"THE HOUSE-OF-NO-SHADE SHALL TAKE AWAY ITS TAX FROM YOU" (MICAH I 11)

by

NADAV NA’AMAN

Tel Aviv

Literary Structure of Micah i 8-16

The most difficult passage in the book of Micah is i 8-16. Numerous attempts have been made throughout the years to analyse its internal structure and to understand its meaning, and many textual corrections and emendations have been suggested. The most radical reconstruction is that of K. Elliger who hypothesizes damage to the outer right edge of the original page, resulting in loss to the first word in a number of lines. Others have suggested various less radical solutions for the text, yet no decipherment or translation has gained broad scholarly consensus. Methodologically, it is best to take the MT as our surest basis and to work with the mechanisms commonly invoked to explain textual corruption (i.e., metathesis, haplography, interchange of similar letters, etc.). The various versions must be treated with caution since the ancient translators probably confronted the same textual problems as have modern commentators, the result being more a kind of interpretative rendering than a word-for-word translation of the original text.

A central issue in the discussion is the internal structure of the prophecy. One problem is the place of vv. 8-9: do they refer to the preceding words about Samaria (vv. 6-7) or introduce the prophecy about Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 10-16)? H.W. Wolff has demonstrated that ‘al-zō‘î in v. 8 has an anaphoric meaning, that it func-


© E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995 Vetus Testamentum XLV, 4
tioned differently from the singular demonstrative pronoun \( zō' \) and thus can refer only to the preceding passage.\(^4\) V. 9, which refers to an impending disaster to the kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, serves as an introduction to the following passage (vv. 10-16). This verse contains double \( ky \)-clauses with verbs in the perfect. The \( ky \)-conjunctions may be interpreted as introducing two causal clauses and translated “because ... (and) because”. Moreover, v. 9 has an exact parallel in v. 12, which also contains double \( ky \)-clauses. Each of these double \( ky \)-clauses opens a strophe consisting of eight bicolon (vv. 9-11; 12-15). Together they are followed by a two-line summons to lament disaster (v. 16), just as the preceding section about Samaria (vv. 5-7) is followed by a two-line dirge (v. 8). We may further suggest that each of the two strophes of eight bicolon (vv. 9-11, 12-15) is divided into two parts of four bicolon, each with the second sub-strophe in each case being introduced by the adverb \( lāqēn \) (“therefore”) and connected causatively to the preceding sub-strophe. Thus, Micah’s words in vv. 9-16 have a well-planned literary structure and reflect the work of an author who has transformed the oral prophecy into a literary work.

Scholars agree that each bicolon in vv. 10-15 names only one town and that there were word-plays on the names of many towns. The first of each pair of bicolon in vv. 11-15 has the phrase “the inhabitants of” (\( yōšēb \)); in v. 14a, the name of the city \( mōrešēt \) (\( gāt \)) reproduces the sound of \( yōšēb \)et and takes its place.\(^5\)

In the light of the above suggested reconstruction of the structure of the passage in vv. 9-16 (which is closer to that of A.S. van der Woude than to any other reconstruction suggested so far),\(^6\) I will present a translation of the text, accompanied by a commentary and some general remarks.

**Translation**

9. Because her wounds\(^a\) are incurable,
   (and) because it has come as far as Judah,
   it has reached (\( ng^{c}<h> \))\(^b\) as far as the gate of my people,
   as far as Jerusalem—

---

\(^4\) Micha (n. 2), pp. 47-8; cf. Hillers (n. 2), p. 23.
