



Micah - Chapter Four

III Micah 3:1-5:15 - The Present Injustice and the Future Prospect of Just Rule in Jerusalem (continues)

Summary of Chapter Four

Micah looks forward to a day not only when the remnant of Israel will be restored to their former glory but a time when all nations shall come before God to worship him. It will be a time of peace and prosperity for all.

However, before that time the people of Judah will go into Babylonian exile. In fact, there will be many nations that come against Israel, yet it is God's plan that his people will prevail against them.

III.b Micah 4:1-5:15 - Jerusalem's Restoration among the Nations

Jerusalem and its temple, once destroyed (Micah 3:12), are exalted as a source of instruction, justice, and righteousness (vv.1-5). The weak become strong under Yahweh's rule (vv.6-7). The kingdom is established (v.8). The unit moves from distress and salvation (4:9-5:1) to messianic intervention and victory (5:2-6). The remnant both blesses and curses the nations (5:7-9), and the Lord obliterates idolatries from his people (5:10-15).

III.b.i Micah 4:1-5 - Peace and Security through Obedience

The mountain of the Lord is now the focal point of the nations. The oracle in Isaiah 2:1-5 is almost identical; there Isaiah reveals the triumph of God's purpose for his people, when the nations will hurry to learn his ways as the only way. The fulfilment of this prophecy is foreseeable in the progress of Christian missions: *<<and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'>>* (Luke 24:46-48).

- ¹ In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.
Peoples shall stream to it,
- ² and many nations shall come and say:
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:1-2

In days to come is often referred to as 'in the latter days' in the prophets. Micah envisions a new epoch in which Jerusalem's fortunes are reversed. It is an expression for the future beyond the horizon: <<*So now, I am going to my people; let me advise you what this people will do to your people in days to come*>> (Numbers 24:14), <<*In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the Lord your God and heed him*>> (Deuteronomy 4:30), <<*but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days*>> (Daniel 2:28a), which sometimes refers specifically to the time of the Messiah. NT authors use the various Greek translations of the expression, generally rendered 'in the last days,' in the belief that, since Jesus inaugurated his messianic kingship by his resurrection, the latter days have arrived in a decisive way, while at the same time the last days await their complete realisation and final fulfilment at the end of the age; refer to Acts 2:17, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3, 2 Peter 3:3, and probably 1 Peter 1:20 and 1 John 2:18. Isaiah's future orientation in his oracle in Isaiah 2:1-5 is also marked by his sevenfold use of <<*on that day*>> in Isaiah 2:11-4:2, and <<*the Lord of hosts has a day*>> (Isaiah 2:12a), including both the near and distant future. To the prophetic eye, the crises of the present are to be measured by the ultimate crisis of judgement and salvation toward which God is moving history; refer to Joel 2:28-3:21 and Zephaniah 1:7-2:3.

The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, shall be raised up above the hills. This speaks of the ultimate exaltation of Jerusalem, the City of Zion, in the Lord's ultimate restoration. This will be fulfilled completely in the millennial reign of Christ, when peoples shall stream to a restored and redeemed Jerusalem as the capital of the Millennial earth, i.e. out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Peoples shall stream to it. Rather than streaming to false gods: <<*I will punish Bel in Babylon, and make him disgorge what he has swallowed. The nations shall no longer stream to him; the wall of Babylon has fallen*>> (Jeremiah 51:44), the nations will worship only the Lord, fulfilling a key purpose of creation.

The God of Jacob. The nations' access to the Lord comes through Israel.

That he may teach us his ways. With the prophet's eye Micah sees the world streaming into Jerusalem to meet with the Lord God and to know him better: <<*Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith*>> (Philippians 3:7-9).

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The teaching of God's ways will flow from Jerusalem outward to all nations and the Gentiles shall abandon all other forms of religion in order to turn to the Lord.

- ³ He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
- ⁴ but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Micah 4:3-4

Verses 1-3 are repeated in Isaiah 2:1-3. Since Isaiah and Micah were contemporary prophets, it is not surprising that the same Spirit of the Lord could give these two prophets the same word in order to establish and emphasise his Word. The glorious transformation of the mountain of the Lord is especially wonderful in light of what the sinning people of God did to it: <<*Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height*>> (Micah 3:12).

He shall judge between many peoples. During the reign of the Messiah, there will be no more war. There will still be conflicts between nations and individuals, but they will be justly and decisively resolved by the Messiah and those who reign with him because he shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away.

It is not the reign of the Messiah itself that will change the heart of man. Citizens of earth will still need to trust in Jesus and his work on their behalf for their personal salvation during the Millennium. At that time war and armed conflict will not be tolerated.

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares looks forward to a time <<*in days to come*>> (v.1) when the nations of the earth will no longer need armies or weapons to defend against the threat of evil aggressors. Tiny Judah has been threatened by war for most of its existence. Now Micah, like Isaiah, predicts that, far from bringing oppression, the triumph of biblical faith will bring a peace the world has never known, when all nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares. The description of the Messiah's Millennial Reign in Isaiah 11:1-10 echoes many of these themes.

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. It is important to see that this is not the peace of capitulation. This is the peace of enforced righteousness. There is no more war, and no more need for swords, so why not make them into ploughshares? There is no more war because there is a new ruler on earth, Jesus Christ. David speaks of what the Messiah will do to the disobedient in that day: <<*You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*>> (Psalm 2:9).

Most people long for the day when there is no more need for a military budget, when the money that goes for weapons and armies can go to schools and health care. However, it will only be safe to that when the Messiah reigns over all!

They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees is a key OT image of peace and prosperity: <<*During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and*>>

fig trees>> (1 Kings 4:25), and: <<*On that day, says the Lord of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree*>> (Zechariah 3:10).

However, it can also be a false promise of the world: <<*Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: “Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die. Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, The Lord will deliver us”*>> (2 Kings 18:31).

The military title the Lord of hosts, i.e. the Lord of armies, emphasises God’s sovereign right to bring about these events: <<*Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war*>> (Revelation 19:11).

In his 1941 State of the Union address US President Franklin Roosevelt gave a famous speech about four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Here, Micah also describes four freedoms:

- Freedom from ignorance: <<*that he may teach us his ways*>> (v.2).
- Freedom from war: <<*neither shall they learn war anymore*>> (v.3).
- Freedom from want: <<*They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees*>> (v.4).
- Freedom from fear: <<*no one shall make them afraid*>> (v.4).

⁵ For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God
for ever and ever.

Micah 4:5

But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. In contrast to the pantheon available to the nations: <<*But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived*>> (2 Kings 17:29), and: <<*In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy*>> (Acts 14:16-17), the people of God walk together, united to their King and under his law and word (v.2) in unending relationship.

Such faithfulness is how the members of Judah play their part in bringing the story to the fulfilment of vv.1-4. In the Millennial reign, the inhabitants of earth will not be compelled to follow the Lord. Some will walk each in the name of his own god; yet those who do walk in the name of the Lord will enjoy great blessing and peace.

III.b.ii Micah 4:6-5:1 - Restoration Promised after Exile

Before the people of God can be restored to him they must first be taken into Babylonian exile. However, a time will come when God will restore them to their nation and, although they will still face many enemies, it is God's ultimate plan that the nations will be drawn in by his people until they too stand before God.

III.b.ii.1 Micah 4:6-7 - Divine promise to gather Zion

God expresses his covenant faithfulness. These pivotal verses develop the theme of exiles regathered, restored, and submissive to the Lord's reign in ongoing and everlasting fellowship: *<<God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord>>* (1 Corinthians 1:9), and: *<<we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ>>* (1 John 1:3).

⁶ On that day, says the Lord,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven away,
and those whom I have afflicted.

Micah 4:6

On that day. Micah lets the people know he is still talking about the future time when God will reign through Christ, a theme that continues throughout this major section: *<<On that day, says the Lord, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots>>* (Micah 5:10).

I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away. God's restoration is not just for the strong, but the weak and disadvantaged will especially know the blessing of his restoration. Along with *<<I will make>>* (v.7), these same verbs are found in: *<<I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people. The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head>>* (Micah 2:12-13).

Deliverance from the disaster at Jerusalem's gate (Micah 1:12) thus becomes a type of greater salvation.

Those whom I have afflicted. It is the Lord's doing: <<*Therefore, thus says the Lord: Now, I am devising against this family an evil from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time*>> (Micah 2:3).

⁷ The lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong nation;
and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion
now and for evermore.

Micah 4:7

The lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation. The theme that those who appear disadvantaged in this life will be raised up in a glorious future: <<*Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off*>> (Isaiah 56:3-5).

The Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion now and for evermore. As in Micah 2:12-13, the shepherd theme, i.e. to gather and to assemble, gives way to the royal and the sovereign.

III.b.ii.2 Micah 4:8 - Restoration of Zion's Dominion

God promises that a time is coming when Jerusalem will be restored to its former glory and status as the city of God.

⁸ And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of daughter Zion,
to you it shall come,
the former dominion shall come,
the sovereignty of daughter Jerusalem.

Micah 4:8

And you signals renewed kingship: <<*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*>> (Micah 5:2). This verse is a transition between 4:6-7 and 4:9-5:1.

O tower of the flock, the former dominion. As David ‘shepherded his flock’ from Jerusalem, so a new king will rule once more: <<*Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*>> (Zechariah 9:9-10). This was clearly fulfilled on Palm Sunday, when Jesus arrived triumphantly in Jerusalem for the last time before his passion: <<*Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!*>> (John 12:14). Again the Shepherd-King language is prominent.

These promises are so glorious that it would be easy for Israel to think they are too good to be true. Therefore, God gives them a special promise, vowing to you it shall come.

III.b.ii.3 Micah 4:9-5:1 - Nations Approach Zion for Battle

The word ‘now’ in v.9 and v.11 focuses attention on impending exile and siege. Each subunit moves from distress to deliverance.

- ⁹ Now why do you cry aloud?
Is there no king in you?
Has your counsellor perished,
that pangs have seized you like a woman in labour?

Micah 4:9

Is there no king in you? Zion’s daughter must look beyond ineffectual human kings to Yahweh alone for salvation: <<*Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land: ‘Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?’*>> (Jeremiah 8:19a).

Has your counsellor perished. The Lord executes his plan: <<*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*>> (Isaiah 9:6), and: <<*Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the*

temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'>> (Luke 2:27-32).

Pangs have seized you like a woman in labour. After spelling out the glory of restored Zion, now Micah tells them of some of the pain they will experience before it comes. Part of the pain will be a lack of leadership as shown above.

¹⁰ Writhe and groan, O daughter Zion,
like a woman in labour;
for now you shall go forth from the city
and camp in the open country;
you shall go to Babylon.
There you shall be rescued,
there the Lord will redeem you
from the hands of your enemies.

Micah 4:10

You shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued. The Lord focuses attention on rescue and redemption after the 'labour' of exile. As is common in the prophets, Micah intertwines ages, having just spoken of the Millennial Earth, now he speaks of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity: *<<I have aroused Cyrus in righteousness, and I will make all his paths straight; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward, says the Lord of hosts>>* (Isaiah 45:13), with the time span for their exile also clearly stated: *<<This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon for seventy years>>* (Jeremiah 25:11). Even their hopeless situation was full of hope before they even went into exile.

Your enemies. In the context, this refers to the Babylonian captivity of 586 BC.

¹¹ Now many nations
are assembled against you,
saying, 'Let her be profaned,
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.'

Micah 4:11

Now marks a new subunit.

Now many nations are assembled against you. Although the nations were set against Israel, the Lord was for them, i.e. <<*But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord*>> (v.12). The Lord will deal with Israel's enemies as easily as a farmer deals with the sheaves of grain on the threshing-floor: <<*Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste*>> (Jeremiah 25:12).

The you against whom the unnamed nations are assembled applies to God's people in every age. The specific setting is probably the Assyrian siege in 701 BC: <<*If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers*>> (Micah 5:5).

Let her be profaned, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion. The gathered forces express their contemptuous desire to desecrate Jerusalem's holy temple and expose it to public scorn.

¹² But they do not know
the thoughts of the Lord;
they do not understand his plan,
that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing-floor.

Micah 4:12

They do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing-floor. The nations have assembled themselves (v.11), and yet it is Yahweh who brings them to his threshing-floor: <<*Araunah said, 'Why has my lord the king come to his servant?' David said, 'To buy the threshing-floor from you in order to build an altar to the Lord, so that the plague may be averted from the people'*>> (2 Samuel 24:21). War is pictured as harvest, and harvest is used as a figure of judgement: <<*For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Daughter Babylon is like a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come*>> (Jeremiah 51:33), <<*Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn*>> (Matthew 13:30), and: <<*Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, 'Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe'*>> (Revelation 14:15).

13 Arise and thresh,
O daughter Zion,
for I will make your horn iron
and your hoofs bronze;
you shall beat in pieces many peoples,
and shall devote their gain to the Lord,
their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

Micah 4:13

Arise and thresh. Zion is pictured as an unassailable ox treading grain.

For I will make your horn iron. When the Lord restores Zion, he will restore them in strength, as strong as an ox with an iron horn. This has its ultimate fulfilment in the Millennium when Israel will be lifted up as a superpower among the nations: *<<And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever>>* (Daniel 2:44).

You shall beat in pieces many peoples, and shall devote their gain to the Lord. In war the spoils go to the victor. Here it is acknowledged that will be God's due and not that of the people. However, it can be put to use as part of the Lord's work: *<<Her merchandise and her wages will be dedicated to the Lord; her profits will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who live in the presence of the Lord>>* (Isaiah 23:18).

The Lord of the whole earth. There is nothing outside of the rule and rights of the sovereign Lord. His afflicting (v.6) has become his salvation (v.12).

5:1 Now you are walled around with a wall;
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel
upon the cheek.

Micah 5:1

Micah 5:1 is 4:14 in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Now. As earlier in Micah 4:9 and 4:11, this word signals distress for Zion.

Now you are walled around with a wall; siege is laid against us suggests Zion's inability to establish an army to defend itself. Israel will be humbled by foreign powers, and even her judges will bear insults. The siege is probably that of Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BC.

Strike the ruler of Israel is a metaphor of humiliation for Israel's king now under siege: <<*Thus says King Sennacherib of Assyria: On what are you relying, that you undergo the siege of Jerusalem?*>> (2 Chronicles 32:10). There is also an indication that this is looking forward to the time of the Messiah: <<*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate,' says the Lord of hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones*>> (Zechariah 13:7), and: <<*Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.'* When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?'>> (John 18:20-23).