

**Micah's Warning to the Divided Kingdom**  
**Micah 5:5b – 7:20**  
**Lesson 3**

**Bethlehem, too Little to be Among the Clans of Judah**

Because of the powerful shadow of Islam in the world today, when Muslims attack the Scripture, we must prepare Christians to respond with an accurate, truthful answer. Islam uses Micah 5:2 and its parallel passage in Matthew 2:6-7 as proof that the Bible cannot be true and trusted because it contains errors.

**Micah 5:**<sup>2</sup> "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.

Micah states that Bethlehem Ephrathah is too small to be of the clans of Judah.

**Matthew 2:**<sup>4</sup> Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

Just after the Lord's birth in Bethlehem, the wise men approached Herod to ask if he knew the Lord's location. Herod asked his counselors and priests and they responded with the following answer.

In these two Scriptures we have a paradox which Islam sees a problem because Micah says Bethlehem is "too little to be among the clans of Judah" but Matthew says, "You Bethlehem ... are by no means least among the leaders of Judah." Matthew's passage contains no contradiction. He recorded the words of the priests just as they spoke them to Herod. These two passages actually present an example of the infallible and inerrant Word of God. Micah recorded the words of the Lord accurately and Matthew did the same with the words of the priests and scribes; however, the priests and scribes misquoted the Micah passage. The Islamic leaders use this example as proof of error and fallibility of the Scripture because they fail to consider the heart and intent of the speaker in the text. The priests and scribes during Herod's day showed little concern for the truth of the Scripture; instead, they focused on adherence to their religious laws and the desires and pleasures of King Herod proved by Matthew in the rest of his Gospel.

**Assyrian Attack Stopped by Seven Shepherds and Eight Leaders**

**Micah 5:**<sup>5b</sup> When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. <sup>6</sup> They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and He will deliver *us* from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.

The passage promised the invasion of the Assyrians into the Promised Land and addressed the leader with the singular pronoun "him". The Assyrian would take the Northern Kingdom by storm but in the south, seven shepherds and eight leaders would thwart his attempt to overthrow their kingdom; therefore, they protected the Southern Kingdom from

Assyria. The Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria; Hezekiah ruled the south. Who were the shepherds and leaders? Eight kings, including Hezekiah, held the Assyrians back. The other seven kings were Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahas, Jehoakim, Jehoachin and Zedekiah, all direct descendants of King David. During the days of Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, overthrew Assyria and turned on the Southern Kingdom. Although the eight kings successfully held off Assyria, Zedekiah could not hold off Babylon. The seven shepherds during the same period included Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, each blessed with his record of performing the Lord's work permanently included in the Old Testament.

#### **Seven Shepherds**

*(Prophets of the Southern Kingdom During the Reign of the Seven Kings)*

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Obadiah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah

#### **Seven Leaders**

*(Kings of the Southern Kingdom During the Ministries of the Seven Prophetic Shepherds)*

Hezekiah  
Manasseh  
Amon  
Josiah  
Jehoahas  
Jehoakim  
Jehoachin  
Zedekiah

### **Scattered in Exile**

**Micah 5:**<sup>7</sup> Then the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on vegetation which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of men. <sup>8</sup> The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, among many peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, which, if he passes through, tramples down and tears, and there is none to rescue. <sup>9</sup> Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, and all your enemies will be cut off.

The history of Assyria's defeat of the Northern Kingdom confirmed the scattering of Israel throughout the Assyrian Empire. Assyria removed more than 200,000 people from its land in the first invasion under Tiglath and the rest in the invasion by Sargon II. <sup>7</sup> The Lord had already told them it would happen before they entered the Promised Land if they sinned against Him.

**Deuteronomy 28:**<sup>64</sup> "Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

However, Israel's presence in the Assyrian land was manifested as a two-edged sword. Just as the small drops of dew watered the vegetation of the field in minute dosages, so too, did the small, yet ever-present Israel in the Assyrian territory deliver minute dosages of the Lord's message. Occasionally, the presence of Israel in Assyrian territory deluged the message of the Lord and they could do nothing to stop it. Additionally, with the mere presence of Israel in the empire, Assyria conquered more nations than it could control. Assyria's attempt to assimilate Israel into its culture allowed Israel to bring her culture to the Assyrians, allowing the Israelites to express their particular views and beliefs which were contrary to the Assyrian philosophy and religion. Thus, Israel became the lion in the midst of her adversaries and would continue to be so until Assyria bowed in defeat to the Babylonians from 612 BC through 609 BC.

<sup>7</sup> Sargon ruled from 722 BC – 705 BC in Assyria and was responsible for the capture of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

## Vengeance in Anger and Wrath of the Lord

**Micah 5:**<sup>10</sup> "It will be in that day," declares the LORD, "That I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy your chariots. <sup>11</sup> "I will also cut off the cities of your land and tear down all your fortifications. <sup>12</sup> "I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you will have fortune-tellers no more. <sup>13</sup> "I will cut off your carved images and your *sacred* pillars from among you, So that you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands. <sup>14</sup> "I will root out your Asherim from among you and destroy your cities. <sup>15</sup> "And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed."

The vengeance of the Lord on the Israelites should not have come to them as a surprise. Each of the threats listed in this passage can be found in the pages of Deuteronomy. Here are a few examples.

**Deuteronomy 16:**<sup>21</sup> "You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make for yourself. <sup>22</sup> "You shall not set up for yourself a *sacred* pillar which the Lord your God hates.

**Deuteronomy 18:**<sup>10</sup> "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, <sup>11</sup> or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

**Deuteronomy 28:**<sup>58</sup> "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, <sup>59</sup> then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. <sup>60</sup> "He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. <sup>61</sup> "Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed. <sup>62</sup> "Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the Lord your God.

Israel had forgotten the warnings given by the Lord while they were in the wilderness. Their sin was incurable by this time in history, and it was time for the Lord to initiate His plan and promise of vengeance.

## Indictment of the Lord

**Micah 6:**<sup>1</sup> Hear now what the LORD is saying, "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. <sup>2</sup> "Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, because the LORD has a case against His people; Even with Israel He will dispute. <sup>3</sup> "My people, what have I done to you, and how have I wearied you? Answer Me. <sup>4</sup> "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam. <sup>5</sup> "My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, *and* from Shittim to Gilgal, so that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD."

In this passage, Micah presents the indictment of the Lord against His people. He calls for an answer to His questions and begs them to remember what He had done for them

throughout history with Moses, Aaron and Miriam, stories fairly familiar to all Jews and most Christians. The stories of Balak, Balaam, Shittim and Gilgal are not as well known. Balak plotted with Balaam to curse Israel while she wandered in the wilderness.<sup>8</sup> Balaam, who longed to curse Israel, found himself constrained by the Lord to bless Israel instead.<sup>9</sup> In Shittim, the Israelites sinned against the Lord and deserved utter destruction, but by the sparing grace of God, they continued to live.<sup>10</sup> Gilgal became the first place of encampment when Israel crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. It stood between Jericho and the Jordan River where God renewed His covenant with them.<sup>11</sup> Through each of these examples, the Lord showed Israel His righteousness towards them, yet they had forgotten Him by the time of Micah's prophecy.

### God's Requirement of Man

**Micah 6:**<sup>6</sup> With what shall I come to the LORD *and* bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? <sup>7</sup> Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

God's requirement of man costs nothing. God's requirement of man is not difficult to achieve. He requires man to be just, to show loving kindness, to walk humbly with Him and to have no other gods. Deuteronomy 10:12 says the following.

**Deuteronomy 10:**<sup>12</sup> "Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *and* to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?"

### Deserving of the Curse from the Exodus

**Micah 6:**<sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD will call to the city— and it is sound wisdom to fear Your name: "Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time? <sup>10</sup> "Is there yet a man in the wicked house, *Along with* treasures of wickedness and a short measure *that is* cursed? <sup>11</sup> "Can I justify wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights? <sup>12</sup> "For the rich men of *the* city are full of violence, her residents speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. <sup>13</sup> "So also I will make *you* sick, striking you down, desolating *you* because of your sins. <sup>14</sup> "You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, and your vileness will be in your midst. You will *try to remove for safekeeping*, but you will not preserve *anything*, and what you do preserve I will give to the sword. <sup>15</sup> "You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; and the grapes, but you will not drink wine. <sup>16</sup> "The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; and in their devices you walk. Therefore I will give you up for destruction and your inhabitants for derision, and you will bear the reproach of My people."

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<sup>8</sup> Numbers 22:5

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 24:9-11

<sup>10</sup> Numbers 31

<sup>11</sup> Joshua 5:2-11

Israel had broken every statute presented by the Lord. In his last days, the Lord instructed Moses to teach the people the blessings and the curses which they were to use in a ceremony when they reached Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim in the Promised Land. The time to receive their curses had come. Deuteronomy records the curses.

**Deuteronomy 27:**<sup>15</sup> 'Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets *it* up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'<sup>16</sup> 'Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>17</sup> 'Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary mark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>18</sup> 'Cursed is he who misleads a blind *person* on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>19</sup> 'Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>20</sup> 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>21</sup> 'Cursed is he who lies with any animal.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>22</sup> 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>23</sup> 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>24</sup> 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>25</sup> 'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'<sup>26</sup> 'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

What were the statutes of Omri and his son Ahab? Omri founded the capital of the Northern Kingdom in Samaria, moving it from Shechem. His life also set the foundation for the sin of his son's administration.<sup>12</sup> Their eyes focused on false gods, false religions, injustice, perversion, wickedness, superstition, and distortion. Their combined times of rule lasted only 30 years, yet their influence and legacy lasted another 146 years.<sup>13</sup>

### Micah's Comments

**Micah 7:**<sup>1</sup> Woe is me! For I am like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, *or* a first-ripe fig *which* I crave.<sup>2</sup> The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright *person* among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; each of them hunts the other with a net.<sup>3</sup> Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, and a great man speaks the desire of his soul; so they weave it together.<sup>4</sup> The best of them is like a briar, the most upright like a thorn hedge. The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur.<sup>5</sup> Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips.<sup>6</sup> For son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household.

Micah found nothing good in Israel. The rulers, judges, great men, husbands, women, sons and daughters can be compared to thorn bushes at best. None could be trusted – no, not one. Micah could not find a single soul, other than himself, in a right relationship with God.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Kings 16: 16-28; 1 Kings 21:25-26

<sup>13</sup> Omri ruled eight Hebrew years and Ahab ruled twenty-two. In Gregorian years, they served from 894 BC to 868 BC.

## Micah's Source of Salvation and Light

**Micah 7:**<sup>7</sup> But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. <sup>8</sup> Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me. <sup>9</sup> I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, *and* I will see His righteousness.

Micah's execution would soon occur at the hands of his people and under the authority of Hezekiah.<sup>14</sup> He feared nothing and looked intently for the salvation of the Lord to carry him on to the place of peaceful rest. His physical death would not last forever because he would rise again as the darkness of physical death disappears in the light of the Lord. The Lord knew Micah's faults but He also knew his righteousness, so Micah watched expectantly for the Lord in the next few days.

## Sent by the Lord to Trample Down

**Micah 7:**<sup>10</sup> Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look on her; at that time she will be trampled down like mire of the streets. <sup>11</sup> *It will be* a day for building your walls. On that day will your boundary be extended. <sup>12</sup> *It will be* a day when they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt even to the Euphrates, even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain. <sup>13</sup> And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants, on account of the fruit of their deeds.

Even though the Assyrians were enemies of God, the Lord, used them to overtake Israel in 722 BC. When Assyria came into the land, she would trample Israel into the mud. Isaiah mentions the same event in his prophecy.

**Isaiah 51:**<sup>23</sup> "I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over *you*.' You have even made your back like the ground and like the street for those who walk over *it*."

## Unchanging Compassionate Shepherd

**Micah 7:**<sup>14</sup> Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, the flock of Your possession which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. <sup>15</sup> "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles." <sup>16</sup> Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth, their ears will be deaf. <sup>17</sup> They will lick the dust like a serpent, like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; to the LORD our God they will come in dread and they will be afraid before You. <sup>18</sup> Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. <sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup> You will give truth to Jacob *and* unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

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<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah 26:18-19

Micah's message ends with his personal prayer to God on behalf of the people. He knows the outcome because he knows the promise of the unchanging compassionate Shepherd. Israel will be returned to the beautiful land of Bashan and Gilead, nations will bow to Israel as the premier nation of the Lord. God will pardon the sins of Israel and mold them into a great and mighty, upright and godly, righteous and holy people, all of which will have to wait for the time of the Last Days. When Micah finished the word of this prophecy and laid his pen down, his days on earth were numbered and he would die a martyr's death. The Assyrians would trample the Northern Kingdom but the king of the Southern Kingdom would repent and the Lord would grant him 15 years of life. Eight kings would serve the south along with seven prophets, and then the Lord would send Nebuchadnezzar to remove them from the land. No Jewish king of the Davidic line will sit on the throne again until the Lord sets His throne there in the Last Days.