

THE BOOK OF MICAH

Lesson 9, Chapter 5

We were studying verse 2 of Micah chapter 5 last time but didn't complete all it has to tell us. So, to begin we'll re-read the entire chapter so that we have all the needed context to be unpack it.

RE-READ MICAH CHAPTER 5 all

As a reminder, depending on the Bible version you are using, we are either at verse 2 or 3, as it depends on whether your version has chapter 4 with 14 verses or 15. Either way, it is only the numbering of the verses and not the content that is different. We looked closely at the first part of verse 2 in the CJB, which read:

CJB Micah 5:2 *Therefore he will give up [Isra'el] only until ...*

And now we'll look at the second part that begins with:

...until she who is in labor gives birth. Then the rest of his kinsmen will return to the people of Isra'el.

Who is "she who is in labor gives birth"? Clearly, for many centuries, Christianity (and especially Catholicism) has said that the "she" is Mary...Miriam, the birth mother of Yeshua. Let's talk about this because there is far more here than a casual reading of this verse might make it seem and involves a key element of the nature and substance of prophecy. The major reason that all Christendom since the 4th century A.D. has decided that this is talking ONLY about Mary, is that they cite Isaiah 7:14 as proof.

CJB Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore Adonai himself will give you people a sign: the young woman* will become pregnant, bear a son and name him 'Immanu El [God is with us].*

When we read this verse and combine it with Micah, and also include what eventually happened from a historical perspective, one could confidently say

“yes, this can ONLY be speaking about the virgin Mary”. The problem is this: in order to arrive at this firm conclusion, one must take Isaiah 7:14 out of its natural context. Let’s read a bit more of Isaiah in order to add the context back in to the thought process.

CJB Isaiah 7:13-17 ***¹³ Then [the prophet] said, "Listen here, house of David! Is trying people's patience such a small thing for you that you must try the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴ Therefore Adonai himself will give you people a sign: the young woman* will become pregnant, bear a son and name him 'Immanu El [God is with us]. ¹⁵ By the time he knows enough to refuse evil and choose good, he will [have to] eat curdled milk and [wild] honey. ¹⁶ Yes, before the child knows enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be left abandoned. ¹⁷ ADONAI will bring the king of Ashur on you, your people and your father's house. These will be days worse than any you've known since Efrayim broke loose from Y'hudah."***

Everything seems to line up with Christian doctrine on this matter *until* Isaiah 14:16 when it says that this child to be born will be young at a time when there are 2 kings over the land, and then this thought is expanded upon when verse 17 says that Ashur (Assyria) will cause the land (Israel) to be abandoned. Clearly, Yeshua was not born or a young child when the Land of Israel had 2 kings, nor was Assyria in control, nor was the Holy Land abandoned due to invasion and exile. In his day, what Isaiah speaks of is more in line with how things were currently politically, when indeed the land had already been divided and there were 2 kings over the 2 kingdoms that had replaced the one unified kingdom of Israel during David and Solomon’s era. And, in only a few more years from Micah’s prophecy, Assyria would invade the northern kingdom and empty the land of its Israelites, and then a bit over a century later Babylon would invade the remaining Israelite kingdom, Judah, and exile the majority of its Jewish population. So, how are we to square all of this in an intellectually honest, and biblically truthful, way? First, as always, we must abandon long held Christian dogma that suffers no challenges to it, and it also disposes of anything that centers on Israel and the Jewish people, and of God’s favor of them.

There are many births from the wives of the Patriarchs and then of their descendants, who were continuing on the line of the Covenant Promise. In truth, we can trace this back from Eve, and then onto the lines of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then on to David. From each a mother produced an heir that would eventually lead to the ultimate Seed that had long ago been predicted.

JPS Genesis 3:15 ***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; they shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise their heel.'***

Thus, from the viewpoint of the 8th century B.C. when Isaiah and Micah lived, their belief was that within the specific tribe of Judah the line of David would continue to have mothers producing sons to carry on the Covenant Promise.

Thus, we must take Micah's prophecy as being one that is both general and specific. First, the mothers of the sons of the line of the Covenant Promise are the "she who is in labor". Then later Israel itself is personified as the "she who is in labor", and eventually it will be the actual mother of the Messiah who is the "she". And, yet how does that comport with the remainder of Micah 5:2 that says:

CJB Micah 5:2 ***...Then the rest of his kinsmen will return to the people of Isra'el.***

To "return" obviously means people who left and now going to come back. And, when we read in Isaiah of the coming exiles of Israel, then just as clearly this part of Micah 5:2 must be referring to the Israelites that will soon be dispersed, that will eventually come back home. A segment of Israel returned 70 years after the Babylonian Exile of the people of Judah. Certainly, the dispersed of Israel that were sent away from the land by the Romans in 70 A.D. did not return until hundreds of years later after Yeshua's day, and in fact wouldn't happen in any real way until A.D. 1948 after WWII, when Israel was re-born as a nation of Israelites. Because until Israel was re-born as a nation that was no place for returning Israelites to return to! Even so, that was still only a limited return similar to the return of the Babylonian Exiles, when the

returnees were Jews and not all 12 tribes... just 2 of them. But, early in the 21st century, Israel has opened their doors to the non-Jewish Israelites of the so-called 10 Lost Tribes to come home. So, the meaning and application of verse 2 as it pertains to travail and pain in labor, is very wide in scope. At various points in history, it refers to the various mothers of sons that carried on the Line of the Covenants, or it meant Israel in general, and then later it meant Miriam mother of the Messiah Yeshua, and in our time it once again means Israel as a nation of people. Each one of this is the “she” of this verse.

This is why dogmatic insistence about how to frame prophecies, and their fulfillments is a wrong road to take. Prophecies can be very vague at first, or they can make no sense to us until certain world events and resulting conditions come about over time to give us a more concrete frame of reference. This is not even to consider that biblical prophecies are usually fulfilled more than once, each time within a new and differing, but wider and larger, context.

Bottom line: yes, Miriam mother of Yeshua was one of the fulfillments of Micah 5:2 in its own way, but not the first or only. And in fact, there is more to come in our day. With Israel again being the travailing “she”, indeed this will give a different kind of birth to **Immanu El**... our Messiah who is now in Heaven with His Father... and it happens when He returns to Jerusalem to judge the world and to set up God’s Kingdom on earth.

CJB Micah 5:3 *He will stand and feed his flock in the strength of Yehoveh, in the majesty of the name of Yehoveh his God; and they will stay put, as he grows great to the very ends of the earth;*

In view of a history that we have at our disposal, but could not have been predicted by the ancient Israelites prior to the advent of Yeshua, then we can see how the first half-dozen verses of Micah chapter 5 evolve from the general to the more specific, and by the time we get to verse 4 the coming of a Messiah resolves more fully and clearly into view. This Messiah is to be a new David, and He will do wonderful if not miraculous things for Zion... things that have been promised from other prophets as well as Micah in chapter 4.

Who is the “he” that opens this verse? First, from a purely biblical standpoint it seems to refer to the ruler spoken of in verse 1. So, beginning with that, then we see this further development of who this ruler is. Upon verse 3, this ruler is described as one who feeds his flock (the word shepherd doesn’t actually appear here; it is assumed by translators). I won’t dwell on it, but the original Hebrew is **ra’ah** (to feed) and not **ro’eh** that means shepherd. So, we need to be careful about this and take it to mean feeding-the-flock in a general nature that includes more than only shepherding (as in guiding and in protecting). To say that this is done in the strength of Yehoveh means he does this feeding relying on the strength and will of His God to do it, and not on his own. And further, that by association this ruler will be an agent to carry out his god’s will (the phrase “in the strength of” includes this idea of God’s will).

What does “they will stay put” mean? Who is the “they” and what is staying put? The “they” can only be the ones who are being fed by the ruler who feeds. Therefore, the “they” is Israel. The “stay put” needs to be taken as the opposite of exile. That is, once this ruler begins His reign, there will never again be some foreign invader that forces Israel off of their land. We find this promise of Israel “staying put” expanded upon in the Book of Ezekiel.

CJB Ezekiel 37:21-25 ²¹ *Then say to them that Adonai ELOHIM says: 'I will take the people of Isra'el from among the nations where they have gone and gather them from every side and bring them back to their own land. ²² I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Isra'el; and one king will be king for all of them. They will no longer be two nations, and they will never again be divided into two kingdoms. ²³ "'They will never again defile themselves with their idols, their detestable things, or any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the places where they have been living and sinning; and I will cleanse them, so that they will be my people, and I will be their God. ²⁴ My servant David will be king over them, and all of them will have one shepherd; they will live by my rulings and keep and observe my regulations. ²⁵ They will live in the land I gave to Ya'akov my servant, where your ancestors lived; they will live there-they, their children, and their grandchildren, forever; and David my servant will be their leader forever.*

Back to Micah 5:3. The idea that this ruler will eventually become the ruler over the whole world is important. There are some who think that “to the very ends of the earth” mean only the extent of David’s and Solomon’s kingdom. I suspect that that was probably true for the ancients because what constituted the whole world for them is not how we think about it. As it turns out, their thinking on the matter was far too narrow of a scope; yet that’s not their fault. Not enough history had played out and events taken place to lead them to that much larger reality. From our standpoint in the 21st century, we can now see two things: first, this must only be talking about Yeshua’s return. And second, this is yet future to us. I’ll say again: this is not talking about His first advent... this is foretelling His birth. This is not at all hard to discern because He was killed at a tender young age and never was held in great regard by the bulk of Israelites. However, when He returns, that situation will reverse. Micah 5:4 begins a bit awkwardly the way modern Bibles address it, because they take a single statement and split into two.

CJB Micah 5:4 *;**and this will be peace. If Ashur invades our land, if he overruns our fortresses, we will raise seven shepherds against him, eight leaders of men.***

The CJB Bible interprets it this way, but here is another version with a different approach.

YLT Micah 5:5 ***And this one hath been peace. Asshur! when he doth come into our land, And when he doth tread in our palaces, We have raised against him seven shepherds, And eight anointed of man.***

Notice the difference in the opening words. CJB as with other versions says: “And this will be peace”, while the YLT and other versions says: “And this **one** hath been peace”. That is, the CJB is speaking of actions taken by this ruler, while the YLT and others sees it as the personal name or nickname for that ruler. At least one good language scholar believes that the use of the word peace is making a wordplay and a reference to **Shlomo** (Solomon), which itself is a variation of the word **shalom**. I lean towards accepting this as the better interpretation. “The One of Peace” is a sort of divine title for this new

ruler from the family of David. Here, especially as it is used in this context, it is not to mean peace as in the opposite of war, but rather, peace (***shalom***) in its larger sense that means harmony with God and with all of His creation, as well as the general well-being for a human that only the Creator can endow a person with, and such an endowment naturally includes harmony with God and His creation.

Even so, the next words bring up Assyria invading Israel, and so this cannot be (or maybe, cannot *entirely* be) an End Times prophecy but rather something that was not far from Micah's time as actually occurring. Might it be that Assyria's invasion of the northern kingdom around 721 B.C. is NOT the only Assyrian invasion to happen prior to our Messiah's return? Conditions today don't seem to indicate such a possibility is upon us; but yet, if our ears are open at all, we can see how the people of Israel help one another figure out some way to spin this information to mean that nothing bad was going to happen to them. Or at least nothing bad from that particular enemy. Could this be foretelling a modern-day invasion of Israel by the former Kingdom of Assyria? The make-up of this former empire would not go by the same names in our time. Ancient Assyria has now become the independent nations of Northern Iraq, Syria, Iran, Turkey, and Lebanon. And all of these have a delicate balance of relative co-existence with Israel. So, in the End Times this newer coalition of groups who live there today might ally one to the other and attack Israel in a joint effort. After all, a joint national attack of Arab nations is what happened upon Israel declaring independence in 1948, and it has happened a few more times since then. I suspect this is the more likely prophetic fulfillment this verse is telling us about as it can fit with other End Times prophecies. I suppose we'll just have to wait and see.

That Assyria is going to invade Israel is assured, as the grammar of this prophecy of Micah points out. The CJB is the only version I'm aware of that makes this invasion an "if". This is simply poor translation. The meaning is not "if" but rather "when". And the 2nd half of this verse says that **when** this happens, Israel will be prepared and have the strength to fight mightily against them. Be aware that in addition to the poetry of it, this matter of 7 shepherds, and 8 princes of men, is a literary device common for centuries in Semitic languages. Language scholars call it the "x + 1" feature. We've run

across this before in phrases like “7, no eight”. It is not meant literally as 7 or 8, but rather it means an indefinite number that is more than an adequate for the task. So, when Messiah comes, anyone who seeks to attack Israel will have to face more than enough leaders to repel it. Taken a bit farther, what this is getting at is that any resistance of nations against Messiah Yeshua’s rule over His Father’s Kingdom will be futile. God will strengthen Israel in some miraculous to defeat them.

By the way: don’t get thrown off by the words that Ashur (Assyria) invades “our land”, and when “he” tramples on it “we” will raise against “him” 7 no, 8 leaders. The “he” and “him” are singular and masculine because this verse speaks of Assyria not in terms of the name of the nation, but rather in terms of the name of their god... Ashur. So, as it was for all ancient nations, there was an inherent belief that wars between peoples and nations were actually wars between each of those nation’s gods. Israel was no different and Micah believed this as well.

CJB Micah 5:5 *They will shepherd the land of Ashur with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its gates; and he will rescue us from Ashur when he invades our land, when he overruns our borders.*

Speaking plainly, this verse tells of Israel reversing roles and invading Assyria, defeating it, and the same when speaking of the land of Nimrod because this means Babylonia. This is a departure from what we just read in that such a thing is yet to happen. It is ironic that soon after Micah, Assyria would invade and rule over Israel, and then later Babylonia would invade and rule over Judah. But, never in Assyria’s and Babylonia’s history as enemies of Israel, has Israel ever invaded, defeated, and taken-over any meaningful amount of their land and nation. So, while earlier verses in Micah speak of Assyria and Babylonia invading Israel, what we read in verse 5 when the opposite occurs, it can be nothing but future to us, and therefore all part of the many events and historic reversals that occur in the End Times, which includes Yeshua’s return.

It is common in both Bible and other ancient Middle Eastern literature to take the name of a single nation and make it into a symbol representing other

nations of its type. For instance, in the New Testament, Babylon is used to represent all the nations of the world that resist the God of Israel, or oppress His people Israel, or worship Him corruptly. In even earlier days than Micah, Edom was that symbolic nation. Sometimes it was Egypt. Within a few years of Micah's writings, it would become Assyria, and then a bit over a century later, Babylon. So, here in verse 5 the wording certainly points to the contribution of the nations of Assyria and Babylonia to the enemy war efforts but also uses the same terms in double-duty to include all of its alliances and "types" of nations that also wish to join together to harm Israel. The thing for us of the 21st century to understand is that essentially this is talking first and foremost about all the Middle Eastern nations. Secondly, it is about other nations in other regions who harbor the same intent to invade the Holy Land with a single purpose in mind: to destroy Israel.

Look where all this takes us. This, of course was taken by the Israelites of every era when they were either fighting for their national lives or were living under the oppression of a foreign king, as meaning that a savior... a deliverer... in the form of a strong and fierce warrior leader would appear and Israel would be rallied to fight, throw off their chains and even to gain control of a larger region than David or Solomon ever attained. A new Golden Era led by a ruler coming from the family of David and propped up by the undefeatable strength of Yehoveh their God, was just around the corner. This was their hope, their prayer, and their belief. No wonder when Yeshua was born and began His ministry, and the debate over whether He was or was not that Savior, that only but a few thousand Jews believed that He was that deliverer and leader. However, many of those who held high hopes that it was him... but as yet unconvinced... were devastated when He was hung on a cross and died. Even some of his own disciples went into hiding and attempted to understand what had happened. And this because they all still believed that first and foremost this Messiah would be a warrior. But now we know this wasn't the case. Like other prophecies that people misunderstood, they got things out of order. He indeed came to save Israel, but only in the sense of paying a price so that they could be delivered from their sins. When He returns, those ancient expectations of a warrior king that leads Israel to victory will come alive! And that is what we are reading about here in this passage of Micah.

CJB Micah 5:6 *Then the remnant of Ya'akov, surrounded by many peoples, will be like dew from Yehoveh, like showers on the grass, which doesn't wait for a man or expect anything from mortals.*

The YLT says this better and more definitively.

YLT Micah 5:7 *And the remnant of Jacob hath been in the midst of many peoples, As dew from Jehovah -- as showers on the herb, That waiteth not for man, nor stayeth for the sons of men.*

The remnant of Jacob (Israel) was not “surrounded by many peoples”; rather they were sent away and lived in the *midst* of many peoples. To be surrounded means to be altogether in one place and then have others all around you. To be in the midst means to be mixed in.

We see the development of a theme, here, that centers on a term popularly used within modern day Christianity, although it is misused more often than not. That term is “remnant”. In Micah, we regularly find the action words “assemble” and “gather together” when referring to the word “remnant”, which, in Hebrew is *sheerit*. In this passage, the remnant is applied to Israel. A remnant implies a remaining portion, or a differentiated but smaller part taken from a larger group. Therefore, this cannot be implying **all** of the Israelites in general that have been dispersed in the various exiles, but rather a certain part of them. Which part is this speaking of? My best take on this is that it is not speaking of those who accepted assimilation into gentile cultures, but rather those who struggled and paid a dear price to retain their Hebrew identity and faith.

This remnant of Israel was considered (in God’s view) as His dew and showers of rain for the benefit of the human race, and He intended this remnant to be used as such. Hosea used these same symbols before Micah did. Dew and rain are always seen in the Bible as symbolic of divinely provided refreshing, abundance, blessing, and fertility. Since Israel had always been an agricultural-based community of people, naturally their expressions and idioms were also based in agricultural terms. Although this verse is often spun in a few different ways, it clearly says to me that this remnant of Israel is the

mode of spreading dew and rain upon the many nations of the world. It is the presence of this Hebrew remnant that can nourish gentile nations, and it doesn't take any action or permission from humans for it to happen. This is very much the playing out of the Abrahamic Covenant.

CJB Genesis 12:1-3 *Now Yehoveh said to Avram, "Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

There is no getting around the reality that God intended to bless the world through, and by means of, the Hebrew people that Abraham formed. But as it is for all humanity... Hebrew or gentile... there will always be but a few who take-up God's purpose and will. The majority will deny it, walk away from it, invent something else they prefer to replace it or corrupt it, or just plain make a mess of it so as to be ineffective if not damaging to the cause. Thus, the word **sheerit** (remnant) becomes the focus of several prophecies, because it is always though an individual or a small remnant that God works His plans.

According to Micah this remnant of Israelites that have dispersed among the nations, is going to serve the goal of God's saving will. I could spend a great deal of time speaking about this... I won't... but I do want to spend a moment on it. Just as the Hebrews have always been an imperfect means of protecting and professing God's truth, so it has been for Christianity. The Jewish insistence of the teachings of the Torah driving their lives has been greatly distorted and watered down by their Judaism, just as the gentile Believers' insistence of the teaching of the New Testament driving their lives has been greatly distorted and watered down by Christianity. The core of each camp's message... Torah observance for the Hebrews, and Salvation in Christ for the Christians... has served well the gentile nations of this world. And yet, each leave much to be desired, each is incomplete, and each has wrapped their basic and foundational biblical truth in manmade doctrines that causes their people to veer far off the mark into a true no-man's land. There is a remnant

of Hebrews who have embraced the truth of salvation in Yeshua, and there is a remnant of gentiles who have embraced the truth of the Torah... but only a remnant. And within these remnants, there of course are variations. Today, generally speaking, Jews call that hybrid belief in both Torah and Yeshua Messianic, and gentiles call it Hebrew Roots or Jewish Roots.

In our time it is fascinating that in both camps we find God-worshippers opening their hearts and minds to the truths of ALL of God's Word, and not just portions of it as it has been for 1600 years. There is explosive growth in this remnant, that must be a movement of God's spirit upon this earth... and which has not waited for men to decide when or how to do this, or for men to keep it from happening. It is in God's ways and timing and power that it *is* happening. I know this is the case because until now both camps have heretofore remained firmly entrenched in their respective traditions and dogma. I am convinced that we are witnesses to, and can be participants in, that prophesied dew and rain from Heaven that sustains and energizes the remnant. But it requires repentance and courage, individual by individual. I'll leave it there.

The next verse, verse 7, is part of a couplet that operates with the previous verse because that is how Hebrew poetry works.

CJB Micah 5:7 *7 The remnant of Ya'akov among the nations, surrounded by many peoples, will be like a lion among forest animals, like a young lion among flocks of sheep- if it passes through, tramples and tears to pieces, there is no one to rescue them.*

Using the same opening words in poetry fashion, this next passage speaks of this remnant as being fierce, like a lion. That is, both the energizing and refreshing aspect that the Hebrew remnant brings of verse 6, simultaneously has a role of them being like an Alpha predator... a lion... of verse 7. That is, for the remnant these righteous Hebrews are like dew and rain, but for everyone else the remnant acts as a lion that tramples and tears its prey to pieces. This is a picture of how God treats humans and nations. For the obedient and sincere God-worshippers, God brings shalom and blessing. For

the corrupt and for His enemies He brings destruction. And He uses the remnant to do both things when He determines it is time.

Perhaps the most exciting and terrifying part of this verse are its final words: "...there is no one to rescue them." Since the remnant is executing God's will, then those who wish to oppose Him have exactly zero hope. No one can defeat Yehoveh. No one can stop Him from carrying out His will. All any of the opposition can do is to kick against the goad; to attempt the impossible, and all to their own assured destruction.

One of the most destructive manmade doctrines of modern Christianity is that Jesus has set aside His Father's wrath, and all that anyone ought to expect now is love, kindness, and mercy... and especially for the Believer. Well, the Apostle Paul tells a different story.

CJB Romans 11:22 ***So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you- provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off!***

Verses 6 and 7 of Micah chapter 5 speak of exactly the same thing Paul speaks about. Nothing about this has changed because of Christ's birth, death, and later taking His seat at His Father's right hand in Heaven. Verse 8 merely strengthens what is said in verse 7.

CJB Micah 5:8 ***⁸ Your hand will be raised over your enemies; all your adversaries will be destroyed.***

God is going to empower this remnant to confront and defeat all their enemies.

Beginning in verse 9 we find Israel being avenged for what the nations have done to them, but also they are purified from all their sinning and corruption and self-reliance.

CJB Micah 5:9 ***"When that day comes," says Yehoveh, "I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy your chariots."***

"When that day comes" is a standard signal for the Latter Days of the End Times. So, this means a time well into the future of Micah, and almost always signals the final End Times of human history as we know it. So, the remainder of this chapter is connected to what happens in those End Times. As we'll see when we get into the final verses, these things that are attached to End Times happenings have no historical record of having happened in the past and therefore is proof enough that this is speaking of a time future to us.

There has been much reasonable debate over the years of whether God's warning is being issued to the nations, or to Israel. I think the preponderance of evidence is that it *is* aimed at Israel. There is a paradox at play here. God is telling Israel that when the time comes to do battle with their enemies, He is going to cut off Israel's horses and destroy their chariots. In modern terms, the ultimate and best weapons of war are going to be made unavailable or unusable for Israel... generally meaning for this remnant of Israel. Why? It must be that God does not want Israel to rely on their military arsenal to be the means of their victory. This self-reliance must come to an end, such that even when facing the enemy in battle, all attention is turned to Yehoveh to battle the enemy and lead Israel to the most improbable of victories. Then, in this way, the people will know who their God is, and why complete submission to Him is the only hope for their deliverance.

The use of humanly determined chapters and verses in the Bible are not a bad thing; but they can unintentionally create a false image. These divisions make us mentally disconnect one chapter from another, or one verse from another, because this is generally how modern Western literary form operates. It is not this way in the Bible. Therefore, to understand what Micah 5:9 – 14 is getting at, we need to be reminded that this is a balance to Micah 4:1-5. This is where we will leave off for today and begin next time.