

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: MICAHA

MICAHA

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

MICAHA CHAPTER 1

Micah Chapter 1

Micah 1:1 *The word of Yahweh that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem-* We note that although Micah was based in Judah, his work was also in appealing to Samaria, the ten tribes, as well as the two tribe kingdom of Judah whose capital was Jerusalem. Micah's words were perhaps addressed specifically to the leadership and priests in the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem, although all the people were also addressed (:2).

Micah 1:2 *Hear, you peoples, all of you-* As noted on :1, Micah was appealing to both Israel and Judah. Hence "all" the earth / *eretz* / land was addressed. Perhaps there was a tendency for Judah to assume that all words of Divine condemnation were for others rather than themselves; and we all have that tendency. Several of the prophets appeal to both Israel and Judah; potentially, if both nations had repented, they could have reunited as one nation under God and the dominion of God's Kingdom established over them both.

Listen, O earth, and all that is therein- The Hebrew terms for "hear", usually meaning 'be obedient', and "listen", meaning literally to hear or pay attention, are often used together in the Hebrew Bible. The idea is that if we really hear, we will be obedient to what we hear. And this is our problem; the language of the Bible can drift over us, without us paying attention. And so the two terms are used together- to really hear God's word is to be obedient to it.

And let the Lord Yahweh be witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple- The imagery of the court room continues in :3. God is both the witness, and the judge. Just as the Lord Jesus is later presented as both the judge and also the advocate, on our side and successfully pleading our case, hopeless as it is. There is no essential contradiction; the imagery here gives us an insight into the thinking of God Himself. "From" is not a reflection of the original; the idea is that God in His heavenly temple, of which the Jerusalem temple was but a reflection, had entered into judgment with His people and was giving evidence.

Micah 1:3 *For behold, Yahweh comes forth out of His place, and will come down and tread on the high places of the earth-* God would come forth from the Heavenly temple and trample the "high places" where His people worshipped idols (:5). This probably has primary reference to the Angel going forth from the temple to slay the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time. See on Ps. 78:60. Micah's appeal for repentance was heard at Hezekiah's time (Jer. 26:18,19), and so God came forth in judgment upon the enemies of His people rather than upon Judah, as would otherwise have happened as Micah here foresees. This is an example of where God's stated purposes can be changed by human repentance. And yet the prophetic word comes true, but in a different form and time. Yahweh in His Angel did come out of His temple; but to judge Assyria and not Judah as originally intended.

There are a whole set of allusions to Saul and Jonathan's death in Micah 1 and 2, where they are connected with a spiritually collapsed Israel:

Micah 1 and 2

Saul and Jonathan

High places (1:3)

Slain at the site of *their* high places (2 Sam. 1:19,25). These high places are consistently associated with idolatry and at best semi-spirituality.

"A wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls" (1:8) for apostate Israel

David's lament over Jonathan and Saul

"They covet fields, and take them away... they oppress a man" (Mic. 2:2)

Saul was guilty of this.

"Lament with a lamentation of lamentations" for the pathos of it all (Mic. 2:4 AVmg.)

David's lament over Jonathan and Saul

"Your shame naked" (1:11)

Stripped naked by the Philistines, with Saul's body paraded naked on the wall of Bethshan.

"It is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem" (1:9)

The Philistines took the Israelite cities at this time (1 Sam. 31:7), presumably including Jerusalem, which David had to recapture.

"Declare ye it not at Gath" (1:10)
- regarding Israel's judgment for sin

This is a direct quote from 2 Sam.1:20.

"The glory of Israel hides in the cave of Adullam" (1:15 NEB)

Saul

"She is grievously sick of her wounds" (1:9 AVmg.)

How Saul and Jonathan died (1 Sam. 31:1,2 AVmg.).

David's lament over Saul and Jonathan was that of God and Micah over Israel. There is therefore the possible hint that Jonathan's personal spirituality was not what it might have been at this time. The grief of Micah for Israel was that of David for Jonathan: "I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls" (Mic. 1:8). The extent of David's grief is another indication of his love for Jonathan; and this is a prophecy of Christ's love for us. The spirit of Christ was in Micah.

Micah 1:4 *The mountains melt under him*- The language of Ps. 97:5,7 about the judgment upon idolaters.

And the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire- The language of condemnation of the wicked (Ps. 68:2). We note that on the cross, the Lord's heart was also like melted wax (Ps. 22:14). Although He never personally sinned, through the crucifixion process He endured the condemnation of sinners; those He condemns will therefore be given a judgment which He has Himself experienced although innocent. No human judge can do this. His judgment will therefore be ultimately just. And yet we also see how even sin doesn't put us in a position which He cannot appreciate.

Like waters that are poured down a steep place- Waters and rivers often represent Gentile powers. They would gush into the land in judgment, poured out by God, rather like the bowls of judgment are poured out upon *eretz* Israel in Revelation.

Micah 1:5 *All this is because of the disobedience of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the disobedience of Jacob? Isn't it Samaria?*- There are many hints in the Genesis record that the historical Jacob and his family were all too involved with idols as well as Yahweh. Gen. 31:36 uses the precise Hebrew words as here: "Jacob answered Laban, What is my trespass [s.w. "disobedience"]? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me?". The context is that Jacob's wife Rachel had stolen her father's idols, and Jacob was in denial of this. The disobedience of Jacob and the sins of the Jacob family, "Israel", was not only idolatry, but specifically the denial that they practiced it. Soon afterwards, Jacob urged the family of Israel to repentance and they buried their idols beneath a tree. And this was the ongoing sin of Israel at Micah's time- idolatry, and the denial of it. The disobedience of Jacob was at the idol shrine of Samaria, where the ten tribes worshipped their idols in the name of

Yahweh, claiming that their ancestor Jacob had done the same; Hosea comments often about this. See on Hos. 7:1; 8:5,6; 10:5,7; 13:16.

And what are the high places of Judah? Aren't they Jerusalem?- Just as the ten tribes worshipped their idols in the name of Yahweh worship, so the Jerusalem temple was used. Ezekiel was shown men worshipping idols right within the temple. And this is our tendency; not to totally deny Yahweh and fall into atheism, but to worship our idols in the name of serving God. Our passion for a career, nice house, car and vacations becomes justified as Yahweh worship when it is just the same idolatry which the people around us shamelessly practice.

Micah 1:6 Therefore I will make Samaria like a rubble heap of the field, like places for planting vineyards; and I will pour down its stones into the valley, and I will uncover its foundations- It was normal for victorious invaders to destroy the religious symbols of those they vanquished, and this was to happen to Samaria. And yet in wrath God always remembers mercy; the desolate site would become a place where vineyards could be planted. This is the very picture of God's restored Kingdom upon earth (Is. 65:21; Am. 9:14). God's anger is unlike human anger. It is to clear the ground for His restorative work, albeit with another generation and even nation.

Micah 1:7 All her idols will be beaten to pieces, and all her temple gifts will be burned with fire, and all her images will be destroyed; for as the hire of a prostitute has she obtained them, and to the hire of a prostitute shall they return- The condemnation of Jerusalem and her temple cult is more extreme than that of Samaria. Those who prided themselves that they were worshipping Yahweh correctly, in the temple rather than at Jeroboam's idolatrous calf shrines, were actually worse than those they felt superior to. And this is the danger of legalism to this day. As noted on :6, it was usual for victorious invaders to destroy the religious symbols of those they vanquished, and this was to happen to Jerusalem. It was only the reformation led by Isaiah's school of the prophets, which surely included Micah, aided by Hezekiah, which stopped this prophecy coming true at that time. The idols were "temple gifts"; they were justified as having been devoted to Yahweh. See on :5. Micah uses the same language as Hosea, in seeing Jerusalem as a prostitute who was paid for her services with idols which she treasured.

Micah 1:8 For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked- This was the judgment of prostitutes, and Micah has just likened Jerusalem to a prostitute in :7. He doesn't merely condemn, but feels himself into the shoes of those whose behaviour is so abhorrent. No wonder therefore that his appeal was successful in Hezekiah's time (Jer. 26:18,19).

I will howl like the jackals, and moan like the daughters of owls- The Hebrew specifically refers to female jackals and female owls. The females only howl like this when their very own young are taken from them. This was how Micah felt as he predicted the destruction of God's people; for in :16 he will speak of how *they* would lose their beloved offspring. It would be a very personal loss to Micah. Their diminishing was his diminishing, and in this he powerfully reflected the feelings of God. These terrible judgments were not therefore uttered in anger, and unlike Jonah,

they were uttered with every appeal for the hearers to repent and to thereby change the otherwise inevitable.

Micah 1:9 *For her wounds are incurable; and it has come even to Judah-* The incurable wound was healed by their repentance (Jer. 26:18,19). This is the paradox of grace. God is really willing to change His stated purpose, as He did regarding Israel at the time of Moses, and for Nineveh- because He so respects the repentance of even a remnant, and their intercession.

It reaches to the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem- As noted on :8 and :10, Micah's personal identity with his target audience is impressive, and the root of his success. Hence he speaks of "my people". We see here too the unity of spirit between God and His prophet, His man on earth. These words about "my people" could be God speaking, or Micah. Micah was one in spirit with God in his feelings about God's people. The process of inspiration would have worked through this.

Micah 1:10 *Don't tell it in Gath-* See on :3. Micah mourned for God's people as righteous David did for sinful Saul, whom he so loved despite all the wickedness that man did to him.

Don't weep at all. At Beth Ophrah I have rolled myself in the dust- Rolling naked (:7) in the dust... this was the extent of Micah's passion for the repentance of his audience. The success of his appeal (Jer. 26:18,19) was because of his personal appeal and identity with his target audience. And this is the lesson for every preacher. "Beth Ophrah" is literally 'house of dust', this was what that idol shrine would become; and Micah rolls himself in the dust in order to show his extreme identity with those facing such impending judgment. He didn't shrug and not care for those who refused to listen; his heart bled for them because of his urgent and desperate sense of identity with them. This shines through all of Micah's appeals. The prophets believed their message, to the point that it overcame them with grief that men wouldn't heed them. Is this how we feel at the rejection of our message? Is our testimony to Jesus really in the spirit of these prophets...? Can we identify with Micah when he lamented and wailed, going stripped and naked, because of the import of what he was prophesying, and human rejection of it? Depending which translation we choose, it appears that Micah now lists 10 towns around Jerusalem which are to be judged. This may be in order to suggest that Judah is effectively no better than the ten tribe kingdom and will suffer their judgment.

Micah 1:11 *Pass on, inhabitant of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame-* As noted on :7 and :8, the judgment for a prostitute. "Shaphir" means 'beautiful woman', another connection with prostitution. They would flee the invaders, or be taken captive by them, in naked shame. Yet Micah also went naked and shamed because he so identified with them (:8). The towns of Judah listed here were presumably centers of idolatry. If we follow the LXX here, the identity of the next towns is no longer an issue: "The inhabitant of Sennaar, fairly inhabiting her cities, came not forth to mourn for the house next to her: she shall receive of you the stroke of grief". This would be in contrast to how Micah did mourn for those next to him.

The inhabitant of Zaanen won't come out- "Zaanen" could be a form of "Zion". They would not be able to flee to Beth Ezel, possibly Azal near Jerusalem (Zech. 14:5). Zion would be surrounded by her enemies and there would be no place to escape to, as all the surrounding villages would have been captured. There is a similar idea in :12, where another village near Jerusalem is mentioned.

When you hear the wailing of Beth Ezel, you will know there is no protection there- Beth Ezel is "house of joining", perhaps a reference to the brothels associated with idol worship.

Micah 1:12 *For the inhabitant of Maroth waits anxiously hoping for good-* The villages around Jerusalem were to be overrun by the Assyrians as they closed in on Jerusalem. The problem was that the Jews had been worshipping idols in the name of Yahweh worship (see on :5), and they thought that therefore Yahweh would protect them; they 'anxiously hoped', s.w. "pray" in Zech. 8:22; but the response was to be "evil" rather than the "good" they asked for. Both "good" and "evil" come from Him, not Satan.

But evil has come down from Yahweh to the gate of Jerusalem- Clear evidence that evil in the sense of disaster comes from God and not from any supernatural being called Satan. Micah felt that the "evil" was already at the gate of Jerusalem, about to enter. The picture is of the enemies at the gates of Jerusalem, surrounding the city. This is what happened when Sennacherib invaded, but Micah's appeal was heard, a remnant repented, led by Isaiah and his school of the prophets, which included Micah, whose prophecies have much in common with Isaiah (Mic. 4 = Is. 2). And so the situation was averted, although the towns around Jerusalem did indeed fall to the Assyrians at that time.

Micah 1:13 *Harness the chariot to the swift steed, inhabitant of Lachish-* The idea could be that Lachish should prepare to flee. But the rest of the verse speaks as if there was particular sin found there. I suggest therefore that the idea is that the Assyrians had a camp at Lachish from which they would begin their assault on Jerusalem, and this is exactly what is stated in Is. 36:2. Yet that invasion was sent by God, at His command; see on :4.

She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; for the transgressions of Israel were found in you- As explained on :5, the transgression of Israel / Jacob was idolatry and refusing to accept their sin. The daughter of Zion refers specifically to the temple mount, which had become a place of idol worship in the name of Yahweh (:5). Some of the idols they worshipped came from the Assyrians who were now going to attack and destroy them. "The beginning of sin" can mean "the great sin".

Micah 1:14 *Therefore you will give a parting gift to Moresheth Gath-* Micah was from Moresheth (:1), he perhaps calls it "Gath" to suggest it was Philistine in spirit. Again, he is stressing that the judgment he is announcing affects him personally, "my people" (:9), and even his own home village. This continues the theme of Micah's complete identification with the audience he was preaching to.

The houses of Achzib will be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel- There is a word play here, as "deceitful" is the same word as "Achzib". The word is used of the false prophets in Mic. 2:11, so perhaps these houses were the centers of the false prophets who had assured the people that they were serving Yahweh through their idolatry and He would therefore protect them from the invaders; see on :12.

Micah 1:15 *I will yet hand you over to your enemy, inhabitant of Mareshah-* Again the emphasis is upon the fact that God would do this, He would pour out the waters of the invaders upon His own people.

The leader who is the glory of Israel will come to hide in the Adullam cave- As noted on :3, Micah was lamenting for his people as David did for Saul. They gloried in their king just as Israel initially did in Saul, but he would come to hide himself in the Adullam cave just as Saul did. But again there is hope implied; for at that cave, David gave Saul the opportunity for repentance. And this is always the hint throughout Micah, and it seems some took it. The leader whom Israel glorified was presumably a king of Judah before Hezekiah; but the judgment of Jerusalem didn't then come, because Micah's message was responded to. The book of Micah has three discernible sections, possibly corresponding to the prophecies he uttered in the reign of the three kings mention in :1. These words may have therefore had Jotham or Ahaz in view.

Micah 1:16 *Shave your heads, and cut off your hair for the children of your delight. Enlarge your baldness like the vulture; for they have gone into captivity from you!*- I noted on :8 that Micah wept as if *he* had lost his children. He was totally identified with those who were so sinful, who were under certain judgment, but whom he hoped to save by bringing them to repentance. In no way did he practice guilt by association and mental separation from those who were under judgment. Instead, on God's behalf, he identified with them in order to try to win them to repentance. And this was supremely what God did through the work and death of His Son, who was "son of man" as much as any man was. A woman did not shave her head in grief for lost children; this was the punishment of a prostitute, and this is the theme of this section. Israel had prostituted themselves to other gods (:7). Judah was to cut off her hair in shame and grief (Is. 3:24; Jer. 7:29), and yet they would do so themselves.

MICAH CHAPTER 2

Micah Chapter 2

Micah 2:1 *Woe to those who devise iniquity-* The same phrase used in Ps. 36:4 of Saul who has been set up as the prototype of a condemned Israel at Micah's time (see on Mic. 1:3). It is the same phrase used of the Jerusalem leadership who brought idols into the temple (Ez. 11:2). This was ongoing in Micah's time (Mic. 1:5), but judgment didn't come for it because Micah's appeal succeeded, thanks to his passionate identity with the people he was appealing to, and to the effects of the school of the prophets to which he belonged.

And work evil on their beds!- "Evil" was to come upon Jerusalem (Mic. 1:12), but the people had themselves worked or created that evil.

When the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand- We have here one of many Biblical examples of where thought gives direct rise to action. The state of our mind, our spirit, is therefore critically important. They 'did' ["practiced"] evil; and that phrase is the consistent refrain of the record of the kings, that they "did evil in the sight of Yahweh". But that doing of evil was conscious, and the result of their thoughts as they lay at night upon their beds.

Micah 2:2 *They covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage-* As noted on :1, the thought gives rise to the action. They coveted fields in their hearts, and then in the morning, they actually seized them. We think of Ahab's coveting Naboth's vineyard. The perpetrators of these things were the ruling classes. Land inheritances were from God, and the Mosaic law defended inheritances, seeing the land was God's and He had divided it as He wished. To simply grab

property from another was therefore to as it were steal from God. To "oppress" others by legalistic games to their own advantage would lead to the Assyrians 'oppressing' them; the same word is used about this in Is. 52:4. If Judah stopped oppressing their brethren, they would not be oppressed by their enemies (Jer. 7:6; 21:12; 50:33). Not oppressing our brethren is a major theme of the law and the prophets. And it has wide application to our lives today. The collateral damage caused is brought out here- by seizing the house of a man, the oppressor was hurting the man's house in the sense of his family. The collateral damage of unpleasant behaviour against individuals is often ignored or discounted. But God notices.

Micah 2:3 *Therefore thus says Yahweh: Behold, I am planning against these people a disaster-* This is the same word for "evil"; the evil of the oppressors (:1) would lead to the evil of the invasions (Mic. 1:12). God plans judgment, and states it as if it will surely happen, as He did with Nineveh in Jonah's time. But in the gap between statement and fulfilment, there is the opportunity for repentance, and God is so sensitive to that, that He will change His stated word of judgment. The evil planned need not happen if there is repentance (the same words are used in Jer. 18:11).

From which you will not remove your necks, neither will you walk proudly; for it is an evil time- The idea is that the invaders would impose a yoke upon God's people, implying captivity and bondage. And yet they could remove their necks from it eventually, for it was God's purpose that the captives would return. But the generation that first experienced it would not. The intention was to bring down their proud necks; pride as always was the essential problem.

Micah 2:4 *In that day they will take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, saying, 'We are utterly ruined! My people's possession is divided up. Indeed he takes it from me and assigns our fields to traitors!'* - Again we see that the judgments to come were really of their own device. They had taken others' possessions, and so now the fields they had stolen (:2) would be taken by the invaders. Who would take up the parable "against you"? They themselves. They were to lament themselves, and recognize that their fields had been taken away and given to the immoral. Micah ahead of time had lamented (Mic. 1:8). He felt himself into the condemnation of his people, although he himself was innocent. Just as the Lord did to supremacy on the cross. It was this identity and empathy with the objects of the wrath he was pronouncing which made Micah so effective, and it is the reason why the cross of the human Christ must be central to our appeal to men; for He there is what elicits response.

Micah 2:5 *Therefore you will have no one who divides the land by lot in the assembly of Yahweh-* It was at these land courts that the poor were deceived out of their property and inheritances, as criticized in :2. And yet it was done in the name of Yahweh; those illegal courts were presented as being an "assembly of Yahweh" just as idol worship was claimed as Yahweh worship. Or it could be that we are to associate :5 with :6; and this verse is the threat of the Jewish leaders to Micah, that they would arrange that he would lose his inheritance.

Micah 2:6 *Don't preach!, they preach, Don't preach about these things. Disgrace won't overtake us-* As noted on Mic. 1:5, Judah worshipped other gods in the name of Yahweh worship, and the false prophets of both Israel and Judah assured them that therefore Yahweh would protect them from the Assyrians; they expected good to come from Him in the time of their need (see on Mic. 1:12). The word for "preach" is literally 'to drip', which was the metaphor for prophecy in Dt. 32:2. They 'preached' or 'dripped' that Micah was not to 'drip' or

preach. They were claiming Divine inspiration in forbidding Micah to preach. Amos had the same. Anyone who feels the need to stop another preaching is really revealing their own agenda. These false prophets claimed to have had Divine revelation that Micah should stop teaching, and that they had a message that the people would not be overtaken by disgrace as Micah claimed. Truly false teachers say what people want to hear. Isaiah, contemporary with Micah, had prophesied that they would indeed suffer "disgrace" (s.w. Is. 30:3; 45:16). Micah taught the same. In Semitic worldviews, shame was worse than death. It was again their pride which led them to reject intuitively any message that they would be humbled, and it is the same root cause for human rejection of the Christian message.

Micah 2:7 *Shall it be said, O house of Jacob: Is the Spirit of Yahweh restrained?*- Micah spoke by the Spirit of Yahweh, and to tell him not to speak those words (:6) was therefore an attempt to restrain the Spirit. They could not restrain God's Spirit by simply stating that the inspired word of God was not inspired. People make the same mistake today.

Are these His doings? Don't My words do good to him who walks blamelessly?- The power of God's word is such that those who are spiritual, who 'walk blamelessly', are strengthened further by them. His words "do good"; perhaps the false prophets were saying that Micah's prophetic word were 'not good' for the people, just as was claimed against Jeremiah.

Micah 2:8 *But lately My people have risen up as an enemy*- God's people became His enemy in that they were on the side of God's enemies; and He would be an enemy to their enemies (Ex. 23:22 s.w.). Perhaps this was reflected in Micah's personal experience, just as God's painful relationship with Israel was reflected in that of Hosea with his faithless wife Gomer. For Micah will use the same word for "enemy" in speaking of how his own close family members, perhaps even his own wife, had become his "enemy" (Mic. 7:6,8,10). We will note on :11 that the problem was not simply with the minority who were the leaders; but the entire people were polluting the land by eagerly listening to false prophets.

You strip the robe and clothing from those who pass by- As noted on Hos. 7:1, the priests were even robbing those who passed along the roads.

Confidently assuming that they aren't in danger- As noted on :6, the false prophets claimed that Yahweh would protect His people from the Assyrians because they were worshipping Him when they worshipped the idols. The ten tribe kingdom did the same with their calf worship.

Micah 2:9 *You drive the women of My people out from their pleasant houses; from their young children you take away My blessing forever*- This continues the complaint in :2, that houses and the Divine blessing of land inheritance were being taken away from people by wealth-hungry leaders.

Micah 2:10 *Arise, and depart! For this is not your resting place, because of your uncleanness that destroys, even with a grievous destruction*- There has been a strong theme in this chapter of inheritances being given by God but then taken away by corrupt men. This seems to continue here; the land would spew out those who corrupted it (Lev. 18:28; 20:22). The people are being asked to recognize this, and themselves depart. It could not be their permanent resting place because they were destroying it by their own uncleanness. They would be dealt with just as the Canaanites had been.

Micah 2:11 *If a man walking in a spirit of falsehood lies: I will prophesy to you of wine and*

of strong drink; he would be the prophet of this people- The false prophets spoke under the influence of alcohol / spirit drink, and yet claimed to be inspired by God's Spirit. The same contrast between the two types of spirit is made by Paul in Eph. 5:18; perhaps he got the idea from here. And yet the people loved to listen to them and accepted them as Divine prophets. The judgment therefore shifts from the religious leaders to the people, who gave them power and eagerly accepted the false prophets. God would surely not have destroyed the whole land and people for the sake of a few individuals who were falsely claiming to be prophets; the problem was that people had itching ears, and the nature of how they were and what they wanted inspired the false prophets to teach them what they wanted to hear. See on Mic. 3:5.

Micah 2:12 *I will surely assemble, Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock in the midst of their pasture; they will swarm with people-* As so often, the prophecies of condemnation lead immediately onwards to those of God's restorative purpose. His judgments were not threatened nor executed in the kind of anger which men have. Rather did God always use those judgments towards His further purpose of salvation for a repentant remnant. and it sees He envisaged that remnant including both Israel and Judah. Their repentance would lead them to realize that all the personal barriers between them were as nothing; reconciliation with God empowers reconciliation between those reconciled with Him. The experience of repentance and forgiveness involves the humility which is required for reconciliation between persons. This is why the prophets (Ezekiel and Zechariah particularly) often present the restoration to God as the time of unity between the remnants of Judah and Israel.

Micah 2:13 *He who opens the breach goes up before them. They break through and pass the gate, and go out. And their king passes on before them, with Yahweh at their head-* This sounds like the final desperate exit from Jerusalem by Zedekiah many years later. But this could have happened soon after the prophecy was first given. It didn't, because Micah's appeal met some response. God's plan was therefore changed, but His word still came finally true, just as it did in Jonah's prophecy of Nineveh's destruction. It was averted by repentance, but the prophetic word was reinterpreted and rescheduled in fulfilment. But even in that shameful exile, Yahweh would as it were be leading the exiles, at their head.

But the Hebrew can be translated quite comfortably in a way which would rather speak of the return of the exiles, again with Yahweh at their head; and this would fit the context of :12. The same lesson is taught here as in the cherubim visions of Ezekiel; Yahweh in all His glory went with the exiles out of Jerusalem into captivity, and would return with their children to a restored Zion. It was not that God turned away in disgust from His sinful people. He worked with them to both punish and restore, and this is an abiding feature of His work with His people.

MICAH CHAPTER 3

Micah Chapter 3

Micah 3:1 *I said, Please listen-* Often the prophets break off from predicting coming condemnation to *plead personally* with their hearers to repent [this explains some of the strange shifts of pronouns in the prophets]. Chapter 2 is a message of judgment from God against Israel. And now Micah pleads personally with them.

You heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: Isn't it for you to know justice?- "Heads" translates the same word used in the preceding verse, Mic. 2:13, where we noted that

Yahweh was the head of His people, both in exile and restoration. The leadership were supposed to be working on God's behalf, leading the people with Him and for Him. They didn't "know" justice in the sense of actively engaging with it; "know" means effectively to have relationship with. By not knowing justice they hated it (:9).

Micah 3:2 *You who hate the good, and love the evil; who tear off their skin, and their flesh from off their bones-* This is the language of wolves tearing their prey. The shepherds of Israel were in fact wolves.

Micah 3:3 *Who also eat the flesh of My people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces for the pot, and as flesh within the cauldron-* It is a lion who breaks the bones of its prey. The leaders of Israel had acted as the Assyrian lions would do to God's people.

Micah 3:4 *Then they will cry to Yahweh, but He will not answer them. Yes, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they made their deeds evil-* "Evil" is the term used so often of the evil to be brought upon God's people by their invaders. But the people had themselves done "evil" to themselves. Their judgment was appropriate to their sin.

Micah 3:5 *Thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets who lead My people astray; for those who proclaim, Peace! to those who feed them-* "Peace" often refers to peace with God. The priests of the calf shrines of Israel and of the idol shrines within the Jerusalem temple (Mic. 1:5) assured the people that they enjoyed peace with God, and would not suffer from the Assyrians. This is the same kind of fake "peace and safety" cry of the last days (1 Thess. 5:3). They said this to those who paid them, who fed them. They were career religionists. As noted on Mic. 2:11, it was for this reason that the common people were as guilty as their spiritual leaders; for they wanted to hear the message which their leaders taught them, and even paid for it. It's simply not the case that God would punish the mass of innocent people for the sins of their religious leaders. The masses get the leadership they essentially want, in that the leaders know they must say what the masses want. That principle has been historically true, regardless of whether democracy was practiced or not. And so at this point in Israel's history, the leaders spoke what they knew the masses wanted to hear. And so the masses, although they were abused by their leadership, still stood responsible before God. See on :7.

And whoever doesn't provide for their mouths, they prepare war against him- The singular "him" may refer specifically to Micah. Those who didn't pay the false prophets to teach what they wanted to hear, had war prepared or sanctified against them. This is the language of jihad, of holy war- but waged by the false prophets upon the faithful minority. They religiously justified persecuting those who didn't support them, appealing to a very quasi spirituality. See on Mic. 4:3.

Micah 3:6 *Therefore night is over you, with no vision, and it is dark to you, that you may not divine; and the sun will go down on the prophets, and the day will be black over them-* The prophets in view are the false prophets of :5. It is the same idea as Ez. 13:23: "Therefore you shall no more see false visions, nor practise fortune telling. I will deliver My people out of your hand". This verse is not saying that from then on, there would be no more prophets inspired by Yahweh. For there were prophets after Micah, and he himself goes on to insist that he is inspired (:8). The *false* prophets would have no further vision because the night of destruction would come upon them, rather than the light of God's Kingdom which they claimed was about to dawn due to the people's supposed faithfulness to the idol shrines,

which they claimed were a form of devotion to Yahweh. This was the very message of Am. 5:18,20- the false prophets proclaimed the coming of a glorious day of Yahweh, but that day would be night and not light to them. The inversion of light to darkness suggests a de-creation, an undoing of creation, which is the very way that God envisages the destruction of His people and land.

Micah 3:7 *The seers shall be disappointed, and the diviners confounded. Yes, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God-* In their last moments, they would realize that there was no answer from God. God going silent is the ultimate sign of condemnation, as experienced by Saul. "Confounded" is the word Isaiah uses of how Judah would be "confounded" when their idols were destroyed and revealed as impotent (Is. 1:29). "Disappointed and confounded" is the Hebrew phrase used about the ordinary people of Judah in Jer. 15:9. As noted on :5, the masses were also not innocent, for it was their desires which led to the leaders teaching as they did.

Micah 3:8 *But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment, and of might, to declare to Jacob his disobedience, and to Israel his sin-* Micah insists that he is inspired by God's Spirit, whereas the false prophets were not. The references to Jacob and Israel may refer to Judah and the ten tribes. Both had sinned, and Judah were not to assume that they were more righteous. Micah personally was to be the declaration to Israel; see on Mic. 6:8.

The reality of God's anger, His hurt, His jealousy, means that God isn't indifferent to sin. And neither should we be, increasingly surrounded by it as we are, with sin presented to us as the norm of human existence. We may feel or express disapproval at sin; but God's reaction is something which language can't convey. It results in the broken heart of God. This is the message of the prophets: that we must end our indifference, quite literally, for God's sake. Sadly, many readers of the prophets seem to feel that these men are merely droning on, one prophet, one chapter, seems so much like the next. Yet read sensitively, and in a good translation, the words of the prophets expose us to a relentless shattering of indifference. Their words are onslaughts against cherished assumptions, patterns of living, challenging our endless evasions of issues, calling faith and behaviour to account. They are the very voice of God passionately imploring us to turn more fully to Him. Their task was "to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin"; just as Isaiah did, who probably led the school of prophets which Micah belonged to (Mic. 3:8 = Is. 58:1).

Micah 3:9 *Please listen to this, you heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, who hate justice, and pervert all right judgment-* They didn't "know" justice in the sense of actively engaging with it; "know" means effectively to have relationship with (:1). By not knowing justice they hated it. They of course would have denied this; but God sees the implication of our actions and states them for what they really are. The words for "justice" and "right judgment" are typically associated with the characteristics of God Himself (Dt. 32:4). The leaders are called the 'leaders' of His people (:1) just as God is described with the same term in Mic. 2:13. They were to manifest God, to reflect His characteristics to others.

Micah 3:10 *They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity-* The great houses of Jerusalem were built on the basis of the fraud and theft they had committed, as detailed in :11 and also mentioned in Jer. 22:13; Ez. 22:27; and the records of Jerusalem's desolation stress the destruction of the great houses. Instead of building up Zion, they were in effect reducing her to rubble (:12).

Micah 3:11 *Her leaders judge for bribes-* Micah's contemporary Isaiah had also bemoaned this (Is. 1:23); it was a flagrant disobedience to the Law (Ex. 23:8; Dt. 16:19).

And her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money- As explained on :5, the fact the people paid for their teaching meant that the teachers taught what those paying them wanted to hear. And so the guilt of the nation was shared by the entire society; it wasn't just the false teachers and priests who were responsible, but those who paid them to tell them what they wanted to hear. The "fortune" they prophesied was that a wonderful Messianic kingdom would come soon, rather than destruction. Hence as explained on :6, the day of Yahweh which was coming would be night and not light for them, as in Am. 5:18,20.

Yet they lean on Yahweh and say, Isn't Yahweh in the midst of us? No disaster will come on us- The context of :12 suggests this is specifically concerning the false teachers of Judah. They assumed Yahweh was in their midst, and therefore they were invincible, because they had the Jerusalem temple and didn't worship in the calf shrines of the ten tribes. They felt that having the temple in their territory and using it was their automatic justification (Is. 48:2; Jer. 7:4,8-11). And the departure of the cherubim in Ez. 1 would suggest that the shekinah glory was still seen in the temple until the captivity. And yet they had built idol shrines within the Jerusalem temple (Mic. 1:5; Ez. 8). This is the problem with organized religion and religious symbols; simply being involved with them can lead to the false assumption that therefore Yahweh is with us, in our midst, and we must be on the right path.

"Lean" is a word often used by Micah's contemporary prophet Isaiah. Judah leaned or trusted upon their enemies rather than Yahweh (Is. 10:20), upon Egypt (Is. 31:1), upon their own deceit (Is. 30:12). And yet they also claimed to trust in Yahweh. This is not contradictory, but rather absolutely true to life; that effectively we can trust in human strength, whilst genuinely claiming to trust Yahweh. Rabshakeh mocks Judah for this, saying that they trusted or leaned upon Egypt, and yet also upon their God Yahweh (Is. 36:6; 37:10). Trust in Yahweh can only be total; anything less than total trust is not trust.

Yahweh was only "in the midst" of His people in the restored, Messianic Kingdom (s.w. Joel 2:27; Zeph. 3:15,17). But they assumed they had Him with them, when in fact their uncleanness precluded His real presence in their midst.

Micah 3:12 *Therefore Zion for your sake will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become heaps of rubble, and the mountain of the temple like the high places of a forest-* We can wrongly get the impression that the prophets droned on and were never really responded to. But Micah was different. These prophecies of his did elicit repentance. These words could have come true in his time, when the Assyrians invaded Judah; but they didn't, because there was sufficient repentance of a minority (Jer. 26:18,19), to the point that Jeremiah cites this as an appeal for the Judah of his day to repent. These words came only partially true in the Babylonian context. The Babylonian invasion left part of the temple still standing and even functional, although mount Zion was desolate (Lam. 5:18), but the foundations weren't plowed, although there were heaps of rubble (Neh. 2:17; 4:2). The only time Zion's foundations were plowed was by the Romans in AD70. And so we see how prophecy is conditional, just as in 40 days, Nineveh would have been destroyed. But the Ninevites repented, and it didn't happen. But the prophetic word does come finally true, even if it is reapplied and rescheduled. And so these words of Micah did come true in AD70.

MICAH CHAPTER 4

Micah Chapter 4

Micah 4:1 *But in the latter days, it will happen that the mountain of Yahweh's temple will be established on the top of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills; and nations will stream to it-* Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and these words are largely repeated in Is. 2:2-4. Micah also prophesied before Isaiah (Mic. 1:1), so it could be that Isaiah is quoting Micah. The "But..." suggests that after mount Zion is plowed as a field (Mic. 3:12), at some future point, it will be revived into the restored mount and temple of the Messianic kingdom which could have come about at the restoration. This didn't happen, and so we look to the latter day desolation of Zion, perhaps with the total destruction of the area to pave the way for an "abomination of desolation" to be built there, followed by the Lord's return to immediately replace that with the mountain of His house, exalted above all other kingdoms, great ["mountains"] and small ["hills"]; or we may prefer to interpret the mountains as the seven mountains upon which latter day Babylon sits, perhaps seven surrounding nations or power blocs, or seven kings (Rev. 17:9-11). But the theme of social justice is never absent from Micah. He has spoken of how the "houses" of the wealthy in Zion were those "taken away" from others (Mic. 2:2), and "taken away" is the same word here translated "exalted". All that petty grabbing of houses will be totally subsumed within the huge and eternal reality of the exaltation of *Yahweh's* house. The nations will stream or flow unto God's house / kingdom, whereas previously they streamed together to Babylon (s.w. Jer. 51:44). The word is used in Jer. 31:12 of how those who accept the new covenant will flow to Zion in order to receive Yahweh's goodness as well as literal food. So we can assume that these people who flow to Zion are those converted to the Lord Jesus at His return. This is confirmed in :2.

Micah 4:2 *Many nations will go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion will go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem-* This connects with the previous theme of Mic. 3, that Judah had despised Yahweh's law and acted unjustly directly contrary to it. But such would be their restoration, that from the disgraced Zion would go out Yahweh's law to all nations. The Divine vision was that when Judah returned from exile, the Gentile nations of their dispersion would come with them, just as many Egyptians came up with Israel out of Egypt. But this didn't happen at the restoration, and instead the Jews were heavily influenced by the Gentiles' religions and intermarried with them rather than being a light to them. And most of God's people didn't even return to Zion but chose to remain in their dispersion. As noted on Mic. 3:12, Divine prophecy can be reapplied and reinterpreted, but often only in essence rather than to the letter. And so we can see these words as having an ultimate fulfilment, but we would be unwise to insist upon a strictly literal exact fulfilment for them.

The ultimate fulfilment, as explained on :1, will be when repentant people flow to Zion to accept the new covenant. And this will involve learning God's ways, as expressed in the word and law which comes from Zion. That law doesn't have to be the law of Moses; it will be the law of the new covenant. The "law", *torah*, is a form of the verb just used, "to teach"; the idea is simply 'His teaching', and not specifically the Pentateuch or Decalogue.

Micah 4:3 *And He will judge between many peoples-* Ps. 72:4 uses this phrase to predict that Messiah would judge the *poor* and *needy* of the peoples. Again, Micah has social justice in view, seeing he has been condemning Israel's judges for failing in this; the idea is that they ought to have lived the kingdom life right now, as we should. But they didn't. Joel 3:2 uses the phrase concerning how the Lord will judge the peoples for how they have treated His

people Israel. And again, it is the abuse of the weak and downtrodden which will be the eternal issue.

And will decide concerning strong nations afar off- "Decide" is literally 'rebuke', and Micah's contemporary prophet Isaiah explains that the rebuke of the returned Lord Jesus will concern how they treat the poor and downtrodden (Is. 11:3,4); and that passage also says that He will rebuke not from what He sees before His eyes. As Micah puts it, He will be able to do this "afar off". We get the impression that at the Lord's return, the nations will not be forced into spirituality; they will still have their conflicts and tendencies to sin and abuse, and the Lord's word will address these issues. There will therefore be a process of time from His return to the final spiritual subjugation of the planet. Whether that period will be a literal 1000 years is a question I discuss in the commentary on Rev. 20, but a process of time is certainly implied. For it is not God's way to force anyone to accept His ways.

They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks- This will be a conscious reversal of the aggressive spirit of militarism into which the nations around Israel will have sunk in the immediate lead up to the Lord's return (Joel 3:10). The destruction of all military hardware is spoken of again in Hos. 2:18; Zech. 9:10.

Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more- The "war" of the context in Mic. 3:5 is aggression against others who don't agree with us and who stand up to unGodly behaviour. "Learn" is literally to goad, perhaps alluding to the destruction of all prodding spears; there will be no more provocation of conflict on whatever level.

Micah 4:4 *But they will sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and no one will make them afraid: for the mouth of Yahweh of Armies has spoken-* Sitting under ones own vine and fig tree is a picture of not being afraid, which is the context of :3; and the idiom is used like this in 1 Kings 4:25, meaning 'to dwell safely'. In the later day program, this may be the time of Ez. 38:11 (see note there) when Israel are re-established as God's Kingdom at the Lord's return, and then experience an unsuccessful invasion led by Gog. Zech. 3:10 says that the restored people of God will invite Gentiles to sit with them under their vine and fig tree; so the picture is not merely of peace and safety, but of peace with God in covenant with Him. We may legitimately interpret the vine and fig tree of God's people as Messiah, the true vine (Jn. 15).

Micah made this prophecy at a time when Assyria were offering their subject peoples to live under their own vine and fig tree (2 Kings 18:31,32), and likely Rabshakeh was alluding to Micah's words, claiming that the real Kingdom experience was available there and then, if only they accepted Assyrian domination. And so the promises of the Kingdom are replicated in the false claims of materialism today, and perhaps will be specifically claimed by the latter day antiChrist, a fake Christ offering a fake Kingdom of God.

Micah 4:5 *Indeed all the nations may walk in the name of their gods; but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God for ever and ever-* See on Is. 19:18. The idea may be that there will no coercion of the nations in the Messianic Kingdom; but rather the example of God's people walking in the Name of their God will convert the nations. And this principle is seen today; no true convert is one by coercion or high powered argument, but rather by the example of God's people. As noted on :4, the idea is that the restored people of God will invite others to come sit with them under their vine and fig tree (Zech. 3:10). But that will be by invitation and freewill response, and not coercion.

Micah 4:6 *In that day, says Yahweh, I will assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away-* This is all very much the language of limping Jacob being gathered home after his exile in Padan Aram. But in him we must see all of us. The results of sin and trusting in human strength will still be evident, but Jacob will still be regathered. In the primary context, those "driven away" would refer to those who went into captivity in Babylon and Assyria now returning and becoming the "strong nation" (:7) at the centre of God's revived Kingdom on earth. But that didn't work out, because most didn't want to return, and those who did didn't respond spiritually. And yet the prophecy will come true therefore in the last days; although this requires a later day 'driving away' of Jewish people from their land, perhaps spoken of in Is. 27:13 where the same word is used of the driven out ones in Egypt and Assyria. However, the Hebrew for "driven away" is that used of how God's people would be driven away from God by false teachers (Dt. 4:19; 13:5,10). And this may be the sense in which the prophecy comes true in the last days. For Micah has previously warned about the damage of the false prophets. Dt. 30:1,4,17 plays on the idea- Israel would be driven away from God, and so God would drive them away into captivity.

And that which I have afflicted- This is literally, 'done evil to'. It is proof enough that both good and 'evil' in the sense of calamity come from God. There is no space left for the existence of a personal, supernatural 'Satan' figure as the source of such 'evil'. The same word is used of evil in a moral sense in Mic. 3:4; Is. 1:16; Judah had done "evil" and so would receive "evil" from their invaders.

Micah 4:7 *And I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Yahweh will reign over them on Mount Zion from then on, even forever-* The allusion to Jacob continues; he limped after his exile, as a result of trusting in his own strength (Gen. 32:31). His return from exile is seen as representative of the exiles returning, which would be the time when God's Kingdom would be re-established under a Messianic figure and king. But the exiles who returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah failed to become "a strong nation". And so the prophecy has been reapplied and rescheduled to our last days. "The remnant" who repent and 'return' from their being 'driven away' from God (see on :6) will become the "strong nation" at the heart of God's restored Kingdom on earth. "Strong nation" is the very term used in the promises to Abraham about his seed (Gen. 18:18; Dt. 26:5). But "nation" is *goy*, typically used of Gentile nations. This is the paradox- that the seed of Abraham would also comprise Gentiles. This ought to have left all Jewish national pride and elitism stillborn had they thought about it.

Micah 4:8 *You, tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come-* The Kingdom will come to the temple mount when Yahweh in the person of His Son returns to establish His Kingdom based there. "Hill" is *ophel*, the name of part of Jerusalem, and a word also translated "tower". "The daughter of Zion" usually refers to the faithful remnant. It was Yahweh's hill, but also their hill. The tower or mound of Zion was the "tower of the flock", although a different word is used for "tower", *migdal*. Hezekiah and Jotham, in whose reigns Micah prophesied (Mic. 1:1), had built towers in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:5 s.w.), and Jotham had particularly built in Ophel (2 Chron. 27:3). There was a "great tower" in Ophel (Neh. 3:26,27) which was rebuilt at the time of the restoration. But this was not to be the full restoration of God's Kingdom on earth. The great towers recently built in Micah's time were not the real thing; a far greater "tower" was to be built in the Messianic kingdom. But "tower" effectively means 'city'; towers were built as the place of final refuge within a city and came to be iconic symbols of the city (Gen. 11:4,5; Jud. 8:9; 9:47,49,51; Ez. 26:4). In the parable of Isaiah 5, a prophecy contemporary with Micah, Yahweh says He had built a tower in the midst of His vineyard (Is. 5:2). "The flock" in view is that of restored, repentant Israel (Mic.

2:12), and there will be a tower built as shepherds built towers to watch their flocks. Yahweh's hill and tower of Zion was to be the place of safety, the hill, tower and Kingdom of His people, the regathered flock of Jacob (Mic. 2:12), parallel with "the daughter of Zion".

Another possibility is that *Edar*, "flock", refers to a village near Bethlehem where there was a shepherd's watchtower, perhaps used by David as a shepherd in that area. This would then prepare us for the forthcoming announcement in Mic. 5:2 that the Messianic king was to come from Bethlehem.

Yes, the former kingdom will return, the kingdom will come to the daughter of Jerusalem- The former kingdom returning speaks of the restoration of God's Kingdom on earth as it once was (Ez. 21:25-27). This restoration could have happened after the 70 years exile in Babylon, but it didn't happen as God intended. And so the prophecies have been reapplied and rescheduled to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Micah 4:9 Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pains have taken hold of you as of a woman in travail?- The crying aloud was in labour pains; and the "daughter of Zion" of Micah's day was corrupt. She would not bring forth a king, for her king was to be taken away from her into captivity and death (Jer. 52:9). Lam. 4:20 could imply that they believed that even in captivity they would still live under Zedekiah their king; but this was not to be. His counsellors would be proven wrong and perish. "Is there no king...?" effectively means 'he has been taken away'; the same literary device is found in Jer. 49:7 "Is wisdom no more in Teman?". The wisdom of Teman had been taken away. All this has reference to the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. But Micah prophesied in the time of Hezekiah, and this same figure of Zion in travail is used by him at the time of the Assyrian invasion (Is. 37:3). The labour pains at that time were to have issued forth in the rebirth of the nation, and perhaps in the 'birth' or coming of a Messianic king for the revived kingdom. But that didn't happen, although by grace, Zion was saved from her pains by the destruction of the Assyrian army by an Angel.

Micah 4:10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail- This is perhaps alluded to by Hezekiah in Is. 37:3; when the Assyrians surrounded the city, the remnant were in travail, but failed to bring forth the Messianic king and kingdom as a result of that travail. And so the pangs, as it were, came upon them again during the Babylonian invasion.

For now you will go forth out of the city- In surrender to their enemies (2 Kings 14:12; Is. 36:16). This could have happened at the time of the Assyrian invasion, but the response of a minority to Micah's message meant that it didn't. But it was to come true in the later Babylonian invasion.

And will dwell in the field, and will come even to Babylon. There you will be delivered- The idea was that through the experience of captivity in Babylon, dwelling in the fields in temporary camps (Ez. 3:15) and then taken to Babylon, a righteous remnant would be brought forth out of all the suffering there, which would return to Zion and re-establish God's Kingdom on earth. Micah's words are to be connected with those of Is. 39:6, where the punishment for the remnant not then being brought forth was that they would go to Babylon.

There Yahweh will redeem you from the hand of your enemies- Judah in exile were not redeemed from their enemies because most of them didn't want that redemption, and preferred to remain there. This prophecy will therefore have its final fulfilment in the last days, when again there will be travail in Jerusalem which will kill many (Mt. 24:8; 1 Thess.

5:3), but will result in the birth of a righteous remnant and the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth and final, ultimate redemption.

A rather different prophetic scenario is outlined in later Isaiah. Micah 4 suggests that the trauma of the Babylonian invasion was to be Zion's painful labour, but she would go to Babylon and there be delivered of a child- hinting surely at her repentance, bringing forth a spiritual child. Mic. 5:3 continues: "Therefore He will abandon them until the time that she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his brothers will return". Yahweh did abandon them in exile (Is. 54:7) but He put an end to that- even though Zion didn't give birth as intended. She didn't give birth to the child- instead she was given the Gentiles as children. But she refused them. In Isaiah, another scenario is presented, quite different and far more gracious than that found in Micah. Zion had not brought forth the child in Babylon. But God didn't abandon them. The idea was that although in Isaiah's time the child had come to the birth but there had been no strength to deliver (Is. 37:3), yet she would deliver the child in Babylon. But she didn't. In another figure, her children were dead and she was barren, laying drunk in the dust having drunk the wine of condemnation and having become addicted to it. And they had refused to accept the redemption from Babylon when it was offered. She had indeed been in labour pains but had brought forth the wind, nothing (Is. 26:17,18), they conceived chaff and brought forth stubble (Is. 33:11). Now, by absolute grace, God is offering yet another scenario, whereby the barren and bereaved Zion has children, without pain. And even then they resisted, retreating into hard right wing nationalism and xenophobia, resisting any idea of the Gentiles becoming Zion's spiritual children. And so God redefined Zion, and the essence of these things comes true for that new Jerusalem.

Micah 4:11 *Now many nations have assembled against you, that say, Let her be raped, and let our eye gloat over Zion-* The "now" may suggest that this prophecy was given when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrians and their mercenaries drawn from the surrounding nations. There was however the response of a remnant to the preaching of Micah, and therefore the seemingly inevitable capture of Jerusalem was averted by the Angelic destruction of the Assyrian army; see on :10 *For now you will go forth out of the city.* "Raped" or "defiled" suggests that the rape of a virgin is in view. Isaiah's recent prophecy that a virgin would bring forth the Messianic king at this time (Is. 7:14) was not to be fulfilled; she was to be raped. But Micah's ministry was partially successful; the response to his message was enough to stop the rape, but the virgin did not bring forth as she could have done; see on Mic. 5:1. And so she was finally raped to death in the later Babylonian invasion, as Jeremiah laments in Lamentations. And in Mic. 7:10 Micah appears to have perceived this.

Micah 4:12 *But they don't know the thoughts of Yahweh, neither do they understand His counsel-* The "they" could refer to the invading armies, who are the subject of the second half of the verse. But perhaps the referent of the "they" and "them" in the two parts of this verse are different. Those who don't know Yahweh's thoughts are Judah in Is. 55:8. They didn't perceive the possibilities of the Messianic king and kingdom at that time (Rom. 11:33).

For He has assembled them like the sheaves to the threshing floor- As noted on :11, this could have application to the time when the Assyrians were assembled around Jerusalem. Their destruction could have been the threshing floor judgment spoken of in other prophets as heralding the re-establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth. But Hezekiah let the baton drop. Although the repentance of a remnant averted the destruction of the city (see on Mic. 3:12), the great potential then possible for the more powerful establishment of God's Kingdom didn't come true.

Micah 4:13 *Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you will beat in pieces many peoples: and I will devote their gain to Yahweh, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth-* As noted on :12, this may speak of the potential possible for Judah after the destruction of the Assyrians outside the gates of Jerusalem. But the righteous remnant, the daughter of Zion with Hezekiah and the prophets within Jerusalem, didn't go forth and capitalize upon it as planned. Instead Hezekiah became proud and short-termist, and instead of threshing his enemies he accepted their gifts and devoted them to himself rather than to Yahweh. And likewise the Babylonian invaders could have been threshed, if the ministry of the later prophets at that time had been responded to (Is. 41:15,16; Jer. 51:33). And so all these potentials must come true in the latter day fulfilment, when a remnant repent and accept Jesus as Messiah. The Jews in Micah's time were glad that the immediate problem had been solved; the Assyrians lay dead outside Jerusalem. But they didn't heed Micah's call to go forth and thresh them and lead to the establishment of a Messianic Kingdom.

MICAH CHAPTER 5

Micah Chapter 5

Micah 5:1 *Now you shall gather yourself in troops, daughter of troops. He has laid siege against us-* The present tenses of Mic. 4:10-12 suggest that Micah was giving this prophecy whilst Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian armies. And here too- "Now... he *has* laid siege...". Micah's encouragement to gather troops was because he believed that God could give Judah the victory and they could then go out of Zion and thresh their enemies as the preceding verse required (Mic. 4:13).

They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek- Micah foresaw that the Assyrians were to capture Jerusalem and abuse her "judge", Hezekiah. But thanks to his preaching, a remnant repented, and so this didn't happen then (see on Mic. 4:11); but the potential of establishing a Messianic kingdom didn't come about. And so the prophecy was reapplied to the Lord Jesus, the true king of Zion, who was to be smitten with a rod in the cheek (Mt. 27:30). This was clearly in view, hence "judge" and not "king" is used.

Micah 5:2 *But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, being small among the clans of Judah, out of you one will come forth to Me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old-* As noted on :1 and Mic. 4:10-12, Micah was speaking of possibilities at his time. A ruler could have come forth who would have saved Israel and established a Messianic kingdom at that time. Not the Lord Jesus, but a ruler from Bethlehem, i.e. in the Davidic line. Clearly a pre-existent Divine being was not in view. That ruler didn't then emerge, the potential wasn't fulfilled, and so indeed it was reapplied to the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is no evidence here for the incorrect idea of His personal pre-existence. Bethlehem is mentioned to signal the fact that this individual would be in the Davidic line, and the Lord Jesus also was, on account of His mother Mary being in the direct Davidic line (Lk. 1:31-35). The very fact He was the *descendant* of David puts paid to all fantasies that He personally pre-existed from before all time and somehow came down literally from Heaven to earth, like some Divine comet. His fulfilment of the Davidic seed is reflected in the statement that His "goings forth are from of old". He was the seed of Abraham, of David, of Jacob, and of Eve- the one promised in all those promises of a great, Messianic saviour seed / descendant. Hence the plural: "goings forth". His origins (NAB, NIV, RSV) were in all those ancestors. This plural

is a problem for any attempt to interpret this as meaning that He was eternally existent. And He had origins [plural]; He was not uncreate, eternally pre-existent. He had origins, a concept inappropriate for a Divine being, seeing God is uncreate. And this ruler will accept Yahweh as "his God" (:4). The Trinitarian understanding of the Lord Jesus can't cope with this; the Trinity is a wrong turning in theological thought and needs to be abandoned.

The "ruler" was to come forth to "Me", God. This makes no sense if the Lord Jesus had existed eternally with God. The language is very similar to that of Jer. 30:21, where the same word for "ruler" is used: "Their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from their midst; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach to Me: for who is he who has had boldness to approach to Me? says Yahweh". This was the Messianic ruler which could have arisen at the restoration; and he could have arisen even in Micah's time as the Saviour of Judah from Assyria. None of these potentials worked out, and so the prophecy will come to its fulfilment in the final salvation of Israel by the Lord Jesus.

From everlasting- "From everlasting" doesn't have to mean that the ruler existed before time. He had "goings forth", or origins; that very fact means that He was not eternally existent, seeing He had a beginning. The idea of *olahm* here can simply be "from a long time ago", and other translations bear this out: "whose origins are in the distant past" (NET), "Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times" (NAB); "whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (NIV); "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (RSV); "whose going out has been purposed from time past, from the eternal days" (BBE); "whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (ESV). Other examples of where "from *olahm*" doesn't mean 'from infinite eternity' but rather 'from a long time ago, but within human history' include Gen. 6:4; Dt. 32:7; Josh. 24:2; 1 Sam. 27:8,15; Job 22:15; Prov. 22:8; Is. 58:12; 63:9,11; Jer. 5:15; Mal. 3:4. Most significantly, the Hebrew phrase here translated "from everlasting" is that used by Micah to mean "the days of old" (Mic. 7:14), referring to days earlier in Israel's history.

Micah 5:3 *Therefore He will abandon them until the time that she who is in labor gives birth-* As noted on Mic. 4:9,10, Micah prophesied in the time of Hezekiah, and this same figure of Zion in travail is used by him at the time of the Assyrian invasion (Is. 37:3). The labour pains at that time were to have issued forth in the rebirth of the nation, and perhaps in the 'birth' or coming of a Messianic king for the revived kingdom. But that didn't happen, although by grace, Zion was saved from her pains by the destruction of the Assyrian army by an Angel. Is. 26:17,18 speaks of this: "Like as a woman with child who draws near the time of her delivery and is in pain and cries out in her pangs; so we have been before You, Yahweh. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we gave birth, it seems, only to wind. We have not worked any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen". And so the Divine intention was that she would "bring forth" to spiritual maturity in captivity (Mic. 4:10). But until that time, God would "abandon" them. And yet that possibility also didn't really come to fruit. And so the prophecies of the virgin daughter of Zion bringing forth were reapplied to the birth of the Lord Jesus, the individual who epitomized the true Israel as God intended (Is. 7:14; 9:6). Remember that Isaiah was contemporary with Micah. This imagery would have been well understood between them. We marvel at how God tries so hard with people, and yet allows their freewill to be genuine; and yet His prophetic intentions will always come ultimately true.

Then the rest of his brothers will return to the children of Israel- At the intended restoration, Judah and Israel would be united. The "He" in view is the Messiah figure of :2. This figure could then have emerged from Bethlehem, but didn't. The potential wasn't used. The restoration is always presented as a time when Judah and Israel would together return,

not just physically from captivity but in repentance to God. But this is yet to happen; they didn't repent, and so the intended possible prophetic path didn't happen and had to be deferred in fulfilment.

Micah 5:4 *He shall stand*- Literally, stand up, perhaps a reference to the Messiah's resurrection, or exaltation.

And shall shepherd in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God: and they will live, for then he will be great to the ends of the earth- The Messiah figure of :2 was to shepherd the reunited people of God (:3). "They will live" recalls the restoration prophecy of Ez. 36, the revival of the dry bones of God's people in exile. But this prophecy didn't then come true as they refused to spiritually revive; it was deferred to a far greater fulfilment, in the literal resurrection of Israel from their graves at the Lord's second coming, when He will be great to the ends of the earth.

Micah 5:5 *He will be our peace when Assyria invades our land*- A Messianic leader born in Bethlehem could have saved Judah in Micah's time. But that didn't happen. And so these words will have a latter day application. Micah 5 speaks of how "the Assyrian" will be in conflict with the Lord Jesus, the one born in Bethlehem who will become "great unto the ends of the earth" at His return to earth when His brethren 'return' to Him (Mic. 5:1-4). The establishment of the Kingdom on earth and repentance of Israel will occur "when the Assyrian shall come into our land" and the Lord Jesus saves them from the invasion.

And when he marches through our fortresses- This latter day Assyrian will "tread down our palaces". This is likely an intensive plural for the great palace of Israel, the temple. The Lord Jesus uses this language in predicting that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until "the times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled (Lk. 21:24). These times of Gentile treading down of Jerusalem likely refer to the 1260 days / three and a half years of the final tribulation. The treading down of Jerusalem will therefore be by "the Assyrian", and capturing Jerusalem is the great goal of militant Islam. This is the treading down of God's people to be done by the little horn of Dan. 8:10. The little horn is therefore "the Assyrian"; and a charismatic leader of the Islamists would fit the job description exactly.

Then we will raise against him seven shepherds, and eight senior leaders of men- Seven, even eight could be read as three, even four in Am. 1,2. That is, a complete fullness of shepherds. The Messiah has just been called a shepherd in :4; perhaps the idea is that this latter day Messiah, the Lord Jesus, will have incorporated within Him many other shepherds. This would then refer to the believers and repentant Israel, who are "in" Christ. For we are to king-priests reigning over the earth at the Lord's return (Rev. 5:10). Or it may be that the Lord's Messianic administration has seven leaders. "Senior leaders of men" is literally "poured out [as offerings] Adams"; appropriate to those who have given their lives to Christ.

As in the prototype with Sennacherib, the destruction of Gog at the second coming will be by Angelic means under the command of Christ. The enigmatic Mic. 5:5 maybe refers primarily to Hezekiah's influence of Angelic forces in leading to the destruction of the Assyrian invader. This would point forward to Christ's use of the Angels to destroy Gog: "This man (Hezekiah/ Jesus) shall be the peace, when the Assyrian (Gog) shall come into our land... then shall we raise against him seven shepherds (an Angelic title in Ps. 80:1 and Is. 63:9-11; cp. the seven eye-Angels of Zechariah and Revelation), and eight princes of men"- another Angelic reference, seeing that "the prince of Persia" in Daniel was an Angel. Maybe this implies that the Angels will use other nations as a means of defeating Gog. Perhaps it is to the seven Angel-spirits of Revelation and Zechariah that Micah refers: "When the Assyrian shall come into our land. . . shall we raise against him (in warfare, the Hebrew implies- cp.

Obadiah 1) seven shepherds, and eight princes of men" (Mic. 5:5). The only beings to fight the Assyrians were the Angels who slew them, seeing that the Jews scarcely fired an arrow in anger at them. Both "shepherd" and "prince" are Angelic titles (see Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:9-11 and Josh. 5:14; Dan. 10:13; 12:1 respectively). The Angels could be "princes of men" as those in Daniel were both princes of Heaven and also of human nations, e. g. Persia.

Micah 5:6 *They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in its gates. He will deliver us from the Assyrian, when he invades our land, and when he marches within our border-* The deliverance from the Assyrian invader within the land borders of Israel will result also in dominating the land of Assyria. This never happened historically, although it had been potentially possible. But it will happen in a moment at the Lord's return. "Marches" is literally 'to tread'; see on :5 *And when he marches through our fortresses*. Micah opened his prophecy by saying that Yahweh through the invaders would tread down Israel (s.w. Mic. 1:3). But now in His grace He will rescue Israel from that judgment through Messiah.

Micah 5:7 *The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from Yahweh, like showers on the grass-* The dropping of dew was understood as the teaching of doctrine (Dt. 32:2). The repentant remnant were to go out and teach the Gentile world. This is consciously alluding to the then-famous Messianic prophecy of Ps. 72:6: "*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth*". The blessings Messiah brings are to be articulated through the witness of those in Him. Those who have lived in Him will then shine as the brightness of the firmament (Dan. 12:3). But the description of the Lord's face shining as the sun draws on this; as if to say that our shining in the future Kingdom will be because we were and are in Him. We will shine forth then (Mt. 13:43), as the Sun of righteousness Himself.

That don't wait for man, nor wait for the sons of men- The idea may be that men must respond to the teaching and offer of salvation quickly, or else they will miss it, and it will be gone for ever. See on :15.

Micah 5:8 *The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the animals of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is no one to deliver-* The preceding verse :7 has spoken of the remnant teaching the nations, but that teaching would be as the dew which appears only briefly. If that teaching will be rejected, then judgment will follow immediately. And the once downtrodden remnant are described in the very language used of their invaders- young lions and a mature lion. This therefore means that the invaders will be treated by Israel as they treated Israel- unless they repent. This is exactly the outline picture of the book of Revelation; the seals of judgment upon Israel are the basis of the bowls of judgment then poured out upon those who judge Israel in the last days. The tearing into pieces by Israel will then bring about the destruction of the image of Dan. 2 into little pieces. Repentant Israel "in Christ" will be as the little stone which falls in judgment.

Micah 5:9 *Let your hand be lifted up above your adversaries-* Jeremiah quotes this phrase exactly in Lam. 2:17, lamenting what Babylon had done to Judah and the temple. Now that was to be finally reversed. This is the same theme as in Revelation, as noted on :8. The repentant remnant will judge their abusers as they dealt with God's people.

And let all of your enemies be cut off- This could be Micah's statement of approval upon the prophecy in :8 that finally, the repentant remnant of Jacob would destroy their enemies, after having first given them the opportunity to repent (see on :7). The phrase quotes what is repeatedly said about all David's enemies being cut off (1 Sam. 20:15; 2 Sam. 7:9; 1 Chron.

17:8). Those enemies referred not only to Saul but to the nations around David; and it is the neighbours of Israel who are the continual focus of latter day prophecies.

Micah 5:10 *It will happen in that day, says Yahweh, That I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you, and will destroy your chariots-* Horses and chariots from Egypt were what Judah in Micah's time had trusted in. However there is a purposeful ambiguity in :10-15; these words could refer to the pagan invaders, the "nations" of :15 (see note there), and yet also to the Jews of Micah's time. They were acting like the Gentiles, and so would meet an identical judgment. All military technology which had seemed so invincible will be rendered useless; and we note an increasing dependence upon technological defence and deterrents in the Middle East situation.

Micah 5:11 *I will cut off the cities of your land, and will tear down all your strongholds-* Again, as noted on :10, this could apply equally to Israel as well as to their enemies. It is a theme of the prophets that all human defences shall collapse (as Is. 2:15), and we are to live daily life in that awareness too.

Micah 5:12 *I will destroy witchcraft from your hand; and you shall have no soothsayers-* There was recourse to these things in Micah's time as the situation got more desperate before the Assyrian advance (also noted in Is. 2:6; 47:12), although the historical record doesn't mention it. The "soothsayers" may refer to the false prophets whom he has criticized in Mic. 2. If Israel had been obedient to the commands about these things in Dt. 18:10, there would have been no need for their day of judgment to have as it were made them obedient in these matters. And so we are left with a powerful logic- we either accept God's ways now, or the condemnation process will lead us to accept them all too late. Hence John the Baptist offered his audience either fire now, or the fire of damnation at the last day.

Micah 5:13 *I will cut off your engraved images and your pillars out of your midst; and you shall no more worship the work of your hands-* The essence of idolatry is to worship or trust our own works. And we can do this without any images or pillars in a literal sense. The invaders of those times liked to destroy the images of the gods of those they had vanquished, and God says that He will do this, through working with the invaders. But as noted on :12, if Israel had cut them off themselves, they wouldn't have needed a day of condemnation through which it would be achieved. Pillars were acceptable when they merely marked a place of Yahweh's appearance or worship (Gen. 31:13,45), but as with nehushtan, the bronze serpent, those pillars became turned into idols (1 Kings 14:23). The attraction was that they mixed Yahweh worship with the paganism of the flesh; and this is our abiding temptation. For Yahweh demands our all, and not worship of the gods of this world in the name of worshipping Him.

Micah 5:14 *I will uproot your Asherim out of your midst; and I will destroy your cities-* The Asherim were what the Canaanites worshipped, and Israel had been specifically told to uproot their groves (Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5). If they had done that, as explained on :12, they wouldn't have required the day of judgment to do it. We see too that if we allow weakness in one area, the problem is that it morphs and multiplies over time into things which will lead us totally away from God. Their "cities" are paralleled with their Asherim, the tree groves in the countryside. They likely considered that what they did in some lonely spot was somehow different to their normal city life; but all of life is to be sanctified to God, and so this mentality is directly attacked here- and we too need to take heed.

Micah 5:15 *I will execute vengeance in anger, and wrath on the nations that didn't listen-* The idea may be that the "vengeance" is upon Israel, but the surrounding nations will likewise share in it; see on :10. But they will have been given the chance to "listen" (see on :7), and are only judged after they refuse the final appeal by the repentant remnant.

MICAH CHAPTER 6

Micah Chapter 6

Micah 6:1 *Listen now to what Yahweh says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear what you have to say-* As often in the prophets, the analogy of a courtroom meeting is used. God invites His people to answer the case He makes against them through Micah. The case is to be made very public- shouted wide and loud enough for the mountains to hear it. Or pleading before the mountains could be a reference to the fact that the "high places" were literally on the uplands. It is the spirit of Gideon's father, "let Baal plead" for himself, and Elijah asking Israel to witness a legal standoff between Yahweh and the false gods.

Micah 6:2 *Hear, you mountains, Yahweh's controversy-* Remember that Isaiah was contemporary with Micah (Mic. 1:1); and Isaiah likewise invites God's people to reason or enter into judgment together with God (Is. 1:18). The whole idea of course begs the obvious conclusion from the start- God is right, and He will be proven right. Any thought of entering into judgment with God should of itself provoke our immediate capitulation and casting of ourselves upon His grace.

And you enduring foundations of the earth- The LXX suggests "the valleys". But the allusion may be to the myth that the *eretz* / land of promise was upheld by foundations (Gen. 49:26; Dt. 33:15). As with the usage of the language of demons, God in His word does at times go along with wrong understandings, and reasons for a moment as if they are correct, in order to engage with people in their own terms of reference and understanding.

For Yahweh has a controversy with His people, and He will contend with Israel- This continues the courtroom analogy. God is taking out a case against His people. And He is also the judge of all the earth, although He invites them to be the judges. He humbles Himself to simply present the evidence of His case. Man stands self-condemned before God, and the quicker we personally realize that, the better. The judgment of the last day is for those who have not condemned themselves in this life; see on 1 Cor. 11:31,32. God is moving toward us too in judgment, and the only thing to do is to repent and totally capitulate; see on Lk. 14:31.

Micah 6:3 *My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you?-* Some time later, in Ezekiel's time, the people complained that they were suffering unjustly for the sins of their ancestors. This sense that God was somehow unfair was around in Micah's time. Hence the usage of the courtroom analogy. To answer before God is an awesome idea; to reply to Him, the God of all grace, against the accusation that He has treated us unreasonably is a terrifying idea. As noted above, Yahweh is presented not as the judge but as the complainant, and we are left to judge. By implication, they were claiming God had sinned against man (Jer. 2:5) and burdened them with commandments (Is. 43:23); and in those passages, God in the dock asks Israel to give evidence. Romans uses the same idea, of God in the dock accused by men.

And we are left as the judges to immediately conclude that this is deeply wrong. God did not burden His people with legal requirements, because even in the period of the old covenant, He often states that He asks not for ritualistic obedience but for humble, faithful hearts. See on :6.

The truth was that Israel had burdened / wearied God by their insincere rituals (s.w. Is. 1:14; 7:3). Their attitudes implied that they considered that relationship with Him was a burden and wearisome (Mal. 1:13). But this was a false accusation; God has not wearied man, but the other way around.

Answer me!- "Answer me!" is literally, testify, provide evidence (Num. 35:30). And the most hardened atheist and cynic cannot do so when actually in court with God. The bravado of words said over the coffee tables and tapped on social media will soon collapse.

Micah 6:4 *For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage. I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam-* This is cited as the parade example of the fact God loves His people and has poured grace upon them. With us too, the fact we were called out of this world, God intervening in our lives to engage us with the Gospel's call, is really a parade example of His grace. This means we should never accuse God of being unfair. His grace in calling us is enough. Historically, God's bringing up of His people from Egypt was all of Divine grace. The phrase is used of Abraham being brought up from Egypt after his deceit regarding his wife, which would usually have resulted in death (Gen. 13:1); Joseph's family were likewise brought up out of Egypt after having been released by the grace of Joseph-Jesus (Gen. 45:25). And the bringing up of the nation from Egypt when they were still worshipping the idols of Egypt was likewise of pure grace. The redemption of Israel from the house of bondage is the very phrase used in Dt. 7:8, as the exemplification of the simple fact that "Yahweh loved you" and kept His side of the covenant when Israel broke it. Because of this redemption from bondage, Israel were to be obedient to the covenant (Dt. 15:15; 24:18). And not to complain that such a duty was in any sense an unreasonable burden.

Micah 6:5 *My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of Yahweh-* This again is an example of grace which should answer any complaint that God has been unreasonable or harsh toward Israel. Israel at Balaam's time were still worshipping the idols of Egypt which they had taken with them out of Egypt. They were weak. But God's answer to Balak was to inspire Balaam to reveal how God imputed righteousness to Israel. He had not seen any iniquity in them, and beheld them in their encampments as beautiful and without spot (Num. 23:21; 24:5,6). They passed from Shittim to Gilgal, from the wilderness journey over the Jordan into the promised land, by absolute grace. Righteousness was imputed to them, as Paul would later put it in Romans. Here again was grace; and yet it was done as a 'righteous act', which again is a big theme with Paul. God counts the sinful as sinless without infringing morality, ethics nor righteousness; because He held in mind the future work of His son.

Micah 6:6 *How shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself before the exalted God?*- The high or "exalted" God is a phrase used only twice elsewhere. God was made high or exalted by His justice / righteousness, which was revealed above all in His redemption of His faithless people from Egypt (Ps. 68:18; 71:19).

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?- This is one of the many Old Testament hints that the Mosaic sacrifices of themselves couldn't reconcile sinful

Israel with God. It is an answer to the complaint that God had burdened Israel with the law (see on :3). The reference to calves is an allusion to the calf worship of the ten tribes, which was presented as a form of Yahweh worship.

Micah 6:7 *Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams? With tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my disobedience? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*- This again is an answer to the complaint that God had burdened Israel with the law (see on :3). Micah comes to the point where he would fain make sacrifice for Israel, even to the point of offering his firstborn son, so strongly did he take upon himself the sins of his people; he felt their sins as the sins of his very soul. But he tells Israel that even this will be no good; they must repent themselves. In all this, Micah came close to the spirit of the Father and Son. For the Father *would* give His firstborn for their sin. And the Lord Jesus likewise totally identified with the sins of Israel and all God's people, whilst being personally innocent. "Disobedience" is the same word used in the contemporary prophecy of Is. 53:5,8 of how the suffering Messiah would bear Israel's transgression or disobedience, as God's firstborn dying for their sin. In :4, allusion was made to how God redeemed Israel from Egypt- through the blood of the lamb representing the firstborns. Micah may be implying that *he* and indeed no man could offer his firstborn for Israel's sin; but *God* could, and all man can do is to humbly respond as explained in :8. Perhaps he is making the same point by way of allusion to Ps. 132:11, where Messiah is called the fruit of David's body; and Micah is saying that the fruit of *his* body, therefore, would not suffice.

Micah 6:8 *He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does Yahweh require of you-* Instead of sacrifice and legalistic obedience (:7), this was what God required. In this sense, it was just untrue that the law of Moses was a burden upon Israel (see on :3). The implication is that God had already 'shown' His people what was required of them. The same word is used of how Micah himself was to show or "declare" God's requirements to Israel (Mic. 3:8). Perhaps the idea was that Micah himself was the declaration of what God required of His people at that time. The voice of Yahweh which called to the city in :9 was that of Micah personally. As noted throughout this commentary, Micah was the declaration of God to Israel and yet he also totally identified with sinful Israel. This was the basis of his appeal to them; and in these things he pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, of human nature and yet Divine character. The parallel in Isaiah is when again God enters the courtroom with His people: "Learn to do well, seek justice, relieve the oppressed judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is. 1:17). "Seek" is the same word here translated "require".

But to act justly- This is the same phrase as in Gen. 18:19; this was to be the lead characteristic of all the true seed of Abraham. And that is true of us to this day. Is. 56:1 urges Israel to do this, so that the Kingdom's re-establishment might be hastened. But there was not a man who did this in the lead up to Judah's destruction (Jer. 5:1; 7:5). Had Judah done this, the Babylonian destruction would not have come (Jer. 22:3,15), and a Messianic kingdom could have come, when Messiah would "act justly" (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). The people were being asked to act like Him in this life. And Micah, at the time of the Assyrian invasion, is saying the same; and it seems some did respond, and the planned destruction at the hands of Sennacherib didn't happen. But finally, Judah was destroyed, and that is described as God acting justly (Ez. 5:8). As noted earlier, the judgment process brings about what men ought to have done by their freewill decisions in this life. To "act justly" was to act in a way that no other nation did (Ez. 11:12,20). True justice is the unique possibility of the true people of God. To "act justly" is the lead characteristic of the righteous (Ez. 18:5,8,9,17,19,21,27; 33:16,19 and often in the prophets); and that is true of us God's people to this day. It is the behaviour of those in the new covenant (Ez. 36:27; 37:24). Micah concludes, as one who has

done justly, in appealing for God to do justly for him (Mic. 7:9); and that justice is done on the basis of imputed righteousness.

To love mercy- This love of mercy, a love of being merciful, is the characteristic of God toward those in the new covenant (Jer. 31:3). And it is for us, as it was for Israel then, to reflect our experience of this in our attitudes to those who need our mercy.

And to walk humbly with your God?- Walking humbly is the essence of it all. The humility which comes from realizing our sins will empower us too to "love mercy" and be just. The only other occurrence of the Hebrew word here translated "humbly" is in Prov. 11:2: "With the humble is wisdom". And it is this wisdom which is spoken of now in :9.

It is tempting to see a parallel between these three things [justice, mercy and walking humbly with God] and Mt. 23:23, which also says that instead of legalistic obedience, God wanted "justice, mercy *and faith*". "Humility" here is therefore understood by the Lord Jesus as "faith". And the two are indeed connected; for to walk in humility is to walk in faith, for without humility there can be no true faith. One spiritual attribute strengthens and enables another.

Micah 6:9 *Yahweh's voice calls to the city, and wisdom sees your name-* The way of wisdom was to see in all the appeals to "the city", presumably Jerusalem, the articulation of God's Name / character as declared in Ex 34:5-7. It was the wisdom which comes from the humility of :8 (Prov. 11:2). And there is another allusion to Proverbs, in that wisdom's "voice calls" to the city in Prov. 8:1-4. The 'voice that calls' is ultimately that of Messiah and His herald, appealing for Israel's repentance (Is. 40:3,6; 58:1). And yet the same 'voice that calls' was the voice that called forth the invaders to come and judge Jerusalem (Ez. 9:1).

Listen to the rod, and He who appointed it- The Assyrians were the rod of God's anger against His people, appointed by Him (Is. 10:5); the appeal was to have the wisdom of humility (Prov. 11:2) to perceive that it was God acting behind them.

Micah 6:10 *Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a short ephah that is accursed?-* "Are there yet...?" suggests the people should have repented by this stage. They needed to urgently give away the results of their fraud, and no longer use false weights. The fact Micah's message resulted in the Assyrian invasion being turned back by God means that at least some responded to his desperate, urgent appeal. "Accursed" is perhaps better "which provokes indignation" (s.w. Zech. 1:12). God's utter indignation was against the quiet, subtle dishonesty of those who made the ephah weigh to the slight advantage of the wicked. I say "slight" because anything too obviously dishonest wouldn't have been credible. Here again we have a major message from a minor prophet. This kind of thing kindles God's deepest ire.

Micah 6:11 *Shall I be pure with dishonest scales, and with a bag of deceitful weights?-* As noted on :10, this kind of thing provoked God's deepest fury, as it does today. The connection with the contemporary words of Isaiah is to Is. 1:16 "Make you clean [s.w. "pure"], put away the evil of your doings". Micah is saying that response to Isaiah's opening call to repentance isn't going to be possible if they continue with their deceitful weights. But more than that, Micah stands as representative of Judah: "Shall I be pure...". Perhaps it was his willing representation of Judah which alone led to the aversion of judgment upon Jerusalem at Sennacherib's time.

Micah 6:12 *Her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their speech-* The rich leaders and the ordinary inhabitants are paralleled; Judah

was not to be judged simply because of the sin of the minority who were wealthy. The ordinary people were guilty in essence of the same sins. And speaking lies and deceitfully is paralleled with "violence". This is typical of the prophets- to juxtapose apparently minor, quiet sins with major ones; for it is the quiet, subtle sins which are such abomination to God. See on :10. Lying and deceit are likewise mentioned by Isaiah as major reasons for Judah's judgment (Is. 32:7; 59:3,13). It was the false prophets who spoke lies and deceit (Jer. 29:23; Zech. 13:3), but they spoke to a people who did the same.

Micah 6:13 *Therefore I also have struck you with a grievous wound. I have made you desolate because of your sins-* This paradox is also used by the contemporary Isaiah; the wound was incurable, the people and nation had to die. And yet they could still repent and be healed. See on Mic. 1:9. This was the urgency of Micah's appeal; that an incurable illness could be cured. They had already been made desolate, the word of desolation had been spoken, in fulfilment of Lev. 26:32; but in the gap between the pronouncement of judgment and the fulfilment of it, repentance was possible. This was the urgency and intensity of Micah's appeal.

Micah 6:14 *You shall eat, but not be satisfied-* This continues the allusions to the curses for breaking covenant with God (Lev. 26:26). Being never satisfied is the curse of the condemned (Ps. 59:15; Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). Yet the wicked experience this in this life; sin never satisfies them. And this will be their final experience at the last day. Whereas the righteous can live satisfied lives, looking back in satisfaction at God's grace, at lives well lived. The life of endlessly seeking satisfaction without finding it is therefore living out our own condemnation.

Your humiliation will be in your midst- They ought to have humbled themselves (:8), but if they refused, then they would be humbled through the process of condemnation. The humbling of flesh before God must be achieved; either now, or in condemnation.

You will store up, but not save; and that which you save I will give up to the sword- This is so true of our present society. The culture of individualism, breakup of family and the care families have historically provided in old age, fear of the unknown, the need for funds to survive after we stop working... this has all led to a mentality of storing up. They saved up ["that which you save"], but in another sense they didn't ["but not save"]; because the ultimate end was decreed.

Micah 6:15 *You will sow, but won't reap-* The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

You will tread the olives, but won't anoint yourself with oil; and crush grapes, but won't drink the wine- This again continues the references to the curses for disobedience to the covenant (Dt. 28:39). Dissatisfaction was the curse, and yet living a materialistic life is itself the life of dissatisfaction. Such people live out their own condemnation. Perhaps Micah was predicting that the destruction was to come within months from when he was speaking; they

had trodden their grapes and sown their crops, but the invasion would come before the harvest or before the grape juice had fermented. Micah was therefore speaking very close to the intended Assyrian destruction of Jerusalem. The fact the Lord destroyed the Assyrian armies is therefore a testament to the effectiveness of Micah's appeal for repentance; or perhaps to the power of his own intense mediation for Judah.

The LXX adds: "And the ordinances of my people shall vanish away", looking forward to how :16 describes a set of ordinances or commands for idol worship which were established by Israel's kings and followed by many in Judah.

Micah 6:16 *For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab. You live by their commands, that I may make you a ruin, and her inhabitants a hissing-* Judah prided themselves on not following the sins of the ten tribe kingdom, but in reality, they did. The laws and commands of Omri were kept rather than those of Yahweh. Ahab and Omri had therefore issued specific commandments regarding idol worship, perhaps presented as part of Yahweh worship; and the people religiously kept them. Again we see that the fatal temptation is to justify sin in the name of righteousness, and in essence this is our problem too.

And you will bear the reproach of my people- LXX "the reproach of the nations". This would be in line with frequent predictions that the nations would "hiss" at condemned Judah and reproach her (Ez. 34:29; 36:6,15 etc.).

MICAH CHAPTER 7

Micah Chapter 7

Micah 7:1 *Misery is mine! Indeed, I am like one who gathers the summer fruits, as gleanings of the vineyard: There is no cluster of grapes to eat* Having just said that Israel would sow and not reap (Mic. 6:15), Micah feels as if summer has come, and he has gone to gather the harvest, but there is hardly any. Just the equivalent of left over gleaning quality harvest. This may imply that the harvest had been done by someone else; perhaps he envisages himself as picking up the pieces of a tiny repentant remnant after it. Although there was no cluster of grapes, there were a few odd grapes here and there, the kind of thing left behind for gleaning by the poor. Or perhaps this speaks of the tiny remnant who did respond to Micah's message, just a grape here and there; and that was enough for God to change His plans of destroying Jerusalem by the Assyrians.

The voice of the prophets didn't go entirely unheeded. A tiny minority responded. Isaiah had his school of disciples, referred to in Isaiah 8. The books of the prophets were presumably written up (under inspiration) by their disciples, and the biographical sections added by them. So the very existence of the books of the prophets itself indicates they had some converts who hung on and valued their every word. And yet despite this, the prophets felt lonely men, despite the converts they made- Jeremiah "sat alone" (Jer. 15:17). Not only was their perspective on human sinfulness so very different to that of their audience. They preached a message which was counter-cultural and attacked the very bases of the assumptions which lay at the core of individual and social life in Israel. They appeared to back Israel's enemies. Their message was therefore rejected by the vast majority.

My soul desires to eat the early fig- But the lack of wider response was indeed a "misery" to Micah, just as human indifference to our message should not be met by our indifference to that fact. He really wanted their repentance. His desire for the early fig was a desire to see at least some spiritual fruit in Israel, and is alluded to in Mt. 21:19; Micah's character looked forward to the passion of the Lord Jesus in desiring spiritual fruit, however immature, like an early fig, but at least something.

This leads to the reflection that Micah 7 is a prophecy shot through with Messianic allusion. Mic. 7:4 is alluded to in Mt. 7:16. The Lord openly quoted Mic. 7:6 concerning himself and His men in Mt. 10:35,36. There are many references to the Lord's betrayal and arrest: "They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net" (7:2 = Jn. 8:59; 10:31,39; 11:8). "The prince (Herod) asketh (for a sign, Lk. 23:8), the judge (Pilate) asketh for a reward; and the great man (Caiaphas the High Priest) he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up" (Mic. 7:3), i.e. hatch their plot together. Because of this, "the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh" (Mic. 7:4 = Lk. 19:44). See on :5.

Micah 7:2 *The Godly man has perished out of the land*- Isaiah uses the same word for "perish" to lament the same situation, where "the righteous perish and none lays it to heart" (Is. 57:1). Although it seemed that generally there were no good men left in the land, Micah like Elijah was overlooking the critical importance of the remnant of whom he has just spoken in :1, a grape here and there. But as noted on :1, the reference may here look forward specifically to the Lord Jesus the Messiah, "the Godly man".

And there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net- The spiritual situation at the time of Hezekiah was very low indeed. An individual like Hezekiah with the help of a small minority might impose reforms and appear to redirect the majority toward Godliness, but often the real spiritual level amongst the congregation is very low indeed. It is not the leadership which are specifically criticized here; "every man" was at war with his brother. And our attitude to our brother is chosen as the litmus indicator of how "upright" we are. To hunt with the net implies they considered their brothers small game, small animals who could be caught with a net for their own gain.

Micah 7:3 *Their hands are on that which is evil to do it diligently*- Evil had become a focus and obsession for them. This is the nature of sin; the apparently little things of falsifying weights led to a way of life focused upon it, with both hands (Heb.).

The ruler and judge ask for a bribe; and the powerful man dictates the evil desire of his soul- As noted on :1, this spirit came to its full term in the way the Jews condemned the innocent Lord Jesus. We note that even amidst the reforms of Hezekiah, the judiciary and leadership were utterly corrupt. Genuine spirituality was always in a minority; but that minority was significant enough in God's eyes for the Assyrian army to be slain and Jerusalem saved from the intended destruction. Or, as I have suggested earlier, it was the single intercession of Micah and others which was acceptable to Him, just as likely God would have saved Sodom for the sake of *one* man, or even just Abraham's intercession, had Abraham had the spiritual vision to perceive that.

Thus they conspire together- There was a feedback between the sinful desires of the powerful, and the openness of the judges to bribes. The one encouraged the other, until society slipped into a headlong rush into sin. We earlier noted on Mic. 2 that the desires of the people likewise led the false prophets to prophesy what the people wanted to hear. An upward spiral of spirituality in any group of people is so much harder to initiate and sustain, but it is possible; for the body of Christ makes increase of itself in love.

Micah 7:4 *The best of them is like a brier. The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge*- Even amongst sinners, God seems to grade them. There are better and worse sinners. This reflects His extreme sensitivity to sin and careful calculation of the meaning of every sin.

The day of your watchmen, even your visitation, has come; now is the time of their confusion- The watchmen were the prophets; "the day" they had predicted of Yahweh's judgment "has come" in Micah's time. The word is used of Micah personally in :7, and we

can imagine that he had the school of prophets centered around Isaiah in view (Is. 8:18). And yet by grace, the day of Jerusalem's destruction was averted, thanks to Micah's ministry. What was "now" was still changed. "Confusion" is only used elsewhere in the contemporary Is. 22:5, where it is the time when Zion's walls should be broken down. That was effectively "now", but was changed. It did indeed come about in the Babylonian invasion, but that was a rescheduled fulfilment of the words of Isaiah and Micah.

Micah 7:5 Don't trust in a neighbour. Don't put confidence in a friend. With the woman lying in your embrace, be careful of the words of your mouth!- As noted earlier in this chapter, those who were truly with the Lord were just a grape here and there on a harvested tree. Being part of such a tiny minority was a lonely experience. Micah implies that this minority were liable to betrayal by their family members, and perhaps he had had the same experience with his own wife (Dt. 13:6) and relatives. Again we see that the judiciary and ruling classes even under Hezekiah were not only morally corrupt but abusive towards the righteous remnant. This is something not immediately apparent in the historical records.

The application to the Lord Jesus is clear. "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide (reference to Judas- Ps. 55:13): keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom". This begins a reference to Samson's experience with Delilah. "I will look unto the Lord (Samson first used the Yahweh Name when he cried in his final suffering)... my God will hear me (cp. "Hear me this once")... rejoice not against me, O mine enemy (the Philistines mocking Samson): when I fall, I shall arise (Heb. elsewhere used about the resurrection); when I sit in darkness (Samson sitting in blindness in the prison), the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him (Samson's thoughts, surely), until he plead my cause ("Remember me")... will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy (Delilah, symbol of the Philistines to Samson) shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me (as Delilah did?), Where is Yahweh thy God? mine eyes shall behold her (is this Samson imagining the judgment, with restored eyesight?)". If these connections are valid- and it is hard to deny this- then Samson died full of vision of the resurrection, judgment and the final manifestation of his forgiveness which he would then receive. Paul likewise has plenty of these references in his final writings in 2 Tim. 4. One question remains: why are there these Samson references in a prophecy of the Lord's betrayal? Surely Samson was a type of Christ. It could be that the Lord Jesus was being warned, prophetically, of how a particular woman could be his undoing, as she was Samson's. The way the Messianic Proverbs warn the Son of God against a particular woman lend weight to this. Or it could be that in the same way as Delilah betrayed Samson, so Judas was to betray Jesus, and He would go through the same gamut of emotions. This would be why this prophecy of His betrayal is described in terms of Delilah's betrayal of Samson.

Micah 7:6 For the son dishonours the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house- These words are alluded to in the Olivet prophecy. The situation in Jerusalem in Micah's time on the eve of the Assyrian invasion was to be that in the Jerusalem of both AD70 and the last days. And we wonder whether Micah's own family had experienced this situation, with Micah divided even from his own wife (:5). We know that he was married, for he speaks of his firstborn son in Mic. 6:7.

Micah 7:7 But as for me, I will look to Yahweh- "Look" is the same word as "watch[man]" in

:4. Micah is saying that despite the overall lack of response to his message, even amongst his own family, he will focus on his prophetic ministry as a watchman.

I will wait for the God of my salvation- Judah at that time had forgotten the God of their salvation (s.w. Is. 17:10), but Micah had not, and on this basis it seems God was prepared to accept him standing for Judah.

My God will hear me- Micah expresses faith that God would hear *him*, strengthening the suggestion made that the averting of the Assyrian destruction of Jerusalem was due to his personal intercession.

Micah 7:8 *Don't rejoice against me, my enemy. When I fall, I will arise. When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me*- I have suggested on :7 and elsewhere that Micah personally was counted as God's people, and his intercession on that basis was accepted, resulting in the salvation of Jerusalem at his time from the otherwise inevitable Assyrian judgment. And so "my enemy" refers to Israel's enemy, Assyria. Micah expected the fall of Judah and the threatened darkness of judgment descending, but believed that just as he would be saved out of it, so would Judah. It was the Judah and Jerusalem specifically of Micah's day who were to "fall" under Divine judgment (Is. 8:15; 30:25). Indeed, they were to fall and *not* rise again (Is. 24:20). But Micah was confident that he would fall with Judah and rise again, and God accepted this and therefore Judah did rise again. We see foretold the power of the Lord's rising again in resurrection, through which all identified with and in Him would thereby be justified. And yet finally Judah refused to make this identification, and so they did fall, as stated so often (Ez. 5:12; 6:4 etc.).

The "darkness" was that of Divine judgment (Is. 5:30; 59:9; Lam. 3:2; Joel 2:2; Am. 5:18), because Judah themselves had preferred darkness to the light of God's ways (Is. 5:20; Ez. 8:12). It was through the work of Messiah that those who sat in darkness would see light (Is. 9:2; 58:10; 60:2), and Micah surely alludes to these words [remember Isaiah was contemporary with him]. Whilst not claiming to be Messiah, he interceded for Judah in the spirit of Messiah, and so his personal darkness [on account of association with God's condemned people] was turned to light, and he was accepted as the representative of God's people. The hope of Israel was to finally come out of the darkness of judgment (Is. 29:18; 42:7; 49:9), and Micah represented the people.

Micah 7:9 *I will bear the indignation of Yahweh, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case, and executes judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light. I will see His righteousness*- As explained on :8, Micah was Judah's representative. He was innocent, but he totally identified with their sin. In the metaphor of God having opened a court case against Israel, Micah as it were now stands up in court and gives his witness, and God both pleads his case as his advocate, and is also the judge. And on this basis, Micah and the people he represented were brought to light out of the darkness of Divine judgment (see on 8); and therefore the Assyrian army was slain by God in righteousness, so that Jerusalem did not fall as was otherwise inevitable. In all this we see a foretaste of how God would allow the salvation of His people through the work of the supremely representative and sinless Lord Jesus, who like Micah, totally identified with our sin and consequent condemnation. Therefore Micah as a sinner, by identification with Judah, could confidently ask for Yahweh to plead his case and give the judgment of acceptance, turning the darkness of condemnation into the light of salvation (see on :8).

There are an interesting set of allusions to David's sin with Bathsheba in Micah 7, almost leading us to wonder whether Micah too had a *femme fatale* in his life- whom he speaks of in Mic. 7:10 as "she that is mine enemy...shame shall cover her". He says that "I have sinned against the Lord" (Mic. 7:9), using the very same words as David does in 2 Sam.

12:13; and he marvels how God ‘passes by’ transgression (Mic. 7:18), using the very same Hebrew word as is found in 2 Sam. 12:13 to describe how God “put away” David’s sin. And there are many references throughout Micah 7 to David’s Psalms of penitence. Could it be that David’s sin and repentance served as a personal inspiration to Micah, as well as being held up as the inspiration to all God’s people to repent and experience the sure mercies which David did? Micah saw David’s sin as the epitome of Israel’s, and his salvation by grace as their pattern.

Micah 7:10 *Then my enemy will see it, and shame will cover her who said to me, where is Yahweh your God?*- I have suggested above that Micah is totally identified with God’s people, and their enemy was his. But we also saw hints in :5 and :6 that Micah’s own wife betrayed him. Perhaps this is why he speaks of Assyria as a woman, when Assyria is elsewhere personified by Micah as a male (Mic. 5:6). "Where is... God?" was the attitude of the faithless in Judah (Mal. 2:17). And yet this was the attitude of Judah’s enemies (Joel 2:17), as exemplified in the blasphemous claims of Rabshakeh and Sennacherib in Micah’s time outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Then my enemy will see me and will cover herself with shame. Now she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets- To tread down in the streets was what Assyria was to do to Jerusalem (Is. 10:6 s.w.; Is. 5:5; 28:18; Dan. 8:13). Micah imagined that this would happen to his wife, who like Job’s wife had mocked his faith in God. But we can also apply this to the Assyrians themselves, who would be judged as they had intended to judge Zion by the repentant remnant (s.w. Zech. 10:5).

Micah 7:11 *A day to build your walls! In that day, He will extend your boundary*- Micah envisaged that Isaiah’s contemporary prophecies about the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls and the extension of Judah’s boundaries was to happen in his lifetime (Is. 54:2; 60:10). He as it were had a vision of that day coming, and shouts out the message in joy. All this could have happened after the destruction of the Assyrian army outside Jerusalem, but Hezekiah and others were satisfied just by God’s immediate deliverance in this life, and shrugged off the great potentials possible. And that is true for many believers today.

Micah 7:12 *In that day they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain*- After the Angelic destruction of the Assyrians, representatives did indeed come to Hezekiah from such places. But he was lifted up in pride and was drawn down to their level, rather than using this as the springboard for establishing a Messianic kingdom over the surrounding peoples. The reference to the territory from the Nile to the Euphrates recalls the promises to Abraham. The entire *eretz* promised to Abraham could have flowed to Jerusalem and received teaching, leading to them being incorporated into Yahweh’s dominion or kingdom. This looks forward to the prediction in :16,17 that finally some of the invaders would repent and come to Zion in acceptance of Yahweh and His Son.

Micah 7:13 *Yet the land will be desolate because of those who dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings*- Micah appears to have foreseen, or had revealed to him, that Judah would not ultimately make good. Despite the power of his intercession and the response of a remnant to his message, the baton would be dropped by Hezekiah. The land would still be desolated, using the language of the curses for breaking covenant with Yahweh (s.w. Lev. 26:33). Isaiah’s many threats of a desolated land would still come true in the end (Is. 1:7; 6:11; 17:9 etc.). However we could understand that the land was indeed desolated at Micah’s time by the Assyrians and only Jerusalem remained unconquered.

Micah 7:14 *Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell by themselves in a forest, in the midst of fertile pasture land; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old-* And yet Micah returns to the great prophetic theme, after recognizing Judah's sin and ultimate punishment (:13). The scattered remnant of the flock, wandering in forests [whereas sheep don't usually live in forests] would be shepherded by Yahweh and herded together into a good pasture land, that of *eretz* Israel. And that would be a re-establishment of God's Kingdom ["as in the days of old"]. Ez. 34 speaks of Yahweh as Israel's shepherd at this time in terms which are applied to the Lord Jesus in Jn. 10. Yahweh's shepherding will be through the Lord Jesus.

Micah 7:15 *As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt, I will show them marvellous things-* I suggest that the "marvels" are not so much the miracles of the plagues, but the "marvellous things" done at Sinai when God entered into covenant with Israel after they had left Egypt (Ex. 34:10 s.w.), and when they crossed Jordan into Canaan (Josh. 3:5 s.w.). Yahweh will do the same when He enters into a new covenant with the redeemed, regathered, repentant remnant. In Mic. 6:4, God reasoned that His bringing Israel forth out of Egypt was a parade example of His grace and desire to save. The marvel will preeminently be His grace in finally saving Israel. In the short term, the destruction of the Assyrians who had surrounded Jerusalem was a foretaste of these "marvellous things", and indeed that phrase is used of how God could save Jerusalem from besieging armies (Jer. 21:2).

Micah 7:16 *The nations will see and be ashamed of all their might-* This is a consistent theme of the prophets; that the nations will be ashamed of all trust in human strength. And we should learn that lesson now, surrounded as we are by so many temptations to trust human strength.

They will lay their hand on their mouth. Their ears will be deaf- Shame and laying the hand on the mouth all suggest repentance (Job 21:5; 40:4), which we have stated specifically in :17. A remnant of the invaders will apparently repent in the last days, as noted on :12. GNB "and cover their ears" would be another sign of capitulation and recognition of sin.

Micah 7:17 *They will lick the dust like a serpent-* This is the language of Ps. 72:9 and Is. 49:23 about God's enemies bowing before Him when they do this. Their humiliation leads to their repentance. God's hand in human life seeks to humble us, but in order that we may come to Him, and not for its own sake.

Like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their dens. They will come with fear to Yahweh our God, and will be afraid because of You- As noted above and on :12 and :16, even a remnant of Israel's enemies will come to "fear Yahweh", to become His servants. They will recognize that all human might or 'strongholds' ["dens"] is of no account; for in the lead up to this situation in the last days, human strength and military technology will be seen as of supreme meaning.

Micah 7:18 *Who is a God like You-* No god or idol of any conceivable religion has the grace and forgiveness of the one true God.

Who pardons iniquity- This is the Hebrew phrase usually translated 'to bear iniquity' (Ex. 28:38,43 etc.). God forgives iniquity by as it were bearing or carrying it, as if taking the guilt Himself. For 'to bear iniquity' also means 'to take guilt for iniquity' (Ez. 44:10,12 etc.). This was done by Micah, as noted throughout Mic. 6 and 7. But God did this supremely in the work of His Son, who bore the iniquity of Israel so that God might thereby pardon it.

And passes over- The language of God's Passover deliverance of Israel on account of the blood of the lamb, representative of Jesus (Ex. 12:23), continuing the allusion to those events which began in :15.

The disobedience of the remnant of His heritage?- Not every Israelite or Jew will be saved. Micah's marvel is at God's forgiveness of the repentant remnant. "The remnant of His heritage" is the phrase used in 2 Kings 21:14 of those who would go into captivity. Micah seems to have foreseen this, and yet looked ahead to their repentance and eternal restoration.

He doesn't retain his anger forever, because He delights in loving kindness- God's grace and love only have depth and meaning because He also does feel great anger at sin. But within His personality, the pole of loving kindness eventually comes out as His dominant feature; His mercy triumphs over His necessary judgment. Quite simply, God loves being merciful and gracious, and asks that we have the same attitude (Jer. 9:24; Hos. 6:6).

Micah 7:19 *He will again have compassion on us-* The salvation of Israel from Egypt was by grace, as they left Egypt with the idols of Egypt and tabernacles of their gods. As noted on Mic. 6:4, God's saving of Israel from Egypt was by grace alone, and "He will again" show that grace. This was the compassion which was to be shown when the remnant were regathered from captivity (Dt. 30:3). It was tragic that the returning exiles were indifferent to this. The same amazing, saving grace is available to all now who wish to quit this world and enter the new covenant which the exiles then spurned.

He will tread our iniquities under foot- As noted on :10, it was Judah and specifically Jerusalem who were to be trodden under foot for their sins. But Jerusalem was saved by grace in Micah's time as a result of his intercession and identity with them, the just for the unjust. This looked forward to the far greater future salvation. God will make a difference between the sinners and their sins. Their *sins* rather than they personally would be trodden under foot, and thus the sinners themselves would be saved. And we are to maintain this same clear differentiation in our dealings with people, between sin and sinner.

David asks God to wash him from his sins (Ps. 51:2). The Hebrew means literally to tread out or down, alluding to how a fuller trod clothes to remove the dirt or old stain. This is the sense of how the word is used in Mic. 7:19 "He will tread our iniquities under foot; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". The Lord's clothing is presented as whiter than any human fuller can whiten; this is the extent of our forgiveness and the total nature of the righteousness imputed to us. Judah of Micah's time were invited to experience the same cleansing as David had. The washing, cleansing and blotting out (:1) speak of the removal of a stain in the way that only God can do.

And you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea- This was the punishment of the Egyptians, and we have noted the Passover allusions on :15 and :18. The destruction of Israel's enemies (cp. the Egyptians) is paralleled with the destruction of Israel's sins. The allusion is also to Dt. 9:21, where Moses "cast your sin, the calf which you had made" into the water. As noted above, their sin is differentiated from the persons. The sin was to be totally and permanently destroyed. It is only those who identify with their sins who will likewise be personally cast into the depths in condemnation (Lk. 17:2). Like Paul in Romans 7, we are to recognize our sins, but not identify ourselves with them. And then the sins are dealt with by God, so permanently that they could be searched for and never found (Jer. 50:20), and we as persons are saved.

Micah 7:20 *You will give truth to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old-* "Mercy and truth" is a reference to the promises to the fathers; and it is here defined specifically as the total forgiveness of sin (:19). The same interpretation of the blessing embedded in the promises is found in Acts 3:25,26. This is the final word of

Micah's prophecy; this is the essence of God's purpose- the blessing of forgiveness by grace.
The ultimate truth is of God's saving mercy towards His people.