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Dear Friends,

Have you ever heard of the Yazoo land scandal of 1795? Apparently, it is considered “the most corrupt deal in American history,” according to historynewsnetwork.org.

Shortly after the American Revolution, the state of Georgia sold 35 million acres (now parts of Alabama and Mississippi), called the Yazoo lands, for $500,000. “Every member of the Georgia legislature but one accepted a bribe in return for his vote,” historynewsnetwork.org said.

Then there’s the Teapot Dome scandal that sullied the presidency of Warren G. Harding in 1921. Without seeking competitive bids, Harding’s secretary of the interior, Albert B. Fall, gave private oil companies drilling rights to the oil fields at Teapot Dome in Wyoming and personally pocketed what today would amount to $7 million. Aol.com said Fall has “the dubious distinction of being the first former Cabinet member to be sentenced to prison.”

And then there’s Abscam, code name for “Arab Scam,” a public corruption investigation from 1978 to 1980 that involved more than 100 U.S. federal agents, some posing as Arab sheiks, seeking bribes in exchange for favorable legislation. Seven congressmen went to prison.

Unfortunately, people have not grown more honest over time. Today worldwide corruption abounds. “Companies and individuals pay at least $1 trillion in bribes to public sector officials annually,” The Huffington Post reported in March.

Corruption is nothing new. In fact, it was so prevalent in ancient Israel that it was one of God’s chief complaints against His people. In this issue of Israel My Glory, we learn what the prophet Micah had to tell the Israelites about their failure to live righteously. Their sins were similar to those of many countries today, and God punished Israel for them. But Israel has a promise from God that no other nation has: “For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up” (Jer. 24:6).

As you read these articles, bear in mind that ancient dates are difficult to pin down and some authors will differ on the dates of specific events. Regardless, the message is the same. Nations should fear God, and His people should love Him and bring glory to His holy name.

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
It is common to cross paths with Christians who don’t believe the Jewish people today are God’s Chosen People. They fail to see how Israel fits into God’s plan for this world, and they cannot grasp Israel’s significance to them as believers in Jesus. Yet Israel is crucial to God’s plan to redeem the earth.

After Jesus arose, He met with His disciples before ascending to heaven (Acts 1:4–9). Taking them to the Hebrew Scriptures, He helped them understand that He had to fulfill what was written about Him in the Law, Psalms, and Prophets, which present two images of the Messiah: a suffering Servant (Ps. 22; Isa. 53) and a conquering King (Ps. 2; Isa. 11). He had fulfilled the suffering-Servant prophecies; and one day, He will return as conquering King. He considered this information so important that He wanted to ensure the disciples understood it before they began to build His church.

As followers of Christ, the same is true for us today. Through the progress of revelation, God unfolds His redemptive design little by little. People who see no future for Israel often say you must understand the New Testament before you can understand the Old. Yet Jesus and His disciples preached redemption before the New Testament was written. Their understanding began in the Old Testament.

Redemption is the payment of a price, by one who is qualified, to liberate someone or something from bondage. In Genesis 3, God unveiled His plan to send the Seed of a woman to redress the damage done by mankind’s sin (v. 15). This Redeemer would suffer when Satan bruised His heel, but Satan would be defeated when the Redeemer bruised his head. This promise gives us hope that all was not lost by mankind’s rebellion. God will fix everything.

To do so, He chose to create a unique nation through one man, Abraham (12:1–3). Through Him, God promised to bless all the families of the world (v. 3). The apostle Paul noted the magnitude of this promise when he told the Galatians, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed’” (Gal. 3:8).

God promised to work through Abraham’s descendants of promise, Israel, to accomplish His redemptive plan. So important is this promise to God that He confirmed it in a unilateral covenant with Abraham, binding Himself to keep it (Gen. 12; 15; 17).

From God’s sage perspective, the best way to redeem this sinful world is through a single nation and, ultimately, a promised Son of this nation. If God the Son was going to assume the form of a man, He had to come through the nation God chose for that purpose. God’s plan to deliver humanity and restore Earth to its pre-sin environment flows through the Jewish people. Only through Israel will God fulfill those promises.

Yet Israel’s purpose did not end with the First Coming. By God’s sovereign design, Israel ultimately will lead the world in worship of Him (Ex. 19:6; Zech. 8:20–23). Through His plan of redemption, God answers those who say the Jewish people are no longer His chosen, and He testifies to the irrevocability of their calling.

There is much more to share on this subject. Our prophecy conferences in Winona Lake, Indiana, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, this summer focused on Israel’s place in God’s redemptive plan. You can purchase the conference messages later this year from The Friends of Israel web store, foi.org/store, or by calling 800–257–7843.

by Jim Showers, executive director of The Friends of Israel
CLAUSTROPHOBIA IS THE FEAR OF BEING CONFINED IN A TIGHT SPACE. IT’S AN ANXIETY DISORDER THAT CAN MAKE SOMEONE FEEL LIKE HE IS ALONE AND SUFFOCATING. A WOMAN WHO SUFFERS FROM CLAUSTROPHOBIA ONCE TOLD ME SHE DRIVES FOR DAYS TO VISIT FAMILY RATHER THAN FLY BECAUSE SHE FEELS TRAPPED INSIDE AN AIRPLANE, WITH NO OPTION OF GETTING OUT.

The fear of tight spaces can affect more than individuals. Sometimes it seems an entire country can feel trapped, with no option of escape. Israel is an extremely small state surrounded by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, none of which are its biggest fans. Even Jordan and Egypt, which have peace agreements with Israel on a diplomatic level, have a poor disposition toward it.

Israelis are confined within the borders of their country. They can only leave by plane or boat. Imagine if you lived in New Jersey, for example, and it was unsafe for you to travel to New York, Pennsylvania, or Delaware; and some of those states outright banned New Jerseyians from entering. That’s a typical day in Israel.

In describing the character of an Israeli, one writer put it this way: “What makes an Israeli? A peculiar mix of joie de vivre, arrogance, aggressiveness, fear, claustrophobia, plus a whole lot more.”

So how do you work through the claustrophobia? How do you live with such a debilitating anxiety when it makes you feel like you’re suffocating? Many people can manage their fear of tight spaces if they know there is a light at the end of the tunnel—that freedom from confinement is attainable. They just want to know they can get out at some point.

I’ve learned over the years that being a light at the end of the tunnel is exactly what ORIGINS does for the Israeli people. ORIGINS is The Friends of Israel’s three-week, young-adult ministry trip to Israel. The name stands for “Our Resolve Is Giving Israel Never-ending Support.” This unique program provides a light for Israelis. It helps them see they are not alone.

I figured this out through an experience I had a few years ago at a grocery store in a suburb of Tel Aviv. I was speaking in English with one of my ORIGINS teammates, and a big, burly Russian-Israeli overheard our conversation. He couldn’t help himself. He interrupted us and asked what we were doing in his non-tourist town. I replied, “We’re a group of young evangelical Christians from America and Canada who have come to show you love and support as volunteers at your local hospital.”

Out of nowhere, this man’s eyes welled up with tears. He grabbed me and hugged me and started to cry. Then he explained that he and most of his friends often feel extremely alone in the world, trapped by countries that don’t like them. And to make matters worse, they hear story after story about people all around the world who lie about Israel and foment hatred for the Jewish state in universities, the news media, and even in some churches.

ORIGINS became a light at the end of the tunnel for him. He finally didn’t feel so trapped and alone because he knew there were people outside Israel who loved him.

The experience at the grocery store gave me a clearer vision of our ORIGINS mission. The Friends of Israel provides a way for young evangelicals to answer the call to bring light into a confining, suffocating darkness. We want to show our Israeli friends that God loves them and we love them and that there is unexplainable freedom in the light of our Savior.

by Chris Katulka
Representatives from 26 countries and international organizations met in Paris recently in an effort to relaunch stalled peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. But the initiative is doomed to fail.

The Paris summit brought together officials from the Arab League, Middle East Quartet (comprised of the United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia), and other states—but not Israel or the Palestinian Authority. It was the first international gathering on the Middle East peace process since the Annapolis (Maryland) Conference in November 2007.

The talks in Paris were part of the so-called French Initiative, a drive by the French government to organize an international peace conference before the end of 2016 to preserve the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The two-state solution is in serious danger,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said. “We are reaching a point of no return where this solution will not be possible.” But the French effort lacks balance. A summit document produced by the French foreign ministry faulted Israel for the impasse, “particularly with regard to continued settlement activities.” It did not blame the stalemate on Palestinian terrorism or on the Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

The French efforts are unlikely to succeed in reviving negotiations, in part because Israeli and Palestinian positions are far apart on many issues, including the future status of Jerusalem.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has welcomed the French initiative because it would internationalize the peace talks. Israeli officials have rejected the plan for the same reason; they believe efforts to internationalize the negotiations will allow the Palestinians to dig in their heels and resist direct talks with Israel.

Palestinian Saeb Erekat has confirmed Israeli concerns. Writing in Le Monde, Erekat argued that the longstanding method of bilateral talks had failed and that the Palestinians were being forced to move to a “multilateral framework” in which the international community would impose a solution on Israel.

The director-general of Israel’s foreign ministry, Dore Gold, said the French initiative is doomed to failure: “One hundred years ago, two officials by the name of Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot tried to dictate a new order in the Middle East. It was at the apex of the era of colonialism in our area. This effort utterly failed then and will completely fail today.”

Gold added that the Paris summit had “made the Palestinian positions more extreme, and made it more difficult to resume direct talks.” He said what is needed is a diplomatic approach “that is based on the idea of supporting direct talks, not replacing them.” He added, “One of the critical questions of the conference is whether it increases the Palestinian incentive to negotiate. And from what the Palestinians are saying, whether it is Erekat or [PA Prime Minister] Rami Hamdallah, it appears the French initiative is not making them more cooperative.”

Addressing the European Parliament, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin said that now is not the right time to push for peace: “Currently, the practical conditions, the political and regional circumstances, which would enable us to reach a permanent agreement between us—the Israelis and the Palestinians—are failing to materialize.”

Even if the French initiative fails, momentum is building to internationalize the Palestinian issue. The Obama administration has indicated that it is open to action by the UN Security Council to impose the outlines of a two-state solution on Israel before the next U.S. president takes office. Israel will need to engage in deft diplomacy to avoid being caught between a rock and a hard place.
NIGERIA—The Muslim governor of the Muslim-dominated Kaduna state in Nigeria recently proposed a law that would stifle Christian freedoms and criminalize street preaching. “Street evangelists would be fined, and ‘offensive’ preaching at church services would send pastors to jail for up to two years,” reported MorningStarNews.org.

The bill Gov. Nasir El-Rufai has sent to the state assembly would also require clergy to obtain an annual preaching permit. Church leaders believe the bill is a ploy to persecute Christians under the guise of quelling extremists and charlatans, Morning Star News said.

“Under consideration by the Muslim-dominated Kaduna State House of Assembly, the bill stipulates that clergy would lose preaching rights if the state government or its agencies consider any of their words to be offensive,” the news agency reported. In addition to “criminalizing street evangelism and confining all preaching” to within churches, it “forbids the playing of evangelistic tapes and CDs in public places. Violators would be subject to a fine of up to 200,000 naira [approximately $1,000].” Christian leaders say the bill is unconstitutional.

The Rev. George Dodo, chairman of the Kaduna State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, told Morning Star News, “The proposed law is in contravention of the Nigerian Constitution and shall inhibit the preaching of the gospel when it becomes operational. We have reservations over the bill and believe that it will curtail religious freedom of the people, particularly, Christians in Kaduna state.”

The legislation raises questions concerning Nigeria’s newest president’s ability to keep his campaign promise to fight Christian persecution. Muhammadu Buhari took office in March 2015, beating the incumbent, born-again Christian, Goodluck Jonathan. The election marked the first time an incumbent lost to the opposition.

A year ago, Nigerian Christian leaders said they viewed Buhari as “a man of integrity and decency who can fight corruption and Boko Haram,” according to Morgan Lee of Christianity Today.

David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, said Buhari, whose vice president is a former attorney general turned church pastor from southern Nigeria, could help end religious violence in Nigeria, according to Lee. Open Doors works with a large network of Nigerian Christians.

Curry said Buhari’s election would “shape whether Nigeria will continue to exist in its current state or whether it will be bifurcated by a caliphate set up by Boko Haram,” Lee reported.

Sadly, since Buhari has taken office, things have not gotten better, despite the president’s promises. Christian persecution in northern Nigeria is growing, especially in Kaduna state. The Rev. Evaristus Bassey, director of Caritas International, explained, “The fear is that . . . the proposed restrictions would play into the hands of officials of state who have a hegemonic mentality and would allow them the freedom to persecute one religion in favor of another,” Morning Star News reported.

One Christian leader in Kaduna state, wrote Morning Star News, believes “the government needs to curtail incessant attacks on Christian communities by armed Muslim Fulani herdsmen instead of further burdening them with an anti-Christian law.”

To read the full report at MorningStarNews.org, go to tinyurl.com/jn9hx3s. To read the full report at ChristianityToday.com, go to tinyurl.com/zy3w4qf.
We live in a world that is experiencing massive and troubling changes. North America is in peril, Muslim nations are wreaking havoc, people are clamoring for new leadership as Europe is overwhelmed by immigrants, and Christianity is under attack.

What does God think about all of this? Many of the events that are unfolding before us have been foretold by God in His Word. It’s part of His plan for the ages. Come join us as we open the Scriptures and study the future in light of today.

Visit foi.org/prophecy for more information or call 1-800-257-7843
What do you do when the Bible says one thing and the government says another? Follow the principle the apostle Peter gave us.

The Peter Principle

by Elwood McQuaid

A significant parade of years has passed since my grammar school days in a small Michigan community. The crucial national election looming before us in the United States has prompted me to look back at the time when electing class officers ignited excitement throughout the student body.

The voting protocol varied: cardboard ballot boxes for the upper classes, an eyes-closed show of hands for the younger. The procedure was simple. A bit of campaign rhetoric, followed by heads down and hands up for your favorite candidate—which was usually dictated by friendship or popularity.

Civility was a high priority. No smear tactics. As a matter of fact, it was customary for candidates to show respect by voting for their opponents. After the outcome, congratulations went to the winner from those who failed to win the day.

Today it all may seem like a quaint exercise in make-believe to create a brief respite from the heavy doses of reading, writing, and arithmetic. But grammar school electioneering was actually an initiation into a lifelong privilege known only in free societies where citizens enjoy the right to select their government leadership.

Privilege Begets Obligation

In a world where most governments have been imposed on people, rather than selected by them, this system of free elections stands as the rarest of arrangements. Romans 13:1–7 clarifies the God-ordained authority of government and its purpose—to maintain civil order, execute justice, and restrain evil:

For he [secular ruler] is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who prac-tices evil. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (vv. 4, 7).

However, there is a divine proviso: When secular authorities conflict with God’s laws and pressure God’s people to disobey Him, we should hold firm to God’s Word.

For example, when the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem commanded the apostle Peter and his companions to stop preaching and teaching salvation through Jesus Christ, Peter declined, saying, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

He and the other believers bore the consequences of their decision and continued to proclaim the forbidden message that would ultimately spread to people the world over.
We Can Lose It

When secular rulers fail in their responsibility to restrain evil and exercise their God-granted power for our good (Rom. 13:4), they imperil their nation’s future. Moreover, when they condone and promote the evil they are supposed to restrain, they bring their countries to a point of no return, from which there is no national redemption.

In America, for example, government seems to be waging war on God and Christianity. Federal courts routinely ban symbols and depictions of virtually anything related to our nation’s Judeo-Christian heritage. In April a federal judge in California ruled that the small cross on the official seal of the County of Los Angeles violated the California constitution.

The cross was on the tower of the San Gabriel Mission, one in a chain of Spanish sanctuaries that were historically significant in California’s development. The crossless version makes the building look more like a warehouse than a Christian mission, violating historical accuracy. Such rulings represent the godless, revisionist ideology transforming America and jeopardizing its future for coming generations. It is a serious error to believe that if America rejects God, God will intervene and save it. All evidence proves otherwise.

Unlike Israel, which God promises to preserve through judgment, Gentile nations corrupted by persistent, unrestrained evil have no such promise and are left to their own devices, becoming insignificant shadows of what they once were.

Israel fits a different pattern. God’s program for His Chosen People is remedial. He promises to preserve them (Jer. 5:18; 31:35–40); reconcile them to the Messiah (Zech. 12:10); and reign over them in a Millennial Kingdom where peace, justice, and righteousness will prevail (Isa. 9:6–7).

Here and Now

No one can predict how events, competent leadership, and an awakened “silent majority” could turn things around and bring the United States back from the brink of moral and social disintegration.

As Americans, we have the right—the obligation—to vote. And through responsible participation in the elective process bestowed on us at great personal cost by our forefathers, we can be heard.

Believers hold dual citizenship. As citizens of our respective countries, we must live responsibly within the law (Mk. 12:17). As citizens of heaven, we must obey God. When those obligations collide, we use the “Peter Principle”: to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), as the apostle Peter stated, and accept the consequences.

John Bunyan (1628–1688), the English tinker turned preacher, demonstrated Peter’s admonition in precise fashion. Despite a royal decree declaring that all nonconformist preaching outside the Church of England would be punished by imprisonment, Bunyan refused to stop preaching the gospel. He was arrested and incarcerated for 12 years for obeying God, rather than men.

While imprisoned, the unschooled Baptist produced a rich series of books and began the incomparable The Pilgrim’s Progress, which endures as the most successful allegory ever written. For centuries it was second only to the Bible in translations and distribution.

Bunyan described his years in the fetid prison as a time when his mind was freed to study Christ, and he often described himself as the “Lord’s free prisoner.” Had he not chosen God over man, he would be unknown today; and millions would be deprived of inspiration from his writings.

The Christlike Contradiction

Jesus ministered in a hostile environment. Yet multitudes were drawn to Him because He offered genuine peace, love, hope, and promise—dramatic contradictions to the darkness engulfing the people in imperial Rome.

More than 100 years after Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary, Tertullian (150–225 AD), an early church father, proclaimed, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” No matter how degraded a culture becomes, the true church will grow, rather than recede.

Why? Because Christlike believers are an irresistible attraction. Oppression, no matter how intense, does not drive a stake through the heart of Christianity. Instead, through the power of the gospel, it drives an ever-increasing remnant of individuals to emulate Christ by bearing His moral and spiritual likeness.

Even the most blessed of societies corrode and wither in time. But the church has survived and prospered despite corrupt societies, persecution, and satanically inspired movements to destroy it. And that will not change. Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18).

Soon Americans will exercise the rare right to participate in the future of our country. Voting is not a game. It is an obligation enshrined in the legacy of the freedom we have been given. And as Christians, we must fulfill our obligations until the Lord takes us home. See you at the polls!

Elwood McQuaid

is a former executive director of The Friends of Israel and retired editor-in-chief of Israel My Glory.
THE BOOK OF MICAH is one of the 12 Minor Prophets in the Bible—minor not because of content but because of size. The Minor Prophets cover similar themes as the other Prophets, but they also emphasize social justice and true worship.

The books are shorter than the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings); the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel); and the works of Moses, who was also a prophet (see Deuteronomy 34:10 and Luke 24:27). Moses’ books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are labeled Torah (Law).

Micah is also one of the nine pre-exilic Minor Prophets, meaning it was written before the destruction of Solomon’s Temple in 586 BC and the Babylonian Captivity. The remaining three are post-exilic, written after some of the Jewish people returned from Babylon.

The prophet Micah came from Moresheth (Possession) in the rolling foothills of the Promised Land, about 23 miles southwest of Jerusalem, near ancient Philistia. The area was...
also called Moresheth-Gath (Possession of Gath), not to be confused with Mareshah, a few miles away. Moresheth is also 17.5 miles west of Tekoa, the hometown of the prophet Amos, whose ministry 50 years earlier likely affected Micah greatly. (See Amos 2:12; 7:16; and Micah 2:6.)

Moresheth’s main characteristic was that it was a relatively remote, rural farming community that lay close to the observable Gentile world. Consequently, Micah ministered primarily to the common people of the southern kingdom of Judah. His older contemporary, Isaiah, prophesied in Judah’s capital city of Jerusalem, while Hosea prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel, whose capital was Samaria.

Most of Micah’s message is about Jerusalem, however, not the rural folk of his hometown. Though he mentioned the coming judgment on the northern kingdom (1:1, 5–6), he did so primarily to warn Jerusalem, encouraging it to repent.

The word Israel occurs 12 times in the book, but in most cases it appears to be used generically for all 12 tribes of Israel, not merely for the northern kingdom.

Micah ministered during the reigns of Judean Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (v. 1). Therefore, his ministry is dated from 730 to 700 BC.

His name is short for Micaiah. The following names are all related: Michaiah, Micaiah, Michael, Michal, Michah, Micha, Micah, and Mica, with 27 people in Scripture having a form of that name. They include the archangel Michael and two women: King Saul’s daughter given to David in marriage (1 Sam. 14:49) and the mother of a king of Judah (2 Chr. 13:2).
Most of these individuals are only mentioned in passing. One, however, is prominent: the prophet Micaiah the son of Imlah, who predicted the death in battle of the northern kingdom’s wicked King Ahab (1 Ki. 22; 2 Chr. 18).

Micah’s name means, “Who Is Like Jehovah.” The words could be phrased like a question (“Who is like Jehovah?”), expecting the answer, “No one!” There is a play on words on the name in Micah 7:18: “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.”

Micah’s theme is judgment followed by blessing. The book can be outlined based on the three times the prophet declared, “Hear!” (Shema! 1:2; 3:1; 6:1):

1. Judgment Coming for Samaria and Jerusalem (chaps. 1—2).
2. Judgment on Leaders and Blessings From the Ultimate Leader, the Messiah (chaps. 3—5).
3. Judgment Justified and Blessings Predicted (chaps. 6—7).

Isaiah and Micah ministered through the period when the northern kingdom tried to force Judah to join a coalition against the Assyrians. The ungodly kings of Judah (such as Ahaz) displeased the Lord by trying to protect themselves through military might and treaties with Assyria and Egypt. These human efforts were doomed to fail; and by 701 BC, the erstwhile allies, the Assyrians, had conquered every city of Judah except Jerusalem.

By then, godly Hezekiah sat on Judah’s throne. In the Assyrian records (a clay monument called the Taylor Prism), King Sennacherib bragged that he had “shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem.” Fortunately, instead of panicking, Hezekiah called upon the Lord with Isaiah’s and Micah’s encouragement. God delivered Jerusalem, killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers while they slept.

Micah condemned the idle rich (chap. 2); oppressive government (chap. 3); and hypocritical, ritualistic state religion (chap. 3). He did so mostly using Hebrew poetry, with its emphasis on parallelism. Micah 2:13 provides a descriptive title for the Messiah, Ha Poretz, or “The Breaker” (the one who goes ahead, breaks down obstacles and leads the way).

Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:3, 7–8; and 7:18 use the concept of the remnant. The Hebrew word is shear, as in Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub (“Only a Remnant Shall Return”), so named to warn Ahaz that only a remnant would return if he continued to make treaties with Assyria instead of calling on the Lord for protection (Isa. 7:3).

Micah 4:8 refers to Migdol Eder, the “Tower of the Flock,” which is described as being near Bethlehem in Genesis 35:19, 21. Micah 7:19 is the basis for the Tashlich ceremony before the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), where Orthodox Jews even today symbolically cast their sins into the sea: “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast [tashlich] all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

Interestingly, about 100 years later, the prophet Jeremiah never alluded to or quoted Isaiah, but he quoted Micah 3:12 when everyone wanted to kill him (Jer. 26:8):

Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying: “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Zion shall be plowed

ORACLES OF DOOM AND PROMISES OF BLESSING IN MICAH

**DOOM**
- Micah 1:1—2:11
- Micah 3:1—12
- Micah 6:1—7:10

**BLESSING**
- Micah 2:12–13
- Micah 7:11–20
like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.’” Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord’s favor? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves” (vv. 17–19).

We can also wonder which prophet quoted the other in Isaiah 2:2–4 and Micah 4:1–3. With the exception of only a few words, the passages are identical:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Mic. 4:1–3).

The analogy of war and the plowshare actually predates both Isaiah and Micah, occurring in the reverse in the book of Joel: “Prepare for war! . . . Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears” (Joel 3:9–10).

More than 700 years after Micah’s time, when Herod the Great asked the religious rulers where the Messiah was to be born, they quoted Micah 5:2: “So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel”’” (Mt. 2:5–6).

In Matthew 10:21, 35–36, Jesus quoted Micah 7:6 as He prepared His disciples for the hardships of their ministry.

Important predictions in Micah include the 722 BC exile of Israel’s 10 northern tribes (1:6), the 701 BC Assyrian attack on Judah (v. 9), and one of the most monumental events in Jewish history: the 586 BC destruction of Jerusalem and the nation’s deportation to Babylon (3:12; 4:10; 7:13). This last prediction is particularly significant because Babylon was not a major power in Micah’s lifetime. It was under Assyrian domination.

Though Micah is numbered among the Minor Prophets—only seven chapters long, 105 verses—it is a wellspring of important information.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., 369–374.

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MICAH 1–2

BY TOM DAVIS
Thirty miles north of Jerusalem, in what most people call the West Bank, lie the ruins of Samaria, ancient capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Though the area today is closed to tourists for security reasons, the biblical city’s exposed foundations still stand, a silent witness to the accuracy of the prophecies that open the book of Micah.

Delivered before Assyria’s three-year siege of Samaria (725–722 BC), Micah’s first prophecy was to the northern kingdom, which Assyria finally destroyed in 722 BC. But he addressed his message to “all . . . O earth” (all people everywhere). God’s punishment of Samaria, as well as the southern kingdom of Judea, was to be a lesson for everyone; and all humanity is called to attest to the fact that the Lord’s judgment is just. “Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it!” (Mic. 1:2).

The Lord is pictured as “coming out of His place” and walking on the mountaintops (vv. 3–4), a visual that speaks of His majesty, power, and overwhelming presence. Since most cities were built atop tall hills and accessible mountains, it also speaks of His destruction of those cities.

Samaria’s walls were massive and especially reinforced and enlarged in anticipation of Assyria’s attack. Nevertheless, Micah warned that God would expose the foundations, undermine the walls, and “pour down her stones into the valley” below (v. 6).

Samaria’s and Jerusalem’s specific sins were idolatry and polytheism, which are likened to harlotry (v. 7). Verse 8 speaks of the voices God would leave in His wake—the eerie night cries of the jackal and ostrich, sounds of death and danger. Archaeological surveys indicate the number of villages in this region was reduced from almost 300 to about 50, with less than 15 percent of the population that existed prior to the Assyrian invasion remaining.1

The villages named in verses 8–16 were located in the path of an invading army, initially coming south on the coastal highway and then cutting into the foothills (Shephelah), heading toward Jerusalem from the southwest. In 722 BC, when Shalmaneser3 invaded, he stopped at Lachish. But 21 years later, in 701 BC, Sennacherib went all the way to Jerusalem.

Chapter 1 concludes with the citizens of Samaria and Judea in deep contrition: “Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, because of your precious children; enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they shall go from you into captivity” (v. 16).

Cutting the garments and hair are well-known signs of mourning (cf. Jer. 16:6; Ezek. 27:31). The words stripped and naked were already mentioned (Mic. 1:8). The Hebrew word translated “eagle” can also mean “vulture.” Parents are pictured lamenting the loss of their families as the Assyrians cart their precious children into exile. On this sad note, chapter 1 concludes.

CHAPTER 2 is 13 verses long, and the first 11 continue the Lord’s complaint against the people of Judah as if in a court of law. Abruptly, the final two verses switch to the blessings God will eventually bring. Verse 1 begins with an exclamation that only occurs in prophetic books: “Woe,” implying that something bad is going to happen:
Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance (vv. 1–2).

Micah condemned the political and business leaders of Judah for abusing the poor. Because he lived among the farmers of Moresheth-Gath, he probably had neighbors who had lost their farms to such rapacious individuals. He imagined the schemers lying in bed, devising plans to foreclose on the needy. In fact, they may even have dreamed of doing evil.

Then, at first light, they sprang their legal traps, stealing farmland, homes (v. 2), and clothing (v. 8). Severely disadvantaged by such robbery were the male owners, their descendants (v. 2), wives, and children (v. 9).

The situation was particularly galling because the entire point of the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25) was to ensure that no family in Israel was ever permanently impoverished. At least every 50 years, people would have a chance to start over financially because debts were to be forgiven and farmland returned to the original family owners.

In Micah 2:3 God invokes lex talionis (literally, “Law of the Talion”). It is the legal principle that the punishment must fit the crime (“eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” Lev. 24:20). Wicked men hurt other men’s families; therefore, God would afflict the wicked men’s families: “Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks” (Mic. 2:3). Their inheritances would be seized by pagan Gentiles (“turncoat[s],” v. 4). This prophecy came true for the 10 northern tribes in 722 BC when the Assyrians deported most of the Jewish population and brought Gentiles to live on Jewish land.

Although Assyria greatly afflicted Judea in 701 BC, it did not destroy it. But by 586 BC the southern kingdom was finished, and the Babylonians had deported most of Judea’s citizens. After the Jews were allowed to return to their land, the local people who resisted the rebuilding of both the Temple (see Ezra) and Jerusalem’s walls (see Nehemiah) were the descendants of these “turncoats.” In the New Testament they are the Samaritans.

In verse 4, the phrase bitter lamentation implies the sorrow of a funeral procession: “Lament with a bitter lamentation, saying: ‘We are utterly destroyed!’” In fact, the poetry of this section uses a meter associated with funeral processions.

Verse 6 introduces the word prattle: “‘Do not prattle, you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you.” It means “to drip” and vividly pictures words dripping from a prophet’s mouth, perhaps mocking the man’s spittle when he spoke excitedly. The evil men did not want to hear the “drippings” of the true prophets, but they listened eagerly to the “pratter” who falsely prophesied that good times of wine and strong drink lay ahead (v. 11).

VERSE 12 brings an abrupt change. It switches to a promise of future blessing and protection:

I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the Lord at their head (vv. 12–13).

The words Jacob and Israel refer to the united nation, all 12 tribes. The word for “fold” (v. 12) is the Hebrew word Bozrah. Three places in the ancient Middle East bore that name, the most significant being in Isaiah 63:1—a town in Edom where the Messiah will have a great victory over Israel’s enemies: “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—’I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.’” (See also Isaiah 34.)

God will send a deliverer to the Jewish people who are penned up like a large flock of sheep awaiting slaughter. When were they bottled up in one location in need of intervention to save them? Perhaps Assyria’s 701 BC attack of Jerusalem would qualify. Scripture records that account three times: 2 Kings 18—19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36—37. Jewish people from the surrounding region would have fled to Jerusalem, the only city Assyria did not capture. As godly King Hezekiah called out to God, God replied by killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night while they slept.

This miraculous, divine intervention may foreshadow a future, divine intervention when the Messiah will protect the Jewish people at the end of the seven-year Tribulation. Zechariah 14:1–5 and Revelation 12:6, 14–17 picture them trapped in Jerusalem, breaking out by way of a valley that God creates to help them flee from the Antichrist into the Judean wilderness toward Edom.
Daniel 11:41 even predicts that the Antichrist will not control that portion of the Middle East: “He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.”

The word gate in Micah 2:13 probably refers to a gate in Jerusalem (see Micah 1:9, 12). The underlying structure of verse 13 indicates the “one who breaks open” (Hebrew, Ha Poretz, a recognized Messianic title) is identical to the individual in the last phrase: Jehovah. So in Israel’s darkest moments, its Messiah—the Lord, that great Shepherd of the sheep—will be there to intervene on their behalf.

The locations mentioned in Micah 1 have names that are similar to the verbs in the same sentence, creating plays on words that are lost when translating the text from its original Hebrew:

**MICAH 1:10**

“Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all; in Beth Aphrah roll yourself in the dust.”

In Hebrew, the words tell and Gath are similar. “Weep not at all” can also be “Weep not in Acco” (as it is in the Septuagint). Weep and Acco are similar. Beth Aphrah means “House of Dust.” “Tell it not in Gath” was a proverbial statement dating back to the death of King Saul in 2 Samuel 1:20. It implied that Israel’s enemies should not hear of its downfall for they would certainly gloat.

**MICAH 1:11**

“Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir; the inhabitant of Zaanan does not go out. Beth Ezel mourns; its place to stand is taken away from you.”

Shaphir means “pleasant” (a contrast to their shame). Zaanan sounds like the word for “come out” (they couldn’t). Beth Ezel means “House of Firmness” (they had none and could not stand).

**MICAH 1:12**

“For the inhabitant of Maroth pined for good, but disaster came down from the Lorn to the gate of Jerusalem.”

Maroth sounds like the word for “bitter” (while longing for sweetness). Jerusalem means “City of Peace” (but destruction comes).

**MICAH 1:13**

“O inhabitant of Lachish, harness the chariot to the swift steeds (she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion), for the transgressions of Israel were found in you.”

Lachish sounds like the word for “team” (as in “team of chariot horses”). Zion means “fortress” and is a poetic name for Jerusalem.

**MICAH 1:14**

“Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth Gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.”

Moresheth Gath means “Possession of Gath.” It is similar to the word for “betrothed” and, therefore, refers to Judah not only losing a town in “marriage” but being forced to pay a dowry (“present”) as well. Achzib means “deception” (lying to the authorities).

**MICAH 1:15**

“I will yet bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam.”

Mareshah sounds like the word for “conqueror” (Judah will be conquered). Adullam means “refuge.” There were caves for people to hide in at Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1). The word for “inhabitant” in these verses is feminine, picturing the cities as “ladies in distress.” The Jewish Study Bible attempts to capture the sarcasm and puns in this fashion: “In Dust-house I will roll myself in dust. Pass on your way, girl of Pretty-town, in shameful nakedness. The girl of Bitterness-town aches for good, yet evil has come down from the Lorn to the gate of Jerusalem. The houses of Deception-ville shall be a deception to the kings of Israel.”

**ENDNOTES**


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THE DECIVILIZATION OF JUDAH

by David M. Levy
WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND. THAT MEANS YOU CAN’T GET AWAY WITH DOING WRONG BECAUSE EVENTUALLY, WRONG WILL BE DONE TO YOU. BIBLICALLY, IT IS THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING, SOMETHING THE JUDEAN LEADERS WOULD LEARN ABOUT FIRSTHAND.

SO EVIL WERE THEY IN THE DAYS OF THE PROPHET MICAH THAT GOD USED GROTESQUE METAPHORS TO DESCRIBE THEIR CRUELTY AND PROMISED TO MAKE THEM PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID. MICAH 3 ELABORATES ON JUDAH’S CORRUPTION, DENOUNCES BOTH CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND ANNOUNCES THE IMMINENCE OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION.

DEPRAVED POLITICIANS


INSTEAD, THEY WERE TYRANTS WHO HATED GOOD AND LOVED EVIL (MIC. 3:2). THEY AIDED AND ABETTED THE CRIMINALS IN JUDEAN SOCIETY FOR GREEDY, SELFISH GAIN AND HEARTLESSLY CONSUMED EVERY POSSESSION THEIR VICTIMS OWNED:

YOU WHO HATE GOOD AND LOVE EVIL, WHO TEAR OFF THEIR SKIN FROM THEM AND THEIR FLESH FROM THEIR BONES, WHO EAT THE FLESH OF MY PEOPLE, STRIP OFF THEIR SKIN FROM THEM, BREAK THEIR BONES AND CHOP THEM UP AS FOR THE POT AND AS MEAT IN A KETTLE (VV. 2–3, NASB).

THESE MEN WERE LIKE STARVING, WILD ANIMALS THAT SAVAGELY AND MERCILESSLY GRAB THEIR PREY, RIP IT OPEN, AND DEVOUR THE FLESH AND BLOOD. SO THOROUGH WERE THESE BUTCHERS THAT THEY HACKED UP THEIR VICTIMS LIKE COOKS WHO CHOP THE MEAT AND GRIND THE BONES OF AN ANIMAL THEY PLAN TO BOIL.

SUCH GROTESQUE METAPHORS EMPHASIZE THE DEEP DEPRAVITY OF MEN WHO SHOULD HAVE SAGARDED JUSTICE; GUARANTEED HUMAN RIGHTS; AND PROTECTED THEIR JUDEAN BRETHREN, PARTICULARLY THE UNDERPRIVILEGED. INSTEAD, THEY ABUSED THEIR POSITIONS AND EXPLOITED EVERYONE. GOD CALLS THEIR PREY “MY PEOPLE,” A TERM OF ENDARMENT THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE LORD’S LOVE FOR HIS COVENANT PEOPLE ISRAEL (V. 3).

BUT WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND. “‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ SAYS THE LORD” (ROM. 12:19; CF. DT. 32:35). MICAH WARNED THAT GOD SOMEDAY WILL TURN THE TABLES ON THESE VILE RULERS; AND THOUGH THEY BEG HIM FOR MERCY, HE WILL NOT ANSWER THEM: “THEN THEY WILL CRY TO THE LORD, BUT HE WILL NOT HEAR THEM; HE WILL EVEN HIDE HIS FACE FROM THEM AT THAT TIME, BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN EVIL IN THEIR DEEDS” (MIC. 3:4).

THOSE PROFANE MEN LIVED AS THOUGH THERE WERE NO GOD TO WHOM THEY MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT. SO GOD WILL HIDE HIS FACE FROM THEM AND REFUSE TO EASE THEIR ANGUISH. HE WILL SHOW THEM NO GRACE OR MERCY BECAUSE THEY SHOWED NONE TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH WHO CRIED OUT FOR THEIR HELP.

DECEITFUL PROPHETS

THE SECOND GROUP GOD CONDEMNS IS THE FALSE PROPHETS: “THUS SAYS THE LORD CONCERNING THE PROPHETS WHO MAKE MY PEOPLE STRAY; WHO CHANT ‘PEACE’ WHILE THEY CHEW WITH THEIR TEETH, BUT WHO PREPARE WAR AGAINST HIM” (V. 5).

PEOPLE LOOKED TO THE PROPHETS AS MEN WHO KNEW THE MIND OF GOD AND THEREFORE WOULD DIRECT THE NATION PROPERLY. INSTEAD, THEY DELIBERATELY MISLED JUDAH FOR THEIR OWN SELFISH ENDS. GOD CONDEMNS SUCH PEOPLE AND PUTS THEM UNDER A DIVINE CURSE (DT. 27:18).

SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE THE PHRASE CHEW WITH THEIR TEETH MEANS THEY ONLY PREDICTED PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR THOSE WHO GAVE THEM FOOD OR MATERIAL GOODS. OTHERS BELIEVE IT SPEAKS ABOUT THEIR LYING WORDS, WHICH BIT LIKE A SERPENT. BOTH TEACHINGS ARE TRUE. TO SOMEONE WHO GAVE THESE FALSE PROPHETS NOTHING, THEY PREPARED “WAR AGAINST HIM”; THAT IS, THEY PREDICTED A CURSE. “THERFORE,” MICAH DECLARED, “YOU SHALL HAVE NIGHT WITHOUT VISION, AND YOU SHALL HAVE
darkness without divination; the sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be dark for them” (Mic. 3:6).

God’s judgment will descend on these charlatans like night and darkness, words that depict their impending destruction. He will not give them visions or explain their calamity. Nor will they claim to have visions from the God of peace and prosperity. In that day, they no longer will use “divination” (magic and spiritism). The sun will set on their prosperity—and on any possibility of deliverance (v. 6).

In that day, “the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners abashed; indeed they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God” (v. 7). People who looked to these prophets for direction and illumination concerning the future will disown them and put them to public shame. These prophets will be “abashed,” or struck dumb, because their prophetic gift will be stripped from them. In humiliation, they will “cover their lips” (v. 7). Covering the lip (including the face) signified embarrassment, shame, and mourning (Lev. 13:45). Covering their mouths was an appropriate sign that they had nothing to say. It would seem these prophets did possess a true gift from God; but over time, they prostituted it for financial gain.

In contrast, Micah walked with the Lord: “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Mic. 3:8). He stated three facts about his power and authority:

(1) He was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to speak God’s Word.

(2) His words of justice or righteous judgment were not his own. They came directly from God.

(3) He was given might, or manly courage, to stand fearlessly against men and preach boldly against the sins of "Jacob” and “Israel” (the entire nation, cf. 3:1, 9).

**DEVASTATING PROPHECIES**

Verse 9 recapits the scathing sins of Judah’s rulers and religious leaders and denounces their false confidence that God will not allow calamity to strike them. Micah called them men who “abhorr [despise] justice and pervert [twist] all equity,” distorting the facts of each case in Judah’s courts. No one could be assured a fair verdict unless he bribed the judge.

Judah’s leaders “build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity” (v. 10). That is, the wealthy extorted the poor. Jerusalem’s buildings and palaces were built with blood money gained by fraud, confiscation of property, and even murder. The entire justice system was utterly corrupt: “Her [the nation’s] heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money” (v. 11).

God established the priests to teach, interpret the Law, and decide questions on religion and ritual—free of charge (Dt. 17:8–11). But they only did so for financial gain. He established the prophets to provide divine guidance gratuitously. But they used demonic divination and charged for it (cf. Balaam, Num. 23—24). “They lean [support themselves] on the Lord, and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us’” (Mic. 3:11). These corrupt leaders believed they had immunity from judgment because (1) the Israelites were in a covenant relationship with God, (2) God’s Shekinah Glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and (3) they scrupulously offered the required animal sacrifices at the required times.

How mistaken these men were. Their gross immorality and hypocritical religious practices made God’s judgment inevitable: “Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest” (v. 12).

Because of their sins, three events will befall Jerusalem. First, Zion will be destroyed and become a leveled field for plowing and planting seeds. Second, Jerusalem will be razed and left in ruins. Third, the Temple Mount will become overgrown with trees, briars, and thorns.

Godly King Hezekiah took Micah’s prophecy to heart. He humbled himself, repented of sin, and brought religious and social reforms to the southern kingdom of Judah (Jer. 26:17–19). Because Judah turned to God, God postponed its destruction for more than a century.

Micah’s message is certainly a word from God for our time. Many Americans today worship materialism and technology and pay lip service to God, if they acknowledge Him at all. William Bennett, former U.S. secretary of education, said it well: “There is a coarseness, callousness, and cynicism, a banality and a vulgarity to our time. There are just too many signs of decivilization: that is, civilization gone rotten.”

What goes around comes around. Judah’s fate may be waiting for others among the next bend.

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**ENDNOTE**


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A MESSAGE REQUIRED AND RECEIVED (PSALM 67:2)

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MICAH 4
WHY THE JEWISH NATION CAN STILL TRUST IN GOD DESPITE ITS CIRCUMSTANCES
BY DAVID M. LEVY
The prophet Micah’s message of doom must have troubled Judah’s leaders. After all, if Judah were destroyed, how would God fulfill the vows He made to the children of Israel in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants?

In Micah 4, God gives His people hope and assures them He has not forgotten His promises to their forefathers. And though Judah will be destroyed, He will redeem a remnant and reestablish the Jewish nation in its Promised Land when the Messiah returns to rule the world from David’s throne.

RENEWAL PROMISED
Micah 4:1 uses the phrase the latter days, referring to when the Jewish people will suffer great tribulation, followed by the Messiah’s return to rescue them, restore the nation, and establish Jerusalem as the center of His divine rule on Earth. Moses had prophesied this tribulation and restoration before Israel entered Canaan (Dt. 4:25–31). Micah’s prophecy includes six predictions affecting Israel:

1. ELEVATION
“The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills” (Mic. 4:1). The mountains surrounding Jerusalem are higher than Mount Moriah, where the Temple stood. At Christ’s return, they will be flattened; and Jerusalem and the Temple will become elevated above the surrounding area (Zech. 14:4).

2. ADORATION
Israel and the world will worship God in Jerusalem: “The peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob’” (Mic. 4:1–2, NASB). During the Millennial Kingdom, all roads will lead to Israel, as people the world over encourage one another to go up to Jerusalem to worship at the Millennial Temple.

3. EDIFICATION
The Lord will teach saved Gentiles at the Temple: “He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (v. 2). God will teach a new generation how to live righteously and keep His commandments.

4. ARBITRATION
Nations will bring their disputes to Jerusalem for the Lord to arbitrate:

   And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war (v. 3, NASB).

   The Lord will settle all disputes and eliminate war. Nations will turn their weapons into farm implements and cease teaching their people the strategies of battle.

5. CONCILIATION
With the elimination of war, this difficult, grasping world will finally know true peace. Nations will live in safety and security: “Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (v. 4).

   During King Solomon’s reign, the words vine and fig tree were associated with peace, plenty, and prosperity (1 Ki. 4:25). The same will be true during the Millennial Kingdom because “the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken” (Mic. 4:4). No one will fear terrorism or aggression because the Almighty, the omnipotent head of the armies of heaven, has guaranteed peace.

6. PURIFICATION
Idolatry will be gone: “For all people [will (literally, “now”)] walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever” (v. 5). In Micah’s day, all heathen nations ordered their lifestyles and religious beliefs after false gods.
But a godly remnant in Judah walked with the Lord. In the future Kingdom, Judah will put total trust in the Lord, and the world will put away its heathen gods and follow Him as well.

**REGATHERING PREDICTED**

“In that day,” declares the Lord, “I will assemble the lame, and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever” (vv. 6–7, NASB).

The prophet did not say when this prophecy will be fulfilled. The word remnant cannot refer to the Jewish people who returned from the Babylonian Captivity because the Lord did not reign over Judah “forever.” The words in that day must refer to the Millennium, when the Messiah will rule over Israel forever.

The remnant that will be restored is compared to a flock of sheep that were “lame” (footsore), sick, afflicted, and dispersed—a picture of Israel’s condition during the Great Tribulation. When the Messiah returns, this remnant (one-third of the Jewish population, Zech. 13:9) will come to salvation (12:10; Rom. 11:26).

In keeping with the metaphor of sheep, Micah used a circumlocution to express Jerusalem’s elevation when the Messiah returns: “And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold [Hebrew, ophel] of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem” (Mic. 4:8).

The phrase O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion refers to the southernmost section of the Temple Mount, opposite Zion, separated by the Tyropoeon Valley. The words tower and ophel are used synonymously of the strongholds in the City of David, later fortified by Jotham and Manasseh (2 Chr. 27:3; 33:14). It was where David’s palace once stood and where the king’s men stood as watchmen over the people of Jerusalem. When the Messiah returns to Jerusalem, He will restore the daughter of Zion to her “former dominion” and guarantee Israel protection, peace, political power, and prosperity (Mic. 4:8). The picture is reminiscent of the Davidic and Solomonic empires, which were strong, stable, and impervious to attacks. This prophecy gave hope to a nation that would soon suffer the pain of captivity.

Micah abruptly switched tracks to predict again Judah’s destruction. The prophet asked three rhetorical questions concerning the time of the Babylonian siege: “Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor” (v. 9).

In other words, why did great wailing break out in Judah? Did they not have a king and counselor to call on for help? Yes, but the kings were powerless to lead the nation or counsel it. Jehoiakim and Zedekiah each reigned when Babylon occupied Judah; but both served Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Ki. 24—25).

After Babylon destroyed Judah, the Israelites were left without a king; and they will remain so until their redemption (Hos. 3:4–5). Without leadership, pain and agony will grip them as birth pangs grip women in labor. Although the reference is to the Babylonian Captivity, the situation will be the same during “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:5–7; Rev. 12), the Great Tribulation:

*Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city,*
Judah’s captivity is pictured in stages. Compelled to leave the city, the people will cry out like a woman in childbirth. On their forced march to Babylon, they will “dwell in the field,” unprotected from the elements and predators. Multitudes will perish. Then a remnant will be held captive in Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25:11), after which a remnant will be redeemed, or allowed to return, to Judah. This latter prophecy was fulfilled by edict of Persia’s King Cyrus in 538 BC (Ezra 1:2–4).

Micah’s naming of Babylon is an amazing prediction in itself, for it came more than 100 years before all of Judah ended up there (Isa. 39).

**RETAILATION PICTURED**

In the future, heathen armies will trample Jerusalem’s holy sites: “Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, ‘Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion’” (Mic. 4:11). The world will gloat over Israel’s suffering and subjugation (cf. Dt. 28:37). This prophecy’s ultimate fulfillment will come during the Great Tribulation.

Someday the nations will storm Jerusalem, ignorant of the massacre God has planned for them: “But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor” (Mic. 4:12). As sheaves are bundled and brought to the threshing floor to be trodden under the feet of oxen, so the nations that come against Israel will be destroyed.

In verse 13 God directs Jerusalem to arise and trample its enemies as an ox treads out grain with his hoof. A horn of iron and hooves of bronze symbolize the power and strength God will give Israel to fight its enemies. This event likely takes place when the Messiah comes to destroy the Gentile nations at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16; 19:19).

Then Israel will gather the wealth of the world and devote it to the Lord, whose power will have accomplished the victory. The phrase to the Lord of the whole earth (Mic. 4:13) refers to the Messiah when He returns as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).
MICAH 5

O Little Town of Bethlehem

How the City of David would become the birthplace of hope for the entire world

by Tom Simcox

The prophet Micah wrote during extremely difficult days in the history of the Jewish nation. Crime was rampant, greed was everywhere, Judah’s leaders were cruel, and righteousness was nowhere to be found. So God was preparing judgment. Yet despite everything, He inspired Micah to encourage the nation: Someone special was coming, and He will change the world.

Micah 5 begins with a prediction of Jerusalem being besieged by invaders from Babylon but quickly moves into one of the most important, well-known Messianic prophecies in Scripture, giving hope and assurance of better things:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and this One shall be peace (Mic. 5:2, 4–5).

The Jewish people were being oppressed, robbed, and defrauded by their leaders. But someday God will give them a righteous leader who will “feed His flock in the strength of the Lord.” Though they broke His covenant, God did not cast His people aside permanently.
BUT YOU, BETHLEHEM EPHRATHAH, THOUGH YOU ARE LITTLE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF JUDAH, YET OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH TO ME THE ONE TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL, WHOSE GOINGS FORTH ARE FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING.

MICAH 5:2
Hundred of years earlier, He had promised to establish King David’s throne forever: “Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). God reminded His people of this promise. He will, indeed, establish David’s throne with someone born into David’s family in David’s own hometown, the Judean village of Bethlehem.

This prophecy was meant to encourage the Judeans, who would see their brethren in the northern kingdom of Israel being swept into captivity by Assyria in 721 BC. Then 135 years later, the Babylonians would destroy the southern kingdom and take them captive as well.

The prophecy itself is amazing in its detail and provides a wealth of information concerning the Jewish people’s future Ruler—the Messiah.

**In Brooklyn, New York, resides 770**, headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement, the branch of ultra-Orthodox Judaism once led by the famous Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson who passed away in 1994 without ever setting foot in Israel. Many of his followers believed he was the Messiah—so much so that, after his death, they posted banners in Israel with his picture, telling people to prepare for his return as their “King-Messiah.”

When someone at 770 was asked how Schneerson, born in Ukraine, qualified because Micah 5:2 says the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, the man replied, “Well, he probably had a relative who came from there.”

But a “relative” does not count. God intentionally and specifically identifies the Messiah’s birthplace as “Bethlehem Ephrathah,” also called “Bethlehem, Judah” (Ruth 1:2). The ancient chief priests and scribes understood this detail because when Herod the Great asked them where the Messiah was to be born, they replied, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet” (Mt. 2:5); and they quoted Micah 5:2.

Bethlehem, “little among the thousands of Judah” (Mic. 5:2), was so small it was never listed in the biblical accounts of the conquering or apportioning of the land assigned to Judah. It was too small to make the map.

But God has a way of making insignificant things great. Today, next to Jerusalem, it is the best-known town in the Holy Land because it was the birthplace of Jesus, who will one day sit on the throne of His father David for 1,000 literal years as “the One to be Ruler in Israel” (v. 2).

After naming the Messiah’s birthplace, Micah told the Jewish people their righteous Ruler would be God Himself: “Out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (v. 2). The anticipated descendant of David would be no ordinary man. Wrote Bible expositor David M. Levy, “This One, like God, is eternal. The word everlasting means
‘infinite’ or ‘timeless’ in duration and refers to the Messiah’s eternality. This prophecy clearly states that Messiah’s existence predates the universe’s creation.” King David’s heir would be “Immanuel, which is translated ‘God with us’” (Mt. 1:23; cf. Isa. 7:14). This long-awaited Ruler would be both God and Man.

While Micah was in the countryside telling the farmers a God-Man would be born to them in Bethlehem, Isaiah was in the capital city of Jerusalem, saying the same thing:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this ( Isa. 9:6–7).

Unfortunately, the time preceding the Messiah’s rule will not be easy. In Micah 5:3, Israel is pictured as a woman in labor. This same visual appears in Revelation: “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth” (Rev. 12:1–2). Israel is in pain, trying to birth the Messiah. This prophecy ultimately will be fulfilled when the “male Child who was to rule all nations” (v. 5), returns to establish His never-ending Kingdom.

When the Prince of Peace arrives, He “shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord. . . . For now He shall be great to the ends of the earth” (Mic. 5:4). As He begins His reign as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16), He will minister first to His Chosen People Israel and then to the entire planet; “and this One shall be peace” (Mic. 5:5). Then Israel will finally have shalom, the peace it has craved for centuries.

At the Second Advent, Israel “shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples” (v. 8). Some Jewish people today believe the church teaches Jesus will return to destroy Israel. The opposite is true. He will fight for Israel. The nation will have no need for weapons because “all your enemies shall be cut off. . . . I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots . . . and throw down all your strongholds” (vv. 9–11).

Along with providing peace and protection, the Lord will cleanse the land spiritually: “I will cut off your sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars. . . . You shall no more worship the work of your hands” (vv. 12–13).

The Millennial Kingdom will be a blessing to the earth as the Messiah reigns over it with justice and righteousness. Unlike the selfish, wicked rulers of Micah’s day, this Ruler will “execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard” (v. 15). Punishment finally will fall on the evil and disobedient as the One born in Bethlehem sits on David’s throne and truly changes the world.

ENDNOTES


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WAITING FOR DELIVERANCE
It’s election year in America, and again many are hoping for new leadership to restore the glory of our country. We think if only we get the right leaders into positions of influence, then perhaps we can adjust the direction of our ship. Micah’s prophetic message to Judah more than 27 centuries ago warns us otherwise.

A contemporary of Isaiah, Micah was concerned about both of the Jewish kingdoms but focused mainly on the southern kingdom of Judah. He saw the total and obvious abandonment of Yahweh’s Law and worship in the north, yet he spoke to the less obvious—but equally sinful—abandonment in the south.

Micah’s first sermon (chaps. 1—2) proclaims that the judgment of the ungodly (Israel) affects the godly (Judah). Like an infectious virus, the sin of the northern kingdom spread to the southern kingdom. Idolatry, immorality, and injustice had pervaded Judah.

Micah’s second sermon (chaps. 3—5) proclaims that judgment is coming. Though God has promised ultimately to deliver and exalt Israel through its Messiah, this promise does not prevent intermediate punishment. Micah warned the Judeans their corrupt leaders would bring devastating judgment. Yet He also reminded them of His promise to bring a perfect leader—the Messiah—to shepherd His flock:

And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth (5:4).

Micah’s third sermon (chaps. 6—7) emphasizes God’s preservation of a godly remnant through judgment, not from it. Micah warned the Judeans that even the leadership of their godly king, Hezekiah, could not protect them from God’s wrath against their sin. This principle should concern all nations. Leadership can only do so much. The general population must do the rest and turn to God.

Micah’s third sermon consists of two main points:

1. Devastating judgment will affect Judah, in addition to Israel (chap. 6).
2. Even in the midst of judgment, God, in His loyal love, consoles the Jewish people with His promise of ultimate, future deliverance and exaltation (chap. 7).

DEVASTATING JUDGMENT
Like a district attorney in a courtroom, Micah presented God’s indictment:

Hear now what the Lord says: “Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord’s complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will contend with Israel” (6:1–2).

The Lord reminded Judah He had sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to redeem them from Egyptian bondage. He also protected them from the evil counsel of Balak and Balaam. Therefore, they should have been loyal to Him. Instead, they abandoned Him. Micah told them God was not impressed with

BY RICHARD D. EMMONS
their sacrifices and so-called worship because of their evil and hypocritical behavior. Micah’s charge of hypocrisy sounds akin to the charge of his contemporary, the prophet Isaiah:

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:10–17).

Like Isaiah, Micah described the humble, righteous behavior that the Lord requires: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). This message likely fell on deaf ears, just as it does in much of the world today. Like ancient Judah, contemporary culture largely rejects humility and mercy. Micah contrasted the description of the Lord’s requirements with Judah’s wickedness:

For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat, but not be satisfied; hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; and what you do rescue I will give over to the sword. You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; and make sweet wine, but not drink wine (vv. 12–15).

The prophet also pointed out that Judah’s sinful behavior originated from copying the practices of the northern kingdom of Israel: “For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab’s house are done; and you walk in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing. Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people” (v. 16).

**Micah’s main point in this sermon was that pervasive sin brings punishment, which sometimes affects the righteous.**

**PRESERVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS**

Micah compared looking for a righteous man in Judah to gleaning in a place with no grapes:

Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes; there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires. The faithful
man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands—the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together (7:1–3).

Every person Micah encountered was looking out for himself, searching for a bribe, or plotting with others. People in Judah could not trust anyone—neighbor, friend, family member, or even one’s own spouse. This is the sad state of affairs that walking away from God’s ways produces. America, like many other Western countries today, is heading down the same tragic path—embracing a society without God. Micah bemoaned such heathenism.

But Micah put his trust in the Lord: “Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me” (vv. 7–8). Having confessed his own sin to God, Micah determined to let God deliver him. He acknowledged he and those around him would experience God’s wrath, and he resolved to wait for God’s future deliverance of Israel.

Micah then asked the Lord to shepherd His people and restore them from all over the earth with the miracles He used when He brought them out of Egypt. In that day, he prophesied,

The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of You (vv. 16–17).

His message reaches its crescendo with his affirmation of God's great and loyal love:

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old (vv. 18–20).

God’s promise of ultimate deliverance and exaltation does not preclude the possibility of judgment in the interim. Micah’s main point in this sermon was that pervasive sin brings punishment, which sometimes affects the righteous. Judah would suffer God’s chastening through the Assyrian invasion; and even those who were righteous, like Micah, would suffer.

And more than 100 years later, Judah experienced the same devastation as Israel because of sin; and many righteous men—including Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, and Jeremiah—suffered.

A day is coming when God’s judgment of the nations will also bring suffering for the godly. During the Great Tribulation, many righteous souls will die (Rev. 6:9–11; 7:9–17; 14:1–5). During the seal judgments (6:8) and trumpet judgments (9:18), about half of Earth’s population will die, including many believers in Jesus.

Believers today also may suffer if Jesus tarries. While we look to the Rapture of the church and the deliverance Jesus has promised, judgment may come on our nation for its wickedness and blatant rejection of God’s Word and ways. If Sodom and Gomorrah will rise up to judge Capernaum, surely Capernaum will rise up to judge America; and it will take more than new national leadership to deliver us.

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REJOICING OVER SALVATION

1 THESSALONIANS 1:5–8

The apostle Paul did not preach on the power of positive thinking to the Thessalonians. He did not use skillful oratory, philosophical arguments, clever expressions, or enticing words of human wisdom. Nor did he proclaim that Jesus would supply wealth, health, or deliverance from political oppression.

Paul’s message was simple. Using prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures, he showed that the Messiah had to suffer, die, and be resurrected from the dead. The response was tremendous. Jews and Gentiles alike came to salvation in Christ.

Paul simply presented the gospel. He taught that God the Father, through His sovereign grace, provided salvation through the Messiah’s substitutionary death and bodily resurrection and that all who place their faith in Him are granted eternal life.

First Thessalonians 1:5–8 presents the process of the Thessalonians’ salvation and its impact on those who were receiving Christ, as well as the effect the Thessalonians’ commitment to their faith had on people throughout Macedonia, Achaia, and beyond.

THE TESSALONIANS’ ELECTION

Paul was convinced the Thessalonians who came to Christ at his preaching of the gospel were chosen by God to be saved because he witnessed the life of Christ in them (v. 4). The apostle provided evidence of their election: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (v. 5).

The word for in the phrase for our gospel should be translated “in that” or “because” and gives the reason why Paul was sure of their election: because the Holy Spirit empowered the preaching of the gospel, resulting in their salvation. The Lord accomplished His plan of salvation through men like Paul, saving the Thessalonians by grace through faith, not due to any work on their part.

The words our gospel (good news) do not mean Paul and Silas originated the message or proclaimed a different message from the other apostles. It was theirs in that they personally received it from Christ and were committed to it by faith.

The phrase did not come to you in word only stresses three thoughts about the gospel:

1. It came to the Thessalonians through Scripture, not through the practice of rituals or routinely repeated religious chants.
2. God used men like Paul and Silas, not angels or spirits, to bring the message.
3. The Thessalonians were not saved by Paul’s eloquence, no matter how compelling or persuasive it was. Rather, the Holy Spirit energized Paul’s words, making them effective (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1–5).

Paul used three phrases to explain this fact: but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance (1 Th. 1:5).

The Greek word for “power” (dunamei) is the English word for “dynamite.” Thus the gospel had inherent dynamite through the Holy Spirit’s enablement.

Furthermore, their preaching was done “in the Holy Spirit.” It was united to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the gospel spiritual power and makes it effective in lives. Thus it was the Holy Spirit who used Paul’s message to convict and convince all those who heard it. Paul and other preachers knew the Holy Spirit was working in them when they preached and that His transforming power was using their words to bring the Thessalonians to salvation.

The phrase in much assurance means the Holy Spirit gave Paul and Silas abundant confidence that the message they preached was from God. This is how they came to know without a doubt that the Thessalonians’ election was real and God’s work.

Paul then asked the Thessalonians to recall his message, character, and conduct, as well as that of his companions: “as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (v. 5). The Thessalonians knew with certainty that each member of Paul’s delegation was above reproach, both in word and walk. They also knew how faithfully the men proclaimed the gospel message received from God concerning salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

THE TESSALONIANS’ EXPERIENCE

It was of great importance to preach the gospel, but it was also of great importance to receive it. The Thessalonians’ response gave Paul more evidence that they were God’s elect. He noted three reasons why he was assured of their salvation.

First, they “became followers [imitators]
of us and of the Lord” (v. 6). The change in their behavior was observable. They patterned their lives, conduct, and character after the missionaries, which gave evidence of their true conversion.

Second, they “received the word in much affliction” (v. 6). After receiving the Word of God and Christ, they immediately experienced persecution. Notice, it was “much affliction” from the beginning of their salvation (cf. Acts 17:5–8; 1 Th. 2:14; 3:2–3). They suffered rejection by family and friends. They lost their jobs and homes and were driven out of town, imprisoned, and martyred for their faith.

Third, though they suffered such affliction, they did so “with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Th. 1:6). In the midst of tribulation, their hearts were full of joy and gladness. Their joy was not superficial or self-made but was produced by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. He was its source. Thus, in the midst of the trials and hardships that often come with being a Christian, believers can possess peace and joy that transcend suffering. This is something the world cannot comprehend.

THE THESALONIANS’ EXAMPLE

Others also recognized the Thessalonians’ testimony: “You became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (v. 7).

The word you refers to Christians who became “examples” (models or patterns) to others because they became role models of morality in character and conduct. They had patterned themselves after Paul, Silas, and Timothy and absorbed what these men had taught from the Scriptures concerning how to live out the Christian life.

Their testimony inspired Christians throughout “Macedonia and Achaia,” once part of ancient Greece but then under the Roman Empire. These believers suffered great affliction yet never lost their commitment to and joy in the Savior. Their godly conduct and victorious walk in Christ left an indelible mark on other Christians throughout the area. This is the only church Paul mentioned as a model church in all his epistles, and it is an example all churches should imitate today.

The Thessalonian church played a huge part in spreading God’s Word and faith in Christ throughout the known world of that day. Not only had the Thessalonians’ salvation impacted others, but so, too, did their dramatic change in conduct due to their faith. Paul wrote, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything” (v. 8).

Two things emanated from them: the “word of the Lord” and their faith. The gospel message of Jesus Christ and how salvation could be experienced through belief in Him went far and wide. It “sounded forth [rang out]” (v. 8), like the blast of a trumpet that reverberates in the air. The trumpet’s sound is unmistakable and recognizable. The proclamation of the gospel message emanated with similar strength and clarity.

The Greek verb for “sounded forth” is in the perfect tense, meaning the results of the message continued on far and wide. In fact, most commentators believe maritime merchants who did business in Thessalonica heard about these Christians and spread the news throughout Macedonia, Achaia, and beyond.

Reinforcing the previous thought, Paul said, “Your faith toward God has gone out [forth]” (v. 8). The Thessalonians’ faith is now pictured traveling in every direction. The total message is presented: the gospel from God offered to man and man’s faith embracing the gospel. The object of their faith was the true and living God, whom they received and served.

A number of stories about the Thessalonians may have been widely circulated: the story of their faith in Christ, the story of their continual joy through severe affliction for their faith in Christ, and the story of being falsely charged with “acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus” (Acts 17:7). All these reports would have put their lives in jeopardy.

Paul concluded his thought: “So that we do not need to say anything” (1 Th. 1:8). He had received so many reports from every direction concerning the Thessalonians’ faith that he did not need to mention their commitment to others; others already knew.

The Thessalonians’ salvation stands as an example of how God works in bringing people to life in Christ from the early days of Christianity to today. It is a testimony that should speak to true believers everywhere.

This is the only church Paul mentioned as a model church in all his epistles, and it is an example all churches should imitate today.

by David M. Levy, director of Worldwide Ministry Development and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921) was a significant American theologian, writer, and pastor who is best known for his *Scofield Reference Bible*, one of the most influential theological works of the 20th century. In it, he popularized Dispensationalism, which uses the literal, grammatical, and historical system of biblical interpretation and, therefore, separates Israel and the church. Because of this hermeneutic, Scofield saw in God’s Word a resurrection for the nation of Israel long before there was any hope of a modern Jewish state.

Scofield’s work spread systematized Dispensationalism like no other. In addition to producing the *Scofield Reference Bible*, Scofield is known for cofounding Philadelphia School of the Bible (now Cairn University) and founding the Central American Mission (now Camino Global).

Scofield was born in Clinton Township, Michigan, on August 19, 1843. His mother died soon after his birth, leaving him the youngest of seven children. When he was a boy, his father moved his family to Lebanon, Tennessee.

Scofield received no formal education, but since he and his family were nominal Episcopalians, his local rector encouraged him to do personal study. He was to enter the University of Virginia in 1861, but the Civil War interrupted those plans.

In 1861, when he was 17, Scofield joined the Confederate Army. He served the army well and received the Confederate Cross of Honor in 1862 for a special feat of bravery in the Battle of Antietam.

After the war, he moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he became a clerk at the assessor’s office in 1867 to study law. In 1869 he moved to Atchison, Kansas, finished his law studies, was admitted to the Kansas Bar Association, and became involved in politics. Twice he was elected as a representative to the Kansas Legislature. On June 9, 1873, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed him U.S. district attorney for the District of Kansas. Scofield was only 29, making him the youngest district attorney in the nation. He resigned six months later after rumors spread that he had accepted bribes.

He returned to St. Louis in 1874 and reentered the law practice there. By 1879, he had begun to drink heavily, ruining both his law practice and himself. A friend, Thomas S. McPheeters, became concerned about Scofield’s heavy drinking and was determined to lead him to Christ.

So one day in September 1879, McPheeters went to Scofield’s office and asked him why he was not a Christian. Scofield replied he was a nominal Episcopalian. McPheeters pressed him until Scofield admitted he did not know how to become a Christian. They knelt and prayed, and Scofield gave his life to the Lord. Christ changed him dramatically, delivering him from all desire for alcohol. He was a new man.

Soon afterward, someone introduced Scofield to James H. Brookes, pastor of the Compton Avenue Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. Brookes began discipling Scofield, instructing him in the Bible.

In 1880, Scofield began preaching. He organized and pastored the Hyde Park Congregational Church of North St. Louis. In the spring of 1882, the superintendent of the Congregational Home Missionary Society for the southwest invited Scofield to become the pastor of a small church in Dallas, Texas. Only 12 members attended, 11 of them women.

In Dallas, the 39-year-old Scofield started to hold prayer meetings in homes. Many people became saved. The church ordained him on October 17, 1883, and by January 1884, the church had grown to 75 members and had sent a missionary to India.

In March 1886, Scofield extensively helped Christian evangelist Dwight L. Moody in his revival campaign in Dallas. The men had become close friends during one of Moody’s campaigns in St. Louis years earlier.

By October 1886, Scofield had become well-known as a gifted Bible teacher and was in great demand as a speaker. He published his first book, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, in 1888. The following year he began a monthly journal called *The Believer* and also started the Comprehensive Bible Correspondence Course, which he turned over to Moody Bible
In 1888, Scofield met Hudson Taylor, a Christian missionary to China. Taylor’s passion for the mission field increased Scofield’s interest in missions, and he became specifically burdened for Central America. With the support of three of his church members, he founded the Central American Mission in 1890. Scofield became the secretary. The mission is still thriving today as Camino Global (formerly CAM International).

By 1893, Scofield headed the Southwestern School of the Bible in Dallas, was president of the board of trustees at Lake Charles College, and was superintendent of the American Home Missionary Society in Colorado and surrounding areas. He was spending about five months per year away from his church in Bible conferences and at speaking engagements. Yet his church continued to grow—reaching 550 members by the end of 1894.

As the result of another Moody campaign in Dallas in February 1895, the Trinitarian Congregational Church of Northfield, Massachusetts (Moody’s home church), called Scofield as pastor and as president of Northfield’s two prep schools founded by Moody. When Scofield left Dallas in 1895, his church had grown to 826 members.

In July 1901, Scofield joined the first of a new series of annual Bible conferences in Sea Cliff, Long Island, New York. There he met Arno C. Gaebelein, Bible teacher and editor of Our Hope magazine. Scofield told Gaebelein about his plans to publish a reference Bible, and Gaebelein volunteered to help him find financial support.

In 1902, the Dallas church called Scofield back as pastor. He accepted, thinking he would have more time for his Bible project. But his attention was divided, so he left the church for Europe in 1904 to work on the Bible.

While in England, he met the head of Oxford University Press who became enthusiastic about the project. A year later, Scofield returned to America, signed a contract with Oxford University Press, and returned to pastoring his Dallas church.

Several consulting editors helped Scofield with his reference Bible. They included Gaebelein; James M. Gray, president of Moody Bible Institute; William J. Erdman, Presbyterian minister and author; Arthur T. Pierson, author and editor; William G. Moorehead, president of Xenia Theological Seminary; Henry G. Weston, president of Crozer Theological Seminary; and Elmore Harris, president of Toronto Bible Training School. The Bible was officially published in January 1909 as the Scofield Reference Bible. Scofield then published a revised version in 1917. Today Oxford University Press still publishes the Scofield Reference Bible.

The Scofield Reference Bible remains one of the most influential Christian works of all time. In it, Scofield annotated many portions of Scripture, which made it the first Bible to include a commentary within the same book since the Geneva Bible in 1560. He created cross-references to tie together verses with the same themes. And in his 1917 edition, Scofield added dates to certain biblical events, such as creation in 4004 BC.

But the Scofield Reference Bible is best known for popularizing Dispensationalism and its literal, grammatical, and historical system of biblical interpretation. Scofield defined a dispensation as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.” Theologian Charles C. Ryrie said Dispensationalism possesses three distinct characteristics:

1. It keeps Israel distinct from the church.

2. It distinguishes between Israel and the church based on a literal interpretation of Scripture.

3. It views God’s underlying purpose in the world as displaying His glory, rather than merely saving humanity.

The same year he published his Bible, Scofield resigned as pastor of the Dallas church, today known as Scofield Memorial Church, to serve as editor of Oxford University Press’s tercentenary (300-year) edition of the English Bible scheduled for publication in 1911.

For many years, Scofield dreamed of establishing a Bible school on the East Coast. That dream was finally fulfilled in 1914 when he and William L. Pettingill founded Philadelphia School of the Bible. It opened on October 1 with evening classes, and Scofield served as its first president. Scofield died quietly on Sunday morning, July 24, 1921. He was buried in Flushing, New York, and Pettingill conducted the service. But his legacy did not end in 1921. Scofield’s life of obedience to the Lord’s calling continues to impact the lives of countless Christians today.

ENDNOTES


by Renald E. Showers, retired author and Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
GOVERNMENT IN THE SUNSHINE

In despotisms and tyrannies, people have no rights to be informed about the conduct of their leaders. That is not surprising, as neither their input nor their influence is wanted. In contrast, America’s constitutional form of government requires its citizens to know what is going on. We are, in essence, the government. And our elected officials govern with our consent.

From the beginning, the Obama administration has promised open disclosure about the workings of the executive branch of the federal government. Its website, open.whitehouse.gov, promises, “President Obama is committed to a more transparent federal government.” Words, of course, are the most-used political currency in Washington. So it is important to see how words line up with actions. In one instance at least, the promise seems to have been betrayed.

One of the administration’s most contentious foreign-policy issues has been the bargain it struck with Iran, an official sponsor of global terrorism. Many think it was a bad deal. Iran promised (1) to permit limited and Iranian-controlled inspections of its nuclear sites, (2) to use its plants solely for nuclear-energy production (even though it is swimming in oil), and (3) not to use its centrifuges to enrich military-grade uranium capable of arming nuclear warheads.

America, in return, agreed to (1) lift sanctions against Iran and (2) release back to that country (with no strings attached) $100 billion, frozen because of Iran’s past illegal activities. Even more shocking, however, is the backstory behind those negotiations.

Originally, the Obama administration’s official position was that talks began only after, and in fact because, “moderates” were elected to the Iranian government in 2013. In a December 2013 press briefing, Fox News reporter James Rosen asked State Department spokesperson Jennifer Psaki whether negotiations actually started in 2011 and whether, in the interest of secrecy, the administration had lied.

Psaki replied, “There are times where diplomacy needs privacy in order to progress. This is a good example of that.” Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes recently admitted the same thing to The New York Times in David Samuels’ article “The Aspiring Novelist Who Became Obama’s Foreign-Policy Guru” (May 5, 2016). Negotiations actually did begin in 2011 and whether, in the interest of secrecy, the administration had lied.

Earlier this year, almost three years later, Rosen happened to check the State Department YouTube site where all press briefings are made public, as part of the administration’s “transparency” program. To his astonishment, the all-important admission of deceit by Jen Psaki was missing. All federal documents, including videotapes of press briefings, are public and required to be preserved. In fact, mere months before the videotape editing incident, the National Archives, which has the responsibility to keep and preserve public documents, sent a bulletin to the head of the State Department as a reminder not to tamper with official documents, including videotapes.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), where I serve as special counsel, has made a formal demand to the State Department under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for answers about who gave the order to tamper with the video and why. At first, the State Department called the erasure a mere “glitch.” Then it admitted the act was deliberate. The ACLJ is awaiting further responses from the State Department, but things are looking more and more like a cover-up.

The right of Americans to know the business of their government is a foundation for a free republic. It is the starting point for evaluating Washington’s successes and failures and tells us when we need, through the election process, to make corrections. Darkness and shadows befit tyranny more than liberty. Ultimately, this issue is laid at the voting public’s doorstep.

It doesn’t do any good to complain about the darkness if we don’t advocate for sunshine. As believers, it is our duty and privilege to pray and work toward a government where the people are informed, our leaders hear from us, and the lights are kept on.
BIBI: ‘THEY WILL NOT MAKE US LEAVE HERE’

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu vowed that the recent terror attacks in Judea and Samaria will not drive Israelis from their homes. “We will strengthen this place,” he told the grieving family of Hallel Yaffa Ariel, the 13-year-old Israeli-American girl who was brutally stabbed to death by an Arab terrorist in June while asleep in her bed in Kiryat Arba.

“You don’t murder a sleeping child for peace. You don’t slit a girl’s throat to protest a policy you don’t like. You do this because you’ve been brainwashed. You’ve been brainwashed by a warped ideology that teaches you that this child isn’t human,” Netanyahu said in a video he posted online.

Authorities identified 17-year-old Arab-Palestinian Mohammed Tarayra as the murderer. Tarayra snuck through the town’s security perimeter, broke into Hallel’s bedroom through the window, and stabbed her multiple times before he was shot and killed by a civilian guard. Authorities said his body will not be returned to his family.

The attack mirrors the cold-blooded murder of the Fogel family in 2011 when two Arabs entered the Israeli town of Itamar in Samaria; broke into the Fogel home; and stabbed to death the parents, their two young sons, and their 3-month-old daughter.

“They [terrorists] want to uproot what has been planted, and we will deepen the roots,” Netanyahu said. “They will not make us leave here.”

As hundreds attended Hallel’s funeral in Hebron, another Arab stabbed two Israelis at a market in Netanya, seriously wounding them. He was shot dead. The following day terrorists opened fire on a Jewish family traveling in their car just south of Kiryat Arba. The father, 48-year-old Rabbi Michael Mark, died; his wife and two children were wounded.

From news reports

UNRWA INCITES ARAB CHILDREN TO KILL

A new 10-minute video reveals many of the Arabs who have murdered Israelis in the current “stabbing intifada” were educated in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA Road to Terror: Palestinian Classroom Incitement shows the violence ensued from “an educational curriculum taught to Palestinians beginning in first grade.” Filmmaker David Bedein said about 100 Palestinian children were interviewed. They “believe that they have the right to kill Jews,” he reported.

One said, “We have to constantly stab them, drive them over, and shoot them.”

JNS.org

ISRAEL DEVELOPS SMART-GUN LOCK

Two Israeli army veterans have developed a way to prevent firearm accidents. Jonathan Zimmerman, CEO of the Jerusalem-based startup Zore, and CTO Yalon Fishbein have developed Zore X, a cartridge that is the fastest way to go from a locked firearm to disengaging, chambering, and firing. It also notifies owners if someone has tampered with their guns.

Jpost.com

CONSEQUENCES FOR ISRAELI BDS SUPPORTERS

The Israeli government is planning legislative measures against Israelis who promote the boycott of the Jewish state. “There will now be [a] real price to pay for someone working against their own country in order to isolate it from the rest of the world,” Israeli official Gilad Erdan said. “If we want to convince the world that the delegitimization of Israel is something wrong and that there should be consequences, we must start here in Israel.”

Arutz-7
Which book is more important? The Holy Bible, which was written by the Holy Spirit of God, or those brochures, which were written by false prophets?

by Zvi Kalisher

Isaiah 49 says, “You are My servant, O Israel. You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (vv. 3, 6). Many Hasidic Jews believe they are the servants of God, chosen by Him to spread His salvation to the ends of the earth. Wearing their long beards, payot (curled side locks), black hats, and black clothing, they go to people and introduce themselves as prophets of God.

Unfortunately, they convince many that the Hasidic path is the right path to God. In reality, they do great harm because they are leading people far away from the God of Israel.

Recently, I ran into one of my neighbors who had received some of their literature. She told me she was honored to have met a prophet and that he gave her something special.

“What did he give you?” I asked. She then showed me brochures and rabbinical books. Since I have helped her and her family many times with household repairs and electricity problems, she felt comfortable asking me about the literature.

“People can write all they want to confuse you,” I said. “But what people write is not important. What God has written—that is what matters.”

I held up my Bible. “Which book is more important?” I asked. “The Holy Bible, which was written by the Holy Spirit of God, or those brochures, which were written by false prophets?”

I told her the prophet Jeremiah warned the Jewish people about false prophets:

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed!” How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their
 dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal (Jer. 23:25–27).

I told her I could see the men had already influenced her. “They have deceived you into thinking you are on your way to heaven. But as it is written in Proverbs 25:15, ‘A gentle tongue breaks a bone.’ They speak nice words to you and make you believe you have been cleansed from your sins. But that is not the truth.”

“You must put your trust in the Lord,” I said, “not in false prophets. In Psalm 118:8 it is written, ‘It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.’”

“But you are also a man,” she replied.

“Yes,” I answered. “But I have not come to you with fictitious stories. I have come to you with the Holy Bible and have told you to read the Bible, not books written by men. And I have not told you to trust me but to place your trust in the Lord.”

When she asked me why I had taken so much time out of my day to speak with her, I explained, “Since I believe in the Lord, I am obligated to watch over His people to make sure they do not fall blindly into a deep hole, as you are now doing. Leviticus 19:14 says, ‘You shall not . . . put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God.’ Please, do not follow the traditions of men, even if the men are rabbis.”

I told her even rabbis make mistakes. Some make their followers pay for prayers. I witnessed this recently at a service when the rabbi offered a benediction for the protection of the people at the service. When they finished praying, they asked for payment; and the people obliged.

After the service, I spoke with the rabbis, showing them the truth from the Holy Scriptures. By the end of our discussion, they were thankful and joyful. They had seen their error. Their response, I told her, was evidence that even people who are deeply steeped in the tradition of false teaching can see the light.

Isaiah 9:2 says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” We are obligated to reach such people with the gospel so they may be saved.

—The Friends of Israel Archives, 2005

**CORRECTION**

Our magazine had two typographical errors that we want to correct. Neither was made by the author.

Page 36 of our May/June issue states the apostle Paul established the church in Thessalonica on his first missionary journey. It should have read second missionary journey. And page 14 of our July/August issue states Jesus was the “last” biblical prophet. It should have read “greatest.”

We deeply regret these errors. Please accept our apologies.

**THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL GOSPEL MINISTRY, INC.**

**Statement of Activities**

**YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015**

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Our financial statements are audited by the accounting firm of Lambrides, Arnold, Moulthrop LLP, Certified Public Accountants. Their report on the audit for the year ended December 31, 2015 was rendered on May 19, 2016, with an unmodified opinion. The above figures are taken from that report.

**Zvi Kalisher** (1928–2014) was a Holocaust survivor who was known for his unswerving faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel for more than 55 years.
ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL ALL YEAR!

Enjoy our 2017 inspirational Israel in Focus calendar. Each month pictures different areas of Israel. Jewish holidays are also included!

SEND A MESSAGE OF HOPE AND LOVE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

Our Christmas and Hanukkah cards have arrived! Our beautiful, Scripture-based Christmas cards also allow you to give a free, one-year gift subscription to Israel My Glory magazine.

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