

XI. MICAH 5:2

A. Background of Micah 5:2

1. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah.
2. They both prophesied in shadow of the Assyrian invasion.
3. The political (3:1,9) and spiritual leaders (3:5) were evil
 - a. Chose evil over good - 3:2
 - b. Promised peace when there was none - 3:5
 - c. Driven by greed - 3:11
 - d. Hypocrisy - 3:11b
 - e. Judgment promised - 3:12
4. Hope for the future promised - 4:1-7

B. Context of Micah 5:2

1. Context begins at Micah 4:8: "O, thou, tower of the flock...unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion."
 - a. The site mentioned as "tower of the flock" (*migdal edar* in Hebrew), according to Jerome was 1,000 paces from Bethlehem. It is mentioned in Genesis 35:21.
 - b. The Talmud (Shekalim 7.4) states that *Migdal Edar* was where lambs were raised for Passover.
 - c. Targum Jonathan states: "This is the place where, in the last days, Messiah will be revealed."
 - d. This site is identified as Bethlehem in 5:2 ("and thou"). See 1 Samuel 16:11-12.
 - e. Here shepherds received the announcement of Messiah's birth. (Luke 2:8 ff)
 - f. The "first" or "former" dominion will be restored as the descendant of David arrives there.

Word *memshalah* ("dominion") related to word *mashal* ("ruler") in 5:2.
2. The collapse of the monarchy and the exile. (4:9-13)
 - a. Babylonian siege and captivity - 4:9-10

- b. Worldwide captivity implied between verse 10 and 11
- c. Tribulation siege when Israel will defeat her enemies by the power of God - 4:11-13
 - 1) Many nations gather against Israel - 4:11 (Rev. 16:14-16; Zech. 12:2-3)
 - 2) Anti-Semitism is the driving force - 4:11b
- 3. The siege against Jerusalem and the smiting of the “judge of Israel...upon the cheek” (cf. Micah 5:1; Zedekiah; Lamentations 3:30).
 - a. Probably not Babylonian siege and destruction because a Judge will be struck and there was a King at this time.
 - b. Probably not the Tribulation siege because that is referenced in 5:3 where the oft used illustration for the last days of “labor pains” is used.
 - c. This siege is likely the Roman siege of 70 A.D.

C. Exegesis of Micah 5:2

- 1. This verse is a positive parenthesis between 5:1 and 3, introducing a reminder of hope that not all is lost - a Ruler will come as the Shepherd King.
- 2. “Bethlehem Ephratah”
 - a. Ephratah: “fruitful” and parallels meaning of Bethlehem (“house of bread”); it was an ancient name for this town (Genesis 35:19; Ruth 1:2).
 - b. Added to distinguish from other Bethlehem (Joshua 19:15).
- 3. “little among thousands of Judah”
 - a. “Thousands” equals “districts” - each tribes originally divided into districts of 1,000 each (Numbers 1:16; 10:4; 1 Samuel 23:23).
 - b. Not even mentioned in Joshua’s listing of towns of Judah. (Joshua 15)
- 4. “out of thee...ruler in Israel”
 - a. “come forth to me” - to do God’s work and will
 - b. Bethlehem was town of royal line (David - 1 Samuel 16)
 - c. Can’t refer to David since Micah prophesied 250 years after David died.
 - d. Traditional Jewish interpretation is that this is the “messianic-King:”
 - 1) Ancient scribes affirmed this. (Matthew 2:4-6)

2) Common people affirmed this. (John 7:41-42)

3) Ancient Jewish sources confirm this.

“Although thou art little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come forth unto me a Judge to be Ruler in Israel, and this is the King Messiah.” Rabbi David Kimchi

5. “whose goings forth...from of old, from everlasting”

a. The word “goings forth” (*motsaot*) comes from the same root as “come forth” (*yatsa*).

b. “Goings forth” refers to his activities and ministries, not his origins (NIV is poor translation).

c. “From everlasting” is the same wording used for God. (Habakkuk 1:12; Psalm 90:2; 93:2)

1) In time, He came from Bethlehem - His humanity .

2) Beyond time, He came from eternity - His Deity .

D. Micah 5:3 resumes thought of 5:1. The captivity will take place and last until the “birth pains of the Messiah.”

The great promise of Micah 5:2 parallels Isaiah 7:14. It is a message of hope to a nation led by sinful, rebellious political and spiritual leaders. There is a righteous King coming, One who is both God and Man and will establish justice and peace.

JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF MICAH 5:2

- Leeser: "But thou, Beth-lechem Ephratah, the least (though) thou be among the thousands of Judah, (yet) out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from olden times, from most ancient days."
- Harkavy: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."
- JPS: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, Which are little to be among the thousands of Judah, Out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days."
- NJPS: "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Least among the clans of Judah, From you one shall come forth to rule Israel for Me - One whose origin is from of old, from ancient times."
- LXX:
(English Translation) "And thou, Bethlehem, house of Ephratha, art few in number to be *reckoned* among the thousands of Juda; *yet* out of thee shall one come forth to me, to be a ruler of Israel; and his goings forth were from the beginning, *even* from eternity."
- A Jewish Bible according to the Masoretic Text:
Hebrew & English,
Sinai Publishing, Tel Aviv, Israel
- "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; and his goings forth are from ancient time, from days of old."

CHRISTIAN TRANSLATIONS OF MICAH 5:2

- KJV: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
- NKJV: " 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."
- ASV: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."
- RSV: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days."
- NIV: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of will come from me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."