylonians and showing off his military might and wealth, Isaiah predicted that Judah would one day fall to the Babylonians,” (Waltke, “Micah,” The Minor Prophets, 2:593); cf. 2 Kgs 20:21ff.

C. Israel was in an apostate condition.

1. Micah predicted the fall of her capital, Samaria, 1:5-7 — All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? 6 Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour down her stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations. 7 All her images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste; for as the wages of a prostitute she gathered them, and as the wages of a prostitute they shall again be used.

2. He also foretold the inevitable desolation of Judah, 1:9-16 — For her wound is incurable. It has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. 10 Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all; in Beth-leaphrah roll yourselves in the dust. 11 Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come forth; Beth-ezel is wailing and shall remove its support from you. 12 For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, yet disaster has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem. 13 Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish; it was the beginning of sin to daughter Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel. 14 Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a
deception to the kings of Israel. 15 I will again bring a conqueror upon you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam. 16 Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair for your pampered children; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they have gone from you into exile.

D. Three significant historical events:

1. 734-732 BC, Tiglath-Pileser III’s military campaign:
   a. Against Aram (Syria), Philistia, and parts of Israel and Judah.
   b. Ashkelon and Gaza were defeated.
   c. Judah, Ammon, Edom and Moab paid tribute to the Assyrian king, but Israel did not fare as well.

   (1) 2 Kgs 15:29 records that the Northern Kingdom lost most of its territory, including all of Gilead and much of Galilee.

   (2) Damascus fell in 732 and was annexed to the Assyrian empire.

2. 722-721 Samaria fell, and the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria.

3. 701 Judah joined a revolt against Assyria and was overrun by King Sennacherib and his army, though Jerusalem was spared.

IV. LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS

A. Micah’s style is similar to that of Isaiah.

1. Both prophets use vigorous language and many figures of speech

2. Both show great tenderness in threatening punishment and in promising justice.

B. Micah makes frequent use of word plays, 1:10-15, being the classic example.

V. MESSAGE

A. The book has a disjointed style due to the “binding together of formerly
independent oracles into this coherent book” (Waltke, 594)

1. These were originally isolated prophecies of various forms.

2. Broadly they can be called “alternating messages of doom and hope”

3. These are arranged into 3 cycles: 1-2, 3-5, 6-7

B. Micah, like Amos before him, protested the deprivation and oppression of the poor by the rich and powerful, (cf. Hillers, 4ff).

1. 2:1-2, 9 and 6:9-11, 16 are prime examples:
   a. NRS Micah 2:1-2, 9: Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power. 2 They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance. 9 The women of my people you drive out from their pleasant houses; from their young children you take away my glory forever
   
   b. NRS Micah 6:9-11, 16: The voice of the LORD cries to the city (it is sound wisdom to fear your name): Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city! 10 Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? 11 Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights? 6:16 For you have kept the statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have followed their counsels. Therefore I will make you a desolation, and your inhabitants an object of hissing; so you shall bear the scorn of my people.

2. The policies of the kings would have produced such situations:
   a. Uzziah carried out an aggressive armament and fortress building program, enlarging Judean borders, 2 Chron 26:9-11:15
   
   b. Hezekiah fortified and armed Judah, 2 Chron 32
   
   c. Repeated tribute to Assyria increased the financial burden.
   
   d. The fall of Israel in the north would have had an economic and social effect.
e. Archaeological data confirms this by indicating that “Jerusalem grew to three or four times its previous size,” (Hillers, 5)

f. The lmlk jar handles indicate a strong royal control

3. **7:1-6** portrays the *destruction of the social lives of the people* —

   Micah 7:1 ¶ Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger. 2 The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets. 3 Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice. 4 The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand. 5 Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace; 6 for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household.

4. **3:9-12** and Micah is combating *elements of “millennialism”* —

   Micah 3:9 Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, 10 who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! 11 Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Surely the LORD is with us! No harm shall come upon us." 12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

5. Five elements indicate revitalization by looking toward the future.

   a. Removal of foreign elements, 5:10-15

   b. A “time of troubles,” which come before the Messianic age, in which God will give the nation over until the birth of the Messiah, 5:1-9

   c. The reversal of social roles in which the poor eventually overcome the dominating ruling class, 4:6-7

   d. The idea of a righteous, peaceable ruler, 5:4-5
e. A new age in which God’s people will triumph over their enemies, 4:1-4

6. “To sum up, disparate elements in the book of Micah appear more closely connected on the assumption that the prophet somehow associated with a movement of revitalization, a hypothesis which also promises to deepen our understanding of individual passages,” (Hillers, 7).

VI. JEREMIAH 26:4ff. AND MICAH 3:9-12

A. At the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign Jeremiah preached a sermon in which he stated that unless the people repented God would destroy Jerusalem.

1. Jeremiah made the threat conditional, 26:4-6 — You shall say to them: Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently—though you have not heeded—then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

2. Those who arrested him made it absolute (no "if/then"), 26:9 — Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’ And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

3. Jeremiah as part of his defense urged reform, 26:12-17 — Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “It is the LORD who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.” ¶ Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.” And some of the elders of the land arose and said to all the assembled people,

4. “All the people” took up the defense and argued that in the days of Hezekiah Micah prophesied Jerusalem’s destruction, but Hezekiah did not
punish him, **26:18-19** — Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'

19 Did King Hezekiah of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD change his mind about the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster on ourselves!

5. Jeremiah was finally rescued — **26:24** But the hand of Ahikam son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over into the hands of the people to be put to death.

B. According to Hillers (9):

1. Micah’s words were remembered in a different context from that in Micah — Micah 3:9-12 are remembered as “a prophetic narrative” offers evidence of belief in Micah's words about a century after his time

2. “... in this narrative setting” Micah’s words, like Jeremiah’s are cast in conditional terms.”

VII. OUTLINE

A. Superscription, 1:1

B. **Cycle 1: 1-2:** Israel is threatened with exile (1:2-2:11), but a remnant will survive in Jerusalem (2:12-13)

C. **Cycle 2: 3-5:**

1. God threatens to dismantle Jerusalem due to the failure of its leadership (3:1-12), but he promises eventually to exalt it above the nations (4:1-5)

2. God’s dominion will be established over the earth in the future (4:6-8), while in Micah’s time the leadership could not save itself from Babylonian exile (4:9-5:1)

3. Eventually the Messiah would come, who would regather the remnant and lead them to victory (5:1-14)

D. **Cycle 3: 6-7:** a spiritually depraved (6:1-16) and disintegrating nation (7:1-7) will be forgiven and saved by God (7:8-20)
VIII. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

A. Critical problems in Micah have, for the most part, remained unnoticed from the earliest times till the 19th century, the primary example being the ignoring of the near identicalness of Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 2:2-4 (Hillers, Micah 1).

B. With Ewald, critical views begin to be articulated.
   1. He designated Micah as “complete in itself and lacking nothing,” (Hillers, 1).
   2. By 1867 he argued that chapters 1-5 were from a different prophet
   3. He offered no detailed evidence for these observations

C. Hartmann (in 1800) and Welhausen (in 1878) argued “Mic 7:7-20 presupposes a completely different historical situation than 7:1-6 and strongly resembles Isaiah 40-66,” which, if true, would make it a century later than 7:1-6 (Hillers, 2).

D. Stade set the stage for the way things are today in his argument “that Micah received its present form only after the exile, and that to Micah we can ascribe only chaps 1-3, minus 2:12-13,” (Hillers, 2)
   1. 2:12-13 interrupts the clear plan of 1-3 and does not fit well with the Isaiah as the other chapters do.
   2. The hopeful chapters of 4-5 states the opposite of 1-3

E. Further research has tended to stay within the parameters set by Ewald and Stade.

F. “The chief criteria in carrying out this reduction of Micah have been historical and religious or psychological, rather than linguistic or stylistic,” (Hillers, 2).

G. Gunkel’s identification of 7:7-20 as a prophetic liturgy turned “attention away from the individual prophetic figure . . . toward the studying and worshipping communith which shaped and preserved the prophet’s words” (Hillers, 2-3).

H. For the most part, “Recent fresh contributions to Micah studies have taken the form of attempts to show the growth of the Micah collection from an original core through various stages of editing, each with its own intention,” (Hillers, 3).

I. The most acceptable is that of Wolf:
1. The book is the result of centuries of accretion to a core book (1:6, 7b-13a; 14-16; 2:1-4, 6-11; 3:1-12)

2. Earliest editions were deuteronomic commentary (1:5, 7a, 13b)

3. 4-5 were post-exilic and come from prophets of weal (6th c.)

4. Micah’s disciples added such passages as 6:2-7:7

5. The liturgical 7:8-20 was added to make the book useful for worship

J. Such attempts at redactional explanations have been far from convincing.

1. Childs in 1979 observed “Although these scholars all agree on a complex history of redaction which passed through many stages, the analyses are so strikingly different that no common conclusions have emerged,” (Introduction to the OT as Scripture [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 430).

2. There are several reasons for such skepticism:

   a. Wolff’s scheme lacks any fixed points–there is only one form of the book, none of which gives evidence of a variety of text forms.

   b. We have no evidence of such tradents who were perhaps so involved in the formation of the book.