

003Micah: Structural Outline

1:1 Introduction to the prophet (see 2 Kings 15:32—20:21; Jer. 26:18) “Who is like Yahweh?”

1:2—7 Judgment coming because of Samaria and Jerusalem’s idolatry.

1:8—16 Micah’s personal lament & shame for the people (contrast with 7:7—20)

2:1—5 Denunciation of the people’s corruption—the “day” is coming!

2:6—11 Denunciation of the people continued for their corruption.

3:1—4 Denunciation of the rulers of Judah & Israel.

3:5—7 Denunciation of the prophets who mislead the people.

3:8—12 Micah truly speaks for God: Judgment assured for all: rulers, priests, prophets, people for their superficial loyalty to God and evil.

4:1—5 Promise oracle “in the last days.”

4:6—8 Promise oracle “in that day.”

4:9—13 A call for Israel to act as God’s instrument of judgment against its enemies.

5:1—9 Promise oracle concerning God’s messiah from David’s home town.

5:10—15 Judgment is coming (“I will cut off...”) for ongoing idolatries.

6:1—5 Denunciation, God’s “case” against his people.

6:6—8 Micah’s plea to the people to repent for the charges for which they are guilty.

6:9—16 Judgment is coming—probably the siege of Jerusalem.

7:1—6 A woeful lament, denouncing common people, princes, judges, even within households are a man’s enemies—“your punishment will come.”

7:7—20 Micah’s personal response (remember where he started: with personal lament and shame). “But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord” (7) by “bearing indignation” (9), “trusting in the Shepherd” (14), and considering the magnificence of God, with echoes of Exodus (18-20).

Promise Oracles and the Plan of Salvation

Is history going anywhere? Is there an end in reference to which we can measure the significance of our own lives? Is there any reason for hope? Is there justice in the universe? Where is God in all this chaos? Through the word of the Lord, visions and dreams, biblical prophets reveal the plan of God for history. The prophets proclaim salvation along four lines, each deeply connected with the others.

“Day of the Lord”

Prophetic book Use of term

<i>Joel</i>	Destruction from the Almighty
1:15	Cause to tremble soon approaching
2:1	Unparalleled time of gloom
2:2	Dreadful coming of the Lord’s army—who can endure?
2:11	Great and dreadful, cosmic imagery
2:31	A day of blessing for Judah
3:1	A day of blessing for Judah and judgment on Egypt
3:18	
<i>Obadiah</i>	Edom destroyed (Esau)
1:8	Denunciation of Edom for assault on Jerusalem
1:11	Day of Judah’s destruction
1:12	Day of Jerusalem’s destruction
1:13	Denunciation of Edom
1:14	A day of distress and accountability for the nations
1:15	
<i>Zephaniah</i>	Sacrifice prepared for those invited
1:7	Judgment on the nations

1:8	Judgment on the nations
1:9	Cries from Jerusalem
1:10	The Lord comes as a warrior
1:14	Day of wrath
1:15	Day of battle
1:16	End of world history
1:18	Day of the Lord's wrath, appointed by God
2:2	Seek the Lord in that day, and repent
2:3	Day of judgment for the nations
3:8	Israel to be vindicated
3:11	Jerusalem to be vindicated
3:16	

The day of the Lord is a term used broadly by the prophets to describe *the in-breaking of God in history*. It is not one event, but many. Prophecies are framed in terms of “the day”; “in that day”; “the day of the Lord”; “the day is coming”; “days are coming.” These related expressions are used 250 times by the prophets and are central to their conception of the unfolding of history. The Day of the Lord *erupts* at key moments in salvation history as God’s plan is *filling* and moving toward ultimate *fulfillment*.

The day of the Lord is sometimes presented in cosmic (apocalyptic) imagery to express the awesomeness of the event. See Joel 1:15; 2:2,11,30,31.

The day of the Lord is both *near* and *far*. It is about to occur and it will occur at the end of history. The day of the Lord in the Old Testament shares deep similarities with the New Testament teaching of the kingdom of God. It is the “already/not yet” dynamic of history. The day of the Lord is imminent, but it is a shadow of the day that is coming.

The day of the Lord is a time of judgment for those opposing God and his people and a time of salvation and blessing for those who look to the Lord.

Example of the day of the Lord:

Joel 2:1—11. The day of the Lord is near, a time of destruction for God's people in Zion.

Joel 2:12—17 A call for the guilty to repent.

Joel 2:18—27 Blessings of God to his people will come.

Joel 2:28—3:3 "After this" the day of the Lord in cosmic imagery, universal dimensions, era of the Spirit's presence on all, salvation offered to all, restoration of Zion's stature; the nations will be gathered in judgment (cf. Acts 2:16-21).

Fulfilling the Abrahamic and Davidic promises.

Abrahamic Promise fulfilled: "All the nations called by my name" (Amos 9:12)—the nations share in God's promise to Israel. Remember that God's purpose in calling Abraham is that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3) just as they had been dispersed in judgment (Gen. 11:1-9). Salvation thus takes on universal scope. While the nations surrounding Israel had their gods, the Lord is the true sovereign of all. Throughout Israel's history God's intent for the nations had been expressed, as for instance in Jonah 4:2,11. Surely it is within this context that we are to understand Jesus' commission to make disciples of all peoples (Matt. 28:19). Promise oracles are often characterized by the global dimensions of God's salvation and judgment (see Micah 4:1-4). Amazingly, history concludes with the scene in heaven in which "people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" have become a "kingdom and priests to God" (Rev. 5:9,10, cf. Ex. 19:6).

Davidic Promise fulfilled: An eternal and universal kingdom. How was God going to bless all the families of the earth? Through the extraordinary promise of God to David (2 Samuel 7:8-17). Because of the central importance of this covenant to the promise oracles, let's focus on the key elements as it is developed in the Old Testament.

- David's kingdom is *everlasting* (see 2 Sam. 23:5; Ps. 89:28, 29...).
- God's kingdom and David's kingdom are one (see 1 Chron. 28:5). Nowhere is the connection between the kingdom of David and the kingdom of God more evident than in the "Royal Psalms."

Psalm 2. This Psalm contrasts the kings of the earth who oppose God (2:1,2) with the Lord's *Anointed* (2:3) who reigns as both King and Son of God.

Psalm 89. Here the covenant with David is commemorated and the reaffirmation that David's seed, or descendant would be established forever on his throne (89:3). Yet the king "belongs to the Holy One of Israel" (89:18).

- Jerusalem is both the "city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7,9) and the God's dwelling (1 Kings 11:13; 14:21; 2 Kings 19:34; 20:6) and the place from which God rules (Micah 4:1-5).
- A unique Davidic ruler (anointed, messiah). God is faithful to his promise and while David's sons will be disciplined (2 Sam. 7:14), the promise is irrevocable, based on God's sworn word. So as history reaches its climactic moment, the Davidic King comes to rule from Zion over the nations (see Ezekiel 37:24—27).

The Davidic messiah is sometimes called *Branch* (or "sprig," "root," "stem," "shoot"). See Jeremiah 23:3—6; 33:15; Isaiah 11:1; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.

Messiah from David is uniquely God's Son (Psalm 110:4) and indeed described in terms of *divinity* (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-8).

The unique Davidic anointed One not only rules, but also serves a *priestly role* as well (Psalm 110:4; Zech. 6:12,13; Isaiah 52:15).

New Covenant: from shadow to substance.

The New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). Like the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, the New Covenant is intimately joined to the day of the Lord. It is God's covenant "in that day" (Jer. 31:31,33; Is. 42:6; 49:8; 59:21; Hos. 2:18—20).

- It will be an *everlasting* covenant" (Is. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 37:26)
- Rooted in *internal* obedience, not external conformity to the letter of the Mosaic law. Provisions of the New Covenant are a "new heart," a "new spirit" (Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19, 18:31; 36:26). Under the New Covenant, God works

through his Spirit (Joel 3:28,29). Forgiveness from sin (Jer. 31:34) and deep relationship (Jer. 32:41) form the heart of the New Covenant.

- Planned *obsolescence* of the “Old Covenant” (Jer. 3:16,17)
- In the Old covenant the tabernacle is a “model” of the heavenly, but in the New, the *substance* is present—the symbol no longer needed. Remember that God’s true concern has always been the heart (Psalm 51:10-12), not external ritual (see Psalm 51:16,17; Hos. 6:6)

God’s presence is associated with the ark (2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15).

Moses’ ark is a “model” (Exod. 25:9,40; 26:30; 27:8).

God will be present with his people directly (Ezek. 37:26,27), no longer mediated by mere temple activity (Rev. 21:3,22).

Fulfilling history.

The future *unfolds*, or *completes* the past—fulfilling the historical flow of God’s redemptive acts. The details, language, and imagery of the great narratives of the Old Testament are brought into the ongoing drama of history through the prophets. *The future is often painted in the hues of the past to show continuity in God’s plan, and to demonstrate that He who acted in the past is the One who will bring history to its completion.*

- *Regeneration*: Creation and a new heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17; Rom. 8:18-23; Rev. 21:1; 22:1-5). God brings life from death. Elements of the creation narrative are used by the prophets to express both the problem of humanity, and the hope of new life.
- *Redemption*: Historical deliverance reaches its fullness in universal redemption (Isaiah 11; 19). The Bible’s story is, at the core, a redemption story. Exodus imagery provides the backdrop for much of the prophets’ message (Hos. 11:1; Jer. 16:14).
- *Reconciliation*: The problem starts with rebellion and man evicted from Eden, away from the presence of God. But the story is not over, as God maintains his touchstone to humanity. Ultimately the “Father/son” relationship of God to Israel will widen to “all the nations called by my name” (Amos 9:12) and into New Testament teaching, as the “grafted in” gentiles join as one with Israel to form the new “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).

Oracle Structure

As with all genres, interpretation of prophetic literature involves capturing the thought process of the author, the organization of the ideas that make up the text. We have seen with Old Testament narratives that certain techniques were used to guide the reader into an understanding of the main point of the story—repetition, dramatic realization, etc.—and how the main point was supported by each scene in the narrative. These narrative techniques are sometimes used by the prophets too, especially in those oracles that are rooted in a narrative context.

Here are some tips for identifying the main point and how it is supported:

- *Notice repetition of key words* that relate to the basis of Israel’s blessing and judgment rooted in the Mosaic Law, and key terms used in promise oracles. This will tell you what the oracles are about. Usually, that’s the main point— oracles are describing God’s activity in history in relation to these concepts.
- *Recognize allusion to or quote from Old Testament narrative* that brings an important idea from the past into a fresh situation. Sometimes these quotes or allusions support the main point of the oracle by supplying helpful descriptive language, but at other times they direct us to the main point.
- A declaration of God’s verdict or plan usually is the main point of the oracle, with the details of the oracle providing a basis for the action about to occur or the verdict reached.
- “Connective language” that relates ideas to each other.
 - Main point connective words: Therefore, thus, so, as a result, consequently...
 - Supporting point words: Because, for, but, since, indeed...
- Concluding comment or summary statement.
- Imperative: a command to act is the main point, supported by the reasons given in the oracle. For instance, the call to repent or believe or share wealth, etc.

Examples of oracle structure from Micah

Micah 4:1—5 Promise Oracle

4:1 In the last days...

- The mountain of God's Temple will be established as the chief of the mountains.
- *the nations will stream to it*

4:2 Nations will come and say,

- "Let's go to the mountain of the Lord to be taught his ways and walk in his paths.
- From Zion will go forth the law, the word of the Lord in Jerusalem

4:3—5 *God will judge between many peoples*

- Swords will be hammered into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks
 - Nation will not lift up sword against nation
 - Never again will they train for war

Each will sit under his vine and fig tree

- No one will make them fear
- For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.
-

Though all the nations walk in the name of their god, we will walk in the name of the Lord forever and ever.

4:6—8 Promise Oracle

4:6 "In that day," declares the Lord

- **I will** bring together the lame, the outcasts, and afflicted

4:7—8

- **I will** make the lame a remnant and the outcast a strong nation
- **The Lord will** reign over them in Mount Zion now and forever
- The former dominion of Jerusalem **will come** to you
- the former dominion **will come**
 - the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem

6:1—5 Denunciation

6:1 *Announcement*: "Hear now what the Lord is saying"

- Plead your case before the mountains

6:2 *Charge*: “Listen to the indictment of the Lord”

The Lord has a case/dispute against his people

6:3—5 *God speaks*:

- What have I done to make you weary?
 - Exhibit A: I ransomed you from Egypt, house of slavery
 - Exhibit B: I led you through Moses and Aaron
 - Exhibit C: I provided guidance for you in Balak and Balaam
- So that you might know the righteous acts of the Lord

6:6—8 Call to Repent

6:6a *Micah’s Response*: “With what shall I come to the Lord?”

6:6b—8 *Shall I come with burned offerings?*

- Does God really delight in these sacrifices?
- Should I sacrifice my own first-born for my sin?

God has told man what is good and what he requires:

- **Do justice**
- **Love kindness**
- **Walk humbly with your God**

6:9—16 Judgment

6:9 *Announcement*: “The voice of the Lord calling to the city:”

- Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?

6:10—16 *The coming judgment of God*:

- Unjust measures and weights
- Lies and deceit of the rich

So I will strike you down, making you sick

- you will be hungry

- you will live along side your own waste
- you will save nothing
- your agriculture will fail

You walk in the idolatry of Omri

- **Therefore, I will give you up for destruction**
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7:1—6 Denunciation—a lament

7:1 Micah again responds: *“Woe is me!”*

7:1—6 For...

- Nothing is left to glean
- The godly have perished, only evil ones remain
- princes and judges ask for bribes
- The best of them are like a briar or thorn
- Do not trust your neighbor or friend
- Your sons treat fathers with contempt
- Daughters rise up against mothers...
- A man’s enemies are in his own house

7:7—13; 14—20 Prophet as preacher: *How do we respond?*

7:7 Micah’s response: *“But as for me...”* (a contrast to the “woe is me” in 7:1—6)

I will watch for the Lord, wait for my salvation. My God will hear me.

7:8—13 *Do not rejoice over me, my enemy*

- Though I am in darkness, the Lord is my light
- I will bear God’s indignation, because I sinned
- Until *he pleads my case* and executes my justice
 - He will bring me to the light and I will see his righteousness
 - Then my enemy will see and will be ashamed of taunting, “Where is the Lord your God?”
 - The walls will be built and boundary extended
 - The nations will come to us

7:14—17 *Shepherd your people with your scepter*

7:14, 15 Your flock you possess,

- as in the long-past days, when you came out of Egypt
- I will show you miracles

7:16, 17 *nations will see and be ashamed of their deeds*

- nations will be humbled

7:18—20 *Who is Like God?*

- Pardoning iniquity
- Passing over the rebellion of his possession
- Whose anger does not last forever because he delights in unchanging love
- He will again have compassion on us, casting away our sins to the depths of the sea
- Who gives truth to Jacob, unchanging love to Abraham, which you sword to our forefathers from the days of old.

Content (Muscle):

Historical/Cultural

Explain ancient practices, people, objects, etc. that may bear on the text's meaning.

- Remember that the prophets are writing to God's people at important moments in their history. Much of their message will be fulfilled within their audience's life. To understand the historical situation, interpreters will need to identify and explain culturally and historically significant data in the text. This is where Bible histories, dictionaries and encyclopedias will be especially helpful.

Language

Identify the key theological terms and concepts

- Having identified the type of oracle in the structure section, now it's time to explore the rich background of these terms. What do the words mean? How commonly are the words used by a particular prophet or within the shared vocabulary of the prophets?

- Where figurative language exists, what are the clues to its meaning? Where metaphorical or highly figurative language is being used, what are the clues to meaning? Usually, the text itself provides the meaning. For instance, the symbolism of Daniel’s dreams are interpreted by Daniel himself (Dan. 2:31-45). Sometimes an image is given, then applied in such a way that the connection between the symbolic image and historical events is clear (Jer. 18:1-12; Amos 7:1—8:14).

Theology

Salvation: What does the oracle teach about God’s program on earth? How does the oracle relate to the plan of salvation? How does it describe salvation?

God: What does the oracle teach about God’s nature? Who is God? What is the name of God in the oracle? How is God described or contrasted? How is the description of God rooted in Old Testament narrative?

A short overview of the Old Testament centering on the greatness of Yahweh—reflections from the Pentateuch in Isaiah 40—66 (41:8; 51:2; 63:16; 42:6; 49:8; 54a:10)

- “I am Yahweh your God” (41:4,10,13; 42:6,8; 43:3,10 45:5,6,18; 46:9; 48:12).
- Yahweh is the *creator*: (40:15,17,23-34; 42:5; 43:1-7; 66:22-24)
- Yahweh is go’el, *redeemer*: to redeem” used 26 times.
 - From bondage (43:5-7; 45:13; 48:20; 60:15—22)
 - Spiritual redemption (43:25; 44:22); Gentiles (45:20-23)
 - Land/Jerusalem (40:9,10; 43:20; 44:26; 45:13...)
- Yahweh is *Lord of history*:
 - Called “King” (41:21; 43:15; 44:6)
 - Sovereign over nations (40:15,17; 41:1-4; 43:3-14; 44:24-45:8; 47:5)
- Discloses the future (41:22,23,26; 42:9; 43:9,10; 44:7-8; 45:21; 46:10,11; 48:5)

Humanity: What does the oracle teach about human nature and the human situation? Remember that as social reformers, the prophets speak God’s unchanging truth to ever changing social reality. While humans tend to accommodate sin, God does not. Interpreters should describe the human condition in terms of its failures, suffering, value and virtue.

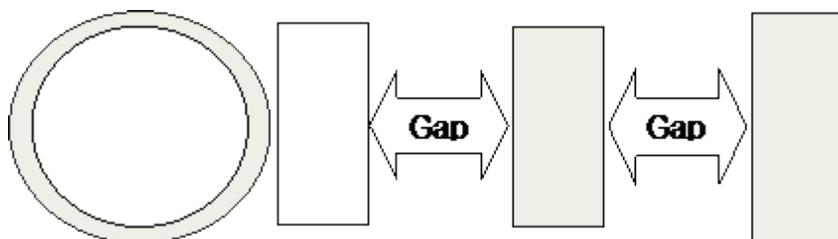
Unity

What kind of prophetic fulfillment is being used?

Motif/Type. The future unfolds the past, showing the continuity of salvation history through fulfilled covenants, events, people and objects. Consequently, prophets may speak of both the *present* and the *future* in the same terms even in the same oracle. The “*overflowing into the future*” pattern is the most common way of predicting the future. *The prophet’s message is about the character or nature of the future more than when it will occur.* We have already noted this pattern in the exodus and creation motifs and will explore this kind of prophetic fulfillment in greater detail when we study the gospels and the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament.

Prediction/fulfillment. The prophets “see” the future through visions or words from the Lord. But usually the distant future and the near future are described together—that the short-term future of Israel is a picture of what the end of history looks like, as though near-term events presage the culmination of history. Or, alternatively, the end of history provides the language and images to describe the near-term future (see Joel 2:1,2). That is in keeping with the “day of the Lord” imagery so common with the prophets. For the interpreter it means that when looking at oracles, it’s important to consider whether the prophet is speaking of the near future, the culmination of history, or both.

- multiple reference prediction



Prophet’s Day as nation repents/Resettlement after captivity/End of History

semantic clues (then, and then): Joel 2:28

temporal clues—things said that could not be true of the historical description at hand; verb tenses: Daniel 9:26

content clues—descriptions that relate to the *universal & eternal*, rather than merely covenant blessings on Israel. Like a double exposed photo. Isaiah 19:1—15; 16—25

- Direct prediction—*fulfillment of a specific event or person*
 - Isaiah 9:6,7 Anticipated Davidic King Messiah
 - Isaiah 52:13ff Enigmatic “anonymous servant”
 - Daniel 2, 7, 8 Emergence of specific kingdoms

- Micah 5:2 Birthplace of the eternal ruler

How is the oracle part of the Bible's inter-textual commentary? Interpreters will want to examine oracles for their place in the unity of scripture.

Informing theology—how is the oracle rooted in the past?

- Example: Jeremiah 23:1-8. How many streams merge in this remarkable river of revelation?
- Is the text cited or alluded to in other parts of scripture? How might those citations bear on its meaning?

Assignment: Read Isaiah 40—66. Using a concordance, identify each reference to “servant.” Then summarize the servant in terms of:

Who is the servant?

What does the servant do?