

MICAH AND THE LONG, SAD DAYS BEFORE ISRAEL'S LATTER DAYS

Bernard E. Northrup Th.D.

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

Let me introduce myself in order that you may understand the aching of my heart for the chosen people of the Eternal and for the centuries of anguish that they have suffered. I am a Christian Hebraist who has studied the Tenach for nearly fifty years. I have taught it in the Hebrew, Aramaic and in the English languages to many young men who were preparing to serve the Eternal. In the nearly fifty five years that I have walked with Him, I have found that He always is faithful to His Word. **"You have dealt with Your servant, Oh Eternal Lord, according to Your Word"** (Psa. 119:65). I have seen His faithfulness displayed in countless ways in those many years. He is faithful. He keeps His word. Therefore **"I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts"** (Psa. 119:63).

Has the Eternal been faithful to His promises to His chosen people that He made long ago or has He failed? Has the One Who showed love and compassion to the offspring of Jacob long ago long closed His heart to those whom He called **"My people?"** The words that He spoke to David long ago are very suggestive of the correct answer. Concerning the rejection of the Eternal and His Messiah, the Eternal laughs at mankind who think that they can thwart His eternal purposes. After considering the rejection (and death) of His Messiah He says to the peoples of the earth, **"Yet will I establish My King upon Zion, mount of My holiness"** (Psa. 2:6). (The translation of the underlined verb as past tense, have, in the King James Version and others that thoughtlessly have followed it, utterly ignores the future time flow of the context of verses 4-9 in the Psalm. The first verb of verse 4 must be translated as a future in the light of this). The early church immediately recognized that Psalm 2:1-3 spoke of the rejection and crucifixion of Israel's Messiah, and they say so very plainly in Acts 4:25-28. In Psalm 2:4-6 the Father scorns feeble man's attempt to thwart the many Old Testament promises concerning the Eternal's plans concerning Messiah's earthly rule in the kingdom. And it is in that setting where the Eternal Lord not only mocks mankind's futile attempt to thwart the will and plan of God that He says: **"Yet will I establish My King [Messiah] upon Zion, mount of My holiness."** And the quotation in Hebrews 1:7 of part of Psalm 2:7 plainly shows that it is the Son of God Who quotes the decree in verses 7-9. And the Son's continuing quotation of the Father's promises in the decree demonstrate clearly the very basis for the Father's assurance of Messiah's yet future rule over the whole earth from the earthly city of Jerusalem in spite of His rejection and crucifixion seen in verses 1-3. Acts 4:25-28 clearly demonstrates the meaning of Psalm 2:1-3. The eternal promises, given so many ways and so many of Israel's prophets, will be fulfilled. The future of the

descendants of Jacob in an earthly kingdom under the Messiah is as assured of certain fulfillment as is any subject covered in the Eternal Decree by the counsel of the Godhead. Man in his rebellion against the Lord cannot thwart the eternal purposes of the Eternal.

Is there something that still hinders the fulfillment of the great promises that the Eternal One has made to His chosen people? Unquestionably, apart from some of the painful distortion intruded into His great kingdom promises by those who still follow the errant eschatology of the fourth century, the Eternal Lord will send the Messiah back to earth to fulfil those great promises made centuries ago to His earthly people. He promises that, in a yet future day, He will change the fortunes of His people. After He has described the way that His people have departed from Him, He describes what He will do for that wayward nation in Hosea. (13) **"...She went after her lovers and she forgot Me, says the Eternal Lord. (14) Therefore, see, I will be alluring her and I will bring her [out of] the wilderness and I will speak to her heart. (15) And I will give her vineyards to her from there, and for a doorway of hope the valley of Achor. And there she will respond [to Me] in the way that she did in the days of her youth, even like the day of her coming up from the land of Egypt. (18) ...And I will cut a covenant with them in that day with the living creatures of the field and with the birds of the heavens and with the creeping things of the ground. And I will proceed to break bow and sword and battle out of the land, and I will to lie down in safety. (19) Then I will betroth you to Myself for ever; (20) yes, I will betroth you to Myself in righteousness and in justice and loving kindness and in compassion. Yes, I will proceed to betroth you unto Myself in faithfulness, and you will know the Eternal Lord"** (Hos. 2:13b-20).

No, the Eternal has not forgotten His promises or His people. Already in this very day He has brought a remnant of His chosen people, back from their exile to the Valley of Achor. These are the descendants of those to whom He had given the land of Israel, His land, long ago. Already He has begun fulfilling the promises that He had given through the prophet Ezekiel. To that prophet He had promised that finally, long after the great Babylonian exile, He would begin returning them to their land. In Ezekiel 35 He even describes the scene that they would face as the tattered remnant would begin streaming back to their inheritance in unbelief. Another people, the descendants of the Edomites and their relatives, would be in control of the land, claiming the right of inheritance to Israel because it would have been in their hands for centuries. To the prophet Ezekiel it is made clear that, when Israel finally would begin their return to the promised land, another people would be occupying that land and would be claiming it as their own.

The prophet Ezekiel in chapter 35:2-6 records the words that were brought through him concerning *hagalut*, the return that already is underway in our day. (2) **"Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir [Petra] and prophesy against it, (3) and say to it: `This is what the Lord, the Eternal One says. Behold, I am against you, oh Mount Seir, and I will stretch out My hand against you and I will make you desolate and an astonishment. (4) I will proceed to make your cities a wasteland and you will become an appalling thing, and you will know that I am the Eternal Lord! (5) The**

reason is that you have been having a perpetual hatred, and you have given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time of the end of [their] iniquity. (6) For this reason, as sure as I live, declares the Lord, the Eternal One, most assuredly I will come to prepare you to blood, and blood will pursue you. Most assuredly blood will come to pursue you."

The expression in verse 5, "...in the time of their calamity, in the time of the end of [their] iniquity," undoubtedly was applied to the onset of the Babylonian captivity by some interpreters in the past. However, a thoughtful consideration of the following context should demonstrate that the events prophesied in these verses yet await their fulfillment. Theoretically they could have been applied to Daniel 9:24 and that time when Messiah came. (24) "[Daniel,] **Seventy sevens [of years] have been decreed upon your people and upon your holy city [Jerusalem], to complete the transgression and to make an end of sins and to provide a covering for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophet and to anoint the most holy place.**" But it is obvious, both from the historical record as well as from the record found in the New Testament that the rejection of the One Who came "...to make an end of sins...and to bring in ever-lasting righteousness..." brought about the delay to that fulfillment clearly anticipated in the decree (Psa. 2:8-9) and in Psalm 110.

For that matter, the Arab peoples were not even in the land until centuries after the death and resurrection of the Messiah. And this prophecy in Ezekiel 35-36 makes it very clear that they would be in control of the land when the return of the exiled people began. Furthermore, that prophecy makes it clear that The Lord has several reasons why the Arab peoples would come to be desolated and removed from the land in the ultimate fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy of their continuing return to the land. The Eternal actually gives six reasons for the dispossessing of the Arab peoples in Ezekiel 35 and 36 as He will bring Israel's first great wave of exiles back to their own land which He had given to them long, long ago. These reasons even include their occupation of the Holy Mount where Solomon had built the first temple. The Eternal also promises the ancient people of Israel that the land that He gave to them long ago, a land that largely has been desolated by the great flocks of the Arabs, would begin to produce for the returning Jewish exiles.

The scene that the prophet Ezekiel describes is precisely that which the world has been observing for the last century and particularly for Israel's first Jubilee as an independent nation after her long exile. No, the Eternal has not become unfaithful. In spite of the unbelief of many who have persisted to believe in ha'aliah, the return of the exiles of the nation of Israel, the Eternal obviously has remained faithful to His word. In spite of the attitude of independence from the Eternal that is expressed in the "We can do it by ourselves!" attitude of modern day Zionism, He will keep His word. He and He alone will bring about the fulfillment of His great words, "**Yet will I establish My king on Zion, mount of My holiness**" (Psa. 2:6).

As I intently have studied the Tenach for nearly half a century,, I have developed a burden, a longing to see the Eternal One fulfil those promises that He made so long ago to the fathers of the peoples of Israel. My burden for Israel became so great some years

ago that I began to wonder about my own ancestors from the Stahl and Weichert families and about their ethnic roots. Could it be that there was a link here with descendants of Abraham and Sarah long ago? Could that be one of the reasons for the continually growing burden of concern that I have had for His exiled peoples? I do not know. But I do know that the burden has been there and that it has continued to grow over the years.

When I began studying the Tenach in Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M. and Th.D.) in that beautiful language in which the Old Testament for the most part was written, I began to recognize that my understanding of those great things that He had promised to His ancient people, Israel, had been very vague and almost empty. As I now read in the ancient Hebrew language the very words of the Eternal, words that had been brought to His people by their heavy hearted prophets, my heart also began to become heavy for the people of Israel.

After serving as an Old Testament professor for years, the door opened for me to work with godly pastors in India, the Philippines and in Africa, men who preached to their congregations only out of a trade language. My responsibility was to check the accuracy of their translation work of the Tenach and the New Testament into their own languages, many of which previously had been unwritten languages. My burden for the people of *hagalut*, the exile, increased greatly on my last trip into the high foothills of the Himalayas of India to check work done on the great book of Leviticus by men from three tribes of the hill country of East India and western Myanmar or Burma.

One with whom I had worked for many months was Mani Singh. He is a pastor in the Manipuri tribe of East India. He was retranslating His work in His own language for me into English, the trade language of India, the translation work that he had done in translating Leviticus into Manipuri, his mother tongue. At the same time I was reading the Hebrew text to be sure that his work had been accurate. He had just finished back-translating the initial instructions concerning the feast of unleavened bread in Leviticus 23:5-6 into English when he hesitated. He turned to me with a very strange look on his face. Then, before I could comment on the accuracy of his translation, he said: "Uncle, we do exactly the same thing in our tribe every spring!" Once again before I could respond, Jam Kothang, who was the pastor/translator for the Paite tribe, interrupted and said: "We do too in our tribe, Uncle!" And just as quickly Thang, the spirited little translator from the Tedim Chin tribe of western Myanmar piped up and said: "Why, we do too, Uncle!"

In a flash I recognized that this could mean only one thing. Only those who had been exiled from the land of Israel, who once faithfully had kept His word but had drifted away from its tenants, could possibly still have a memory of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I suddenly realized that I had been having the priceless privilege of working with descendants of God's exiled people from the northern ten tribe kingdom, Israel. Without previously knowing these things, I had been helping them to have an accurate translation of their Tenach and of the New Testament in their own languages!

But why would I find them so many hundreds of miles from their own land? The words that were spoken through the agonizing prophet, Hosea, by the Eternal concerning the daughter of Hosea's harlot wife tell the story simply. "...Call her name `Lo-Ruhama'

because no longer will I continue to have compassion upon the house of Israel, that I should continue to lift them up" (Hos. 1:6). Because of the continual disobedience of the ancestors of these exiles to the Eternal Lord, He had given them into the hand of the Assyrian king when he had conquered the northern kingdom, Israel, in 722 B.C. The Assyrian king is called the rod of the Lord's anger and the staff of discipline in the hand of the Eternal. The Assyrian king had bragged, ". . . In the strength of my hand I will accomplish [it], even in my wisdom, because I am perceptive and I will get rid of borders of peoples and I will plunder their treasures and I will bring down their inhabitants like a bull" (Isa. 10:13). The Assyrian king had no idea whatsoever that he and his army were nothing more than a tool in the hand of the Eternal Lord. These are the words that the Eternal says to the Assyrian king through the prophet Isaiah. "Oh Asshur, [you are] the rod of My anger, and the staff which is in their hands is My fury. I will send him against a godless nation. I have given him a charge, even against the people of My wrath, in order to take a spoil and to seize plunder and to make them a treading down like muck of the streets." (Isa. 10:5-6),

In 722 B.C. the Assyrian had carried the northern Kingdom away, scattering them to the east, to the far corners of the world that he knew. And now once again faithful men among these long forgotten exiles in India were teaching the distant descendants of those exiles the things of the Eternal Lord and were seeking to lead them into ways of righteousness! How my heart was touched with the privilege of ministering to these people of hagalut, the exile, so far away from their ancestral homes! I have not been able to return to be with my beloved brothers of East India because of a heart attack and a major heart operation in November of 1993. How my heart longs for the day that those exiled peoples will hear the trumpet call of assembly on that day when He will fulfill His ancient promises of reassembling all of His chosen people in His land! Of that regathering He says through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 36:22-27, (22) "Therefore you say this to the house of Israel: This is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says: 'I will not be doing this for your sake, O house of Israel, but rather for My holy name's sake, which all of you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. (23) For I will utterly set apart My great name, that has been profaned among the Gentiles, which all of you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Eternal Lord,' says the Lord, the Eternal One,' when I have been set apart in all of you before their eyes.

(24) Then I will take all of you out from the Gentiles and I will completely gather all of you out of all of the countries and I will bring all of you to your land. (25) And I will sprinkle clean water upon all of you and all of you will be clean from all of your filthiness and I will cleanse all of you from all your idols. (26) I will give all of you a new heart and put a new spirit within all of you. I will remove the heart of stone out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and I will cause you to begin to walk in My statutes, and you will begin to keep My judgments and will do them. Then you will live in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you will be My people, and I will be your God.'"

I attempt to capture the innate bent toward rebellion and evil that is in every descendant of our forefather Adam in the garden in this poem. And this rebellion is not merely in the hearts of His exiled, chosen people but in every man's heart.

MY HEART IS A WILD ASS
(Psalm 42)

My heart is a wild ass snuffing the wind for ways solitaire and alone. It would drink
From the pools left by traders long ago and eat the dry heath, free to roam.
But He seeks me out who, long, long ago, for price rare and precious to Him,
Bought me, tattered, forlorn, all begrimed and undone
And he made the wild ass all His own.

From Nebo's high cliffs over Jericho's plain I toss my wild mane in the wind
For His path wends from home by the way I have come.
He follows my way, follows on. I snort in my fear for He now is near,
For He calls and I plunge away. How I tremble to think of His hand on my flank
And His brush on my coat flecked with foam.

Oh why do I seek to be free? For I snuff the wild wind tinged with aloes and myrrh,
Reminder of death and the tomb. I snort, not with fear but now with the joy
Of seeing Him stand by the trail, His garments all stained from His patient pursuit
To bring the wild one to His home.

Out of the many years that I have taught Israel's Tenach, the Old Testament, to young Gentile spiritual leaders, my burden for God's chosen people has grown greater and greater. When I would read in the words of a prophet like Micah concerning his agony for the troubled events that still lay in the future of that nation even before Ezekiel's prophecy would come to pass, my heart would ache for God's people still in exile. More and more it became my longing that somehow Israel might learn to read their ancient prophecies meaningfully with tender hearts, accepting at face value the revealed word of their Lord. I long that they might come to full understanding of the causes of the long delays in the fulfillment of those ancient prophecies. More and more I realized the crucial importance of the agony that Micah expressed over that long and trying chain of events that lay between Micah's own day and the ultimate fulfillment of the kingdom promises which had been given to him.

It is for this reason that I now share with Israel, the chosen people of the Eternal Lord, Who keeps His word forever, this study from Micah 4-7. This section of Micah carefully sets forth the long, sad event series that is preceding the fulfillment of the parallel prophecies of Isaiah and Micah. These are prophecies concerning that yet future day when (2) **"...the mountain of the house of the Eternal Lord will be established on the top of the mountains, and it will become exalted above the hills, and all nations will flow to it.** (3) **Many people will come and they will say, 'Come, and let us go up**

to the mountain of the Eternal Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths. The reason is that out of Zion the law will go forth and the word of the Eternal Lord will go forth from Jerusalem. (4) He will judge between the nations and will rebuke many people. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up a sword against another nation, neither will they learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:2-4).

These two parallel prophecies literally begin at the turn of a single word. Both Isaiah and Micah have previously been describing the awful chaos that would come to the nation of Israel because of their persistent waywardnesses. Micah has described exactly that which happened to the capital of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. **"Therefore I will make Samaria into a heap of the field for the planting of vineyards, and I will cause the pouring of its stones into the valley, and I will come to uncover its foundations"** (Mic. 1:6). He has described the dreadful ruin of Jerusalem by the Romans because of the terrible sins of the peoples of Judah, the southern kingdom. **"Therefore Zion will be plowed like a field for your sakes and Jerusalem will become heaps, and the mountain of the house [the temple site. Compare a similar description of the temple in Zechariah 11:1-3] will become like the high places in a forest"** [i.e., used for pagan worship] (Mic. 3:12).

Yet at the turn of a tiny word, the simple Hebrew conjunction, here properly translated **"but,"** the Eternal turns to the latter days and to His great promises of the kingdom that are found in Isaiah 2:1-4 and in Micah 4:1-8. The Eternal is not finished with His people! He will restore them to their land in the great and glorious kingdom age that had been promised for so long by the Hebrew prophets. And yet once again at the turn of a word, the prophet is led to write of a great event series of not less than fifteen events that which would precede the golden age of Israel. That word is **"now."** The prophet is led to write from the perspective of his own day about the painful event series that would intervene before the glorious promises of the Eternal would be fulfilled. The primary purpose of this study will be to examine this long, drawn out event series and to determine, if possible, how many of these events already have taken place. That will enable poor Israel to evaluate how near they are to the glorious fulfillment of the kingdom promises of the great prophets of old.

Chapter 2:

THE GLORY OF ISRAEL'S LATTER DAYS (Mic. 4:1-8)

A. THE YET FUTURE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL'S KINGDOM TEMPLE (4:1)

Micah's heart has poured out its grief as he has been instructed by the Eternal Lord to call all of earth's peoples and the earth itself to listen to the Lord's charge in His court that was to be executed against Judah and Israel (Mic. 1:2-5). Micah, in bringing the Lord's sentence against His people, has reported His promise to pour the stones of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, down into the valley below (Mic. 1:5-7). He has agonized over Judah as he has reported in Micah 3 the waywardnesses of Judah's kings and prophets. He has brought the sentence coming from the court case of the Eternal against them in this terrible declaration. **"Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field. Jerusalem will become heaps of ruins and the mountain of the house [the temple, the house of the Lord] will become like the high places of the forest [used for pagan worship]"** (Mic. 3:12).

With such a terrible backdrop, the words of the prophet from the Eternal Lord that open Micah 4 are utterly startling. In the light of the preceding context they are the most improbable words that he possibly could have uttered. Yet the Spirit of the Eternal Lord has lead him to say this: **"But in the latter days it will come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established on the top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills and many peoples will flow into it"** (Mic. 4:1).

There have been many Gentiles who have been touted as great Old Testament scholars, but who have refused to believe that the words of the Eternal Lord would ever be fulfilled concerning the rebuilding of the ancient temple of God's people on earthly Mount Zion. Somehow, wholly without justification except that they follow traditional theology, they have sought to transfer the meaning of these words to the Church,. They have denied in the process that God would ever deal with His ancient people, the nation of Israel, once again. They have sought to transfer Mount Zion to heaven. I regret that many churches still sing "We are marching to Zion," not realizing that they are continuing the false teaching of the amillennialist. Those misguided teachers have supported the claims of Israel's ancient Arab enemies, not only to the land but even to that holy site Mt. Moriah where the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod once stood. They have even dared to say that the Eternal Lord never would respond to the agonizing contemplation of Asaph when he cried: (1) **"O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger continue to smoke against the people of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation which You purchased long ago, the tribe of Your inheritance that you redeemed [out of Egypt]. Remember this Mount Zion where You dwelt! Lift up Your feet toward the perpetual desolations. (2) The enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary. Your enemies have roared in the midst of Your meeting place.... (8a) They have said in their hearts, 'Let us destroy them altogether!'**

(10) "...O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy continue to blaspheme Your name forever? (18) ... Remember this, O Lord, that the enemy has reproached and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name! (19) Oh do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast and do not forget the life of Your poor one forever. (20) Have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of cruelty. (21) Oh do not allow the oppressed ones to return ashamed! Let the poor and needy ones praise Your name. (22) Arise, O God, plead Your own cause! Remember the way that the foolish ones reproach You daily. (23) Do not forget the voice of Your enemies for the tumult of those who rise up against You continues to increase" (Psa. 74:1-2, 8a, 18-23).

Has the Eternal Lord forgotten? No! Or is it that His people have forgotten His promises? Moses warned of that. He said: "...I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt and will turn away from the way that I have commanded you. Then evil will come upon you in the latter days because you will practice evil in the sight of the Eternal, provoking Him to anger through the works of your hands" (Deut. 31:29).

The Eternal Himself has said to His people Israel through Moses: (36) "For the Eternal Lord will judge His people. But He will have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone and no one is remaining shut up or left at large.... (39) Now see that I Myself am He and there is no other God besides Me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal, neither is there anyone who can deliver another out of My hand. (40) The reason is that I have raised My hand and I have said: (41) 'If I whet my glittering sword and My hand takes hold on My judgment, I will begin rendering vengeance on my enemies and I will repay those who have hated Me'" (Deut. 32:36, 39-41).

He will keep His promise in that time that is promised in the words of the New Testament, "...when the fullness of the times is come..." (Gal. 4:4). How beautifully this matter of the Lord's controlling of the timing of events is stated in the Tenach! "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all of its inhabitants will be dissolved. I have set it up on its pillars firmly. Selah" (Psa. 75:3).

But perhaps the words of the Eternal Lord to Messiah best demonstrate His complete control over the timing of such events as His having compassion on His wayward people. His words follow the recommissioning of the Messiah and are addressed to Him. Whereas Messiah formerly had been commissioned to regather the nation of Israel, in the light of His coming rejection by Israel He is recommissioned in Isaiah 42:6 and especially in 49:6 to be a light of the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6). The Father then speaks to the Messiah concerning the yet future time when Israel would receive through Him the fulfillment of the kingdom promises. (8) "In an acceptable time I will hear you, and in the day of salvation I will help you. I will preserve you and will give You as a covenant to the people [of Israel] to restore the land [of Israel], to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages, (9) in order that you may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth;' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves!' They will feed in the ways and their

pastures will be in all high places" (Isa. 49:8-9). That promise relates to the yet future day of which Micah speaks in the rich truths unfolded in Micah 4:1-8.

The Eternal Lord, Who promised to have compassion on His servants, has promised this through Micah: **"But it will come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of house of the Eternal Lord will be established on the top of the mountains and it will be exalted above the hills. Then peoples will flow into it"** (Mic. 4:1). He will keep His word. He has assured the nations of the world and His own nation of that which yet would come to pass even yet in our future. **"Yet will I establish My King [Messiah] on Zion, mount of My holiness"** (Psa. 2:6).

This mount is the one where David established his rule over the United Kingdom. Most certainly it is not speaking of some mythical and remote rule of the Messiah from heaven as imagined by amillennial scholars. These have chosen to insist that there never will be an earthly kingdom in the land of Israel over the restored nation of Israel. Most certainly they are not justified in ignoring all of the curses that were imposed upon Israel for disobedience while transferring only the blessings to the church!

The assurance of the future of the nation of Israel will be found to be established in the divine decree which He made in eternity past concerning the future of the land of Israel and concerning her long promised King, the Messiah. Messiah, the son of David, had been rejected exactly as David had prophesied long ago (Psalm 2:1-3 and Acts 4:25-28). In that future day when the Eternal Lord would establish the Messiah and His great kingdom on earth, He would establish that rule exactly as He had promised the Messiah in the decree. (8) **"Ask of Me for I am determined to give [a determinative cohortative verb form] to You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. (9) You will break them with a rod of iron. You will smash them into pieces like the vessel of a potter"** (Psa. 2:8-9).

In that future day, as prophesied by Isaiah and Micah, the peoples of the earth will flow into Jerusalem and into the presence of the King of the entire earth. (20) **"This is what the Eternal Lord of Hosts says: 'Peoples still will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. (21) The people who live in one city will go to another saying: 'Let us go and pray before the Eternal Lord and seek the Eternal Lord of Hosts. I myself also will go with you.' (22) Indeed, many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the Eternal Lord of Hosts.'** (23) **This is what the Eternal Lord of Hosts says: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations will take hold of the sleeve of a Jewish man and will say: 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'"** (Zech. 8:20-23).

B. THE RESPONSE OF GENTILE NATIONS (4:2a)

The prophet Micah, along with Isaiah in Isaiah 2:3, now prophesies precisely the same thing. **"Many nations will come and they will say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, and we will begin to walk in His paths . . .'"** (Mic. 4:2a).

In 1965 when I first came to the land of Israel on a scholarship with the State of Israel and the United States, I heard the president of the Israeli Bible Society teach the group of college and seminary professors with whom I traveled. He spoke from this verse but misapplied it to events that were happening in Israel at that time. He spoke of how Israel had shared their technology and skills of farming in a very arid country with those of the nations that lay around the perimeter of the great Sahara Desert. He spoke of the many young scholars from places like that who were flowing to Israel for the excellent education that they could receive from the great schools of the land of Israel. But then, regretfully, he limited the text entirely to that present scene, totally ignoring the greater context of the Lord's work of restoring the temple and Messiah's kingdom when this verse would see its fulfillment.

Micah plainly had said: (6) **"The Eternal Lord says that in that day I will gather the lame ones and will assemble the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. (7) I will make the lame ones a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation. In this way the Eternal Lord will begin to reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. (8) And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come, even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem"** (Mic. 4:6-8).

Later, after everyone had left the room but the speaker, I dared to point out to the President of the Israeli Bible Society that Micah actually prophesied that there would be fifteen crucial events that had to precede that glorious day. I showed him that Micah prophesied that these promises would be fulfilled only in the latter days. It was only then that the mountain of the house of the Eternal Lord would be established on earthly Mount Zion. That promise certainly is not fulfilled today since an Arab structure stands on the platform where once the temples of Solomon, Zedekiah and Herod had stood, one after another. Only at that future date would peoples flow into it to fulfill Isaiah's great prophecy in his great second chapter.

When that great leader of Israel suddenly saw from Micah that not only the Babylonian captivity but the birth and the rejection of Israel's king was promised in Micah's future, Israel's birth pains in the tribulation, and other painful events were in that great prophecy, he abruptly had to leave. I sadly watched as he departed with his hat shaking in his hand. My heart long has ached for the scene that I saw the next day. He stood with our group of visiting teachers on the top of a building near the artificial dividing line that at that time divided the people of Israel from old Jerusalem and from the site of the temple where his ancestors once had worshipped. There was a look of longing anguish on his face as he looked across the little valley that lay between us and that great ruined city where so many crucial events had taken place in the past.

Since then, even though I have been privileged to walk through that old city's streets and visit so many of its sacred sites several times, my heart still longs for that day when not only Israel in exile but hordes of Gentiles will flow through its gates to worship the Messiah, their long promised, Davidic King.

C. MESSIAH TO BEGIN HIS RULE OVER THE WORLD (4:2b-3)

The reason for the flood of Gentiles pouring into Jerusalem now is plainly stated by Micah. He continues to speak of the work of the Messiah. He says: "**For the law will go forth out of Zion and the word of the Eternal Lord will go forth from Jerusalem**" (Mic. 4:2b). How these words are like the words that the Eternal Lord speaks as He introduces His Servant, the Messiah, in Isaiah 42:1, 3-4! (1) "**Behold My Servant Whom I will uphold, My Elect One in Whom My soul delights! I will place My Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles....**" (3b) "**He will bring forth justice for truth.**" (4) "**He will not fail nor will He become discouraged until He has established justice in the earth and the isles continue to wait for His law.**"

The "reformed" or "covenant" theologians (what misnomers!) imagine that this promise is being fulfilled in an imagined reign by the Messiah as king over the earth from heaven today. How little the chaotic scene here on earth today is like the glorious kingdom promises given so long ago to the nation of Israel! These who follow the errors of Augustine utterly ignore the unchangeable, the non-revokable Word of the Eternal Lord which He spoke in the Biblical covenants to the ancestors of the nation of Israel. Because of their misguided eschatology, these scholars attempt to rewrite the intent of the Divine Author in the words of the prophets and transfer their promises to the Church. It is fascinating to note how carefully they skirt the curses and judgments of the great Biblical covenants and refuse to apply them to the Church!

But that perversion of the original intent of this revelation from the Eternal Lord utterly ignores the impact of the following verses and their yet future fulfillment. "**He [Messiah] will judge between many people and He will rebuke strong nations that are far off. They will beat their swords into plowshares and they will beat their spears into hooks for pruning trees. One nation will not lift up a sword against another nation, neither will they learn war anymore**" (Mic. 4:3). How far we are from that day! It most certainly is not being fulfilled today! Instead, nations war against nations. Helpless believers are slaughtered by their enemies. Nations tremble in fear of other nations.

How this great prophecy, found also in Isaiah 2:4, parallels that which has been found in Psalm 2:6-9! There a careful examination will reveal that the promises of the earthly Messianic kingdom are directly based upon decisions made by the Godhead in the decree in eternity past! It is the Messiah Himself Who utters the details of the decree relative to the yet future establishment of the kingdom under His rule in ancient Zion (Psa. 2:7). The rejection of the Messiah by Israel and by the Gentiles is described in Psalm 2:1-3. This interpretation is confirmed by the prayer of the early church in Acts 4:25-28. Immediately after that description, the Eternal Lord expresses His determination to establish His king upon Mount Zion. "**Yet will I establish My King [Messiah] upon Zion, mount of My holiness**" (Psa. 2:6). And immediately following in the Psalm, David is led to speak the words of the Messiah as He gives the decreed basis for that determination and the assurance of the Eternal Lord concerning Messiah's future kingdom. "

The great book of Hebrews in the New Testament confirms the fact that verses 7-9 of the Psalm are spoken by the Messiah in its quotation of part of these words in Hebrews 1:5. In the Psalm Messiah emphatically says: "**I am determined to relate the details of the decree [very emphatic syntax]: 'The Eternal Lord said to Me [the Messiah], 'You are My Son. This day [note that this is part of the decree!] I do become Your Father.** [This describes an economic (a working) relationship between members of the Godhead in the decree.] **Ask of Me for I am determined to give to You** [This is another emphatic determinative in the Hebrew text. The Father's determination **will** be fulfilled!] **the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You [the Messiah] will break them with a rod of iron. You will smash them in pieces like the vessel of a potter'**" (Psa. 2:7-9).

The beautiful epistle that was written to the Hebrews says this of the Messiah. **"God, Who at different times in different ways spoke in past times by the prophets, has spoken to us by means of a Son [the Messiah] in these last days, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds [or "fashioned the ages']. He Who, being in the brightness of His glory and in the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is so much better than the angels, in as much as He has, by means of inheritance, received a more excellent name than they have. For unto which of the angels did He [the Eternal Lord] ever say [as He did to the Second Person of the Godhead in eternity past]: 'You are My Son. This day I do become Your Father.' And again [He said], 'I will be to Him as a Father, and He will be a Son to Me" (Heb. 1:1-5). This last verse is quoted from the great Davidic Covenant in Second Samuel 7. The Covenant promises that, one day in the future, a descendant of David would sit upon the throne of Israel, and that He would rule there forever.**

The expression, "this day," in Psalm 2:7, quoted by Hebrews, does not refer to some point in the time which lies between the eternities. It is part of the eternal decree that the Eternal Lord made before the foundation of the earth. Failure to recognize the implications of the clause that introduces this great statement by the Eternal Lord to the Messiah in eternity past has resulted in all kinds of theological confusion.

The prophet Micah speaks of the establishment of that glorious, Messianic kingdom in the land of Israel in this way. He focuses on the result of that great battle in which Messiah would subdue the nations and deliver the ancient people Israel from their enemies "...around about" (Zech. 12:2, 6). **"He will judge between many people and will rebuke strong nations that are far off. They will beat their swords into plowshares and they will beat their spears into hooks for pruning trees. One nation will not lift up a sword against another nation, neither will they learn war anymore"** (Mic. 4:3).

But how unlike Micah's words are the words that were spoken through the prophet Joel in Joel 3:9-16 (in the English text) concerning the divine invitation that would bring the nations together to the battle of Armageddon. This would bring about the subjection of the nations of the world to Messiah's rule! There that prophet looks forward to the final battle before the Kingdom age. Using remarkably similar language to that used by

Micah, Joel focuses upon the call of the Eternal to the nations to gather for that battle in which Messiah would subdue them!

Joel says: (9) **"Proclaim this among the Gentiles: 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men! Let all of the men of war come near. Let them come up. (10) Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak ones say: 'I am strong!'** (11) **Assemble yourselves and come, all of you heathen, and gather yourselves together around about. O Eternal Lord, cause Your mighty ones to come down there!** (12) **Let the heathen be awakened and let them come to the valley of Jehoshaphat [The Eternal Lord will judge!], for there I will sit to judge all of the heathen around about. (13) Put in the sickle because the harvest is ripe. Come! Get down because the winepress is full and the vats overflow because their wickedness is great. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision because the day of the Eternal Lord is at hand in the valley of decision. (15) The sun and moon will become darkened and the stars will withdraw their shining. (16) The Eternal Lord will also roar out of Zion and He will utter His voice from Jerusalem. Then the heavens and the earth will shake, but the Eternal Lord will become the hope of His people and He will be the strength of the children of Israel. (17) So you will come to know that I am the Eternal Lord your God who is dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem will become holy and no strangers will pass through her any more"** (Joel 3:9-17).

Joel, like Micah and Isaiah, is speaking of the initiation of that great battle that will bring in the kingdom for Israel. But Micah and Isaiah primarily look at the results of that great battle when the land of Israel will abound in that peace for which the nation long has longed. Joel looks at the invitation sent out by the Eternal that will gather Israel's enemies for their great judgment before the kingdom is established. That is the battle that is so powerfully described by the prophet Zechariah in chapter 14.

D. THE WONDER OF ISRAEL'S LATTER DAYS (4:4-5)

One of the remarkable themes found in several of the Old Testament prophets is the transformation of the land of Israel in that future day when the great Messianic kingdom will be established. It is obvious that the barren old hills of Israel would be totally transformed under the hands of the remnant of the exiled people that already have been returning and repopulating to the promised land. On my first trip to Israel in 1965 I watched one of the poorly trained professors who was traveling in our scholarship group as he looked out over the ruined terraces and desolate hills. He shook his head in amazement. Then he uttered that which has been on the minds of many tourists who have seen the same scene. "Land of milk and honey! What on earth?" He did not recognize the desperate ruin of the land that had been brought by the Arab occupation in the last millennium and more. This past October I stood once again in the same place. The barren hillside south of the *Eretz Ts'vie* hotel now is filled with great condominiums that are filled with people that have returned to the land and who work to develop it in its beauty once again.

Years ago a British biologist, whom I have forgotten, was commissioned by the Arab king who then ruled the land the land of Israel to write a book about the land. His first statement in his book condemned the rape of the land by the tragic overgrazing of the land by the herds of sheep and goats of the Bedouin. He spoke of the destruction of the once beautifully terraced hills when their rich cover of grapevines were stripped away to satisfy the command of the Koran. Rain now washed away the soil as it was trampled by the sharp feet of the animals. The grass was eaten by them even below the surface and was killed. This destroyed the terracing which now lay without ground cover. He also spoke of the way that the sheiks in latter years found delight in pursuing the wild animals of the land in their automobiles and gunning them down with machine guns.

But it will not be so in the latter days. The prophet Micah briefly describes the idyllic scene of that future day in this way. **"But everyone will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree and no one will make them afraid because the mouth of the Eternal Lord has spoken it"** (Mic. 4:4). He is speaking of the same future period as Amos who makes it clear that he speaks of the day when the Eternal Lord will **"...raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen, and I will close up the breaches of it and will raise up his ruins and will build it as in the days of old"** (Amos 9:11). Amos describes the prosperity of that glorious future day in the close of that chapter. No amount of verbal shenanigans by the theologian who refuses to believe that *hagalut*, the exile, will be restored to its land can transform these words about the land of Israel to promises for the Church.

1. THE PROSPERITY AND PEACE OF THOSE DAYS (4:4a)

The description of the bounty of the land of Israel in that future day when the Davidic kingdom will be restored closes the book of Amos. **"See, the Eternal Lord says, 'the days are coming when the plowman will overtake the one who is reaping and the one who treads the grapes will overtake the one who sows the seed. Then the mountains will drop sweet fresh grape juice and all of the hills will melt. Then I will bring the captivity of My people of Israel, and they will rebuild the waste cities and they will live in them. Then they will plant vineyards and they will drink the wine from them. Also they will make gardens and eat of the produce from them, and I will plant them upon their land, and no more will they be pulled up out of their land which I have given to them,' says the Eternal Lord your God"** (Amos 9:13-15).

The bountiful richness, fertility and productivity of the land and the peace which will bless that old land, so long troubled by war, is delightfully summarized by the words of the prophet. Both the prophets Isaiah and Micah have spoken of the fact that, under Messiah's worldwide rule, the instruments of war will be converted into tools of agriculture (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). Isaiah describes the transformation of the land itself from a wilderness and a wasteland into a place of abundance and great joy at the arrival of their God in the day when He would bring vengeance on their enemies and salvation to His chosen people. **"Wilderness and parched land will be glad and the Arabah will rejoice and it will blossom like the rose. It will blossom very abundantly and it will**

rejoice, even with joy and with singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it and the splendor of Carmel and of [the plain of] Sharon [will be given to them] (Isa. 35:1-2a).

Yes, the land will be gloriously transformed in that future day. Three of the prophets speak of the elevation of the water tables of the land that makes possible the transformation of the barren and fruitless places of the land of Israel. The great prophet Ezekiel devotes much of his forty seventh chapter to this geological phenomenon which will follow the arrival of the Messiah. He prophesies about "...water flowing from underneath the threshold of the temple toward the east for the front of the temple will face west. The water will be flowing from under the right side of the temple on the south side of the altar" (Ezek. 47:1).

Ezekiel describes the vision that he had of the continual swelling flow of this water as it flowed toward the east in this way. "And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits. Then he brought me through the waters. The waters came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand [cubits] and brought me through the waters. The waters came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and he brought me through it. The water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand [cubits] and it had become a river that I was not able to cross because the waters were too deep, waters in which a person must swim for it was a river that could not be crossed" (Ezek. 47:3-5).

I personally have concluded that the waters which well up in northern Israel to supply the Sea of Galilee comes through the deep fractures of the great African Rift Valley from the highlands of Africa. Someone else has pointed out that there is a fish that is common only to the Sea of Galilee and to Lake Victoria. It appears that the raising of Israel's water tables at the arrival of Messiah will result from a change in the flow of this water at the great geological movement when the valleys are lifted up and the mountains are made low. "The voice of the one who (Isa. 40:3-4).

The prophets also describe the effect of Messiah's raising of the water tables of the land in that day. Ezekiel speaks of the transformation of the vegetation that will result from this remarkable event. "When I came back, there were very many trees there along the banks of the river on both sides. ... Along the banks of the river on both sides will grow all kinds of trees that are useful for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. They will continue to bear fruit every month because of the waters that will flow from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves will be for medicine" (Ezek. 47:12).

Isaiah indicates that the same remarkable change of water tables will transform the wilderness into a place with standing pools of water. (6b) "...Waters will burst forth in the wilderness and streams [will flow] in the desert. (7) The parched ground will become a pool and the thirsty land [will develop] springs of water. There will be grass with reeds and rushes in the habitation of jackals where they lay" (Isa. 35:6b-7).

The prophet Joel turns to the mountains and hills of Judah, joining his description of the changed water tables with its effect on the productivity of the land. "And it will

come to pass in that day that the mountains will drip with grape juice. The hills will flow with milk and all of the brooks of Judah will be flooded with water. A fountain will flow from the house of the Eternal Lord and it will water the Valley of Acacias" (Joel 3:18 Engl., 4:18 Heb.). But surely the words of the prophet Amos most graphically describe that which happens to the land of Israel when the Eternal Lord fulfills His ancient promises to reestablish the rule of the house of David over the land and indeed, over all mankind. But perhaps the words of Amos most graphically describe that glorious day yet in the future. **"Behold,' the Eternal Lord says, 'the days will be coming, when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the one who treads the grapes will overtake the one who sows the seed. The mountains will drip with grape juice and all the hills will flow'"** (Amos 9:13).

2. THE SOURCE OF THE PEACE OF THAT DAY (4:4b)

Peace has been the longing of Jewish hearts for centuries as the ancient people have been driven, slain, tormented and uprooted from one land after another by Gentiles. These foolishly refused to believe that the Eternal ever would fulfill His great covenant promises to these blood descendants of Abraham. But the prophet Micah describes the peace of that future day in simple language which, without errant presuppositions, any child should be able to understand. **"...No one will make them afraid because the mouth of the Eternal Lord of Hosts has spoken it"** (Mic. 4:4b).

No description of that great day of peace that yet is ahead for the nation of Israel is more beautiful than that brought by the prophet Hosea. He says: (4) **"I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely because My anger will have turned away from them. (5) I will be like the dew to Israel. He will grow like the lily and he will lengthen his roots like Lebanon. (6) His branches will spread. His beauty will be like an olive tree and his fragrance will be like Lebanon. (7) Those who live under His shadow will return. They will be revived like grain and they will grow like a vine. Their remembrance will be like the wines of Lebanon. (8) Ephraim will say: 'What do I have to do with idols anymore? I have heard and I have observed Him. I am like a green cypress tree. Your fruit is found in Me. (9) Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him understand them because the ways of the Eternal Lord are right. The righteous ones will walk in them, but the transgressors will stumble in them"** (Hos. 14:4-9).

Zephaniah speaks of that wonderful day when (17) **"The Eternal Lord your God will be in your midst ...when "He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with His love and He will rejoice over you with singing. (18) I will gather those that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, even those who are of you to whom the reproach was a burden"** (Zeph. 3:17-18). Imagine a day when the Eternal Lord will sing over His wayward people after He has brought them back to Himself! What a time that will be! The Eternal through Zephaniah says to Israel, (19) **"See, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you. I will save the lame ones and will gather those who have been driven out. I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they**

had been put to shame. (20) At that time I will bring you back, even at the time that I will gather you because I will give you fame and praise among all of the peoples of the earth when I return your captives before your eyes' says the Eternal Lord" (Zeph. 3:19-20).

3. ISRAEL'S WORSHIP CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE PAGANS (4:5)

For centuries the exiles of the people of Israel rightly have scorned the vagrant worshippers who were dedicated to the worship of trees, animals and idols of plaster, even though at times they also became involved in this desperate degradation from true worship of the Creator. In Isaiah 48:1-5 the Eternal had mocked those who were satisfied to worship the things that they had made. (1) "Hear this, oh house of Jacob, the ones who are called by the name `Israel,' who have come forth out of the fountain of Judah, who swear by the name of the Eternal Lord but not in truth and not in righteousness. (2) For they name themselves as from the holy city and they stay themselves upon the God of Israel. The Eternal Lord of Armies is His name. Those things that came before, I have declared from [i.e, even before] then.

(3) Yes, from My mouth they went forth because I proceeded to cause them to be heard. Abruptly I did [these things] and they came to pass. (4) [I did this] because I knew that you were obstinate and that your neck was a sinew of iron and your forehead was brass. (5) Therefore I proceeded to declare [this] to you from old times. Before it came to be I caused you to hear it lest you should come to say: `My idol has done them and my graven image and my melted [and cast] image has commanded them [to be]'" (Isa. 48:1-5).

Yet a king like Manasseh and others who followed Manasseh turned to this very thing. (3) "Manasseh ...rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed. He built up altars for Baal and he made a wooden image.... He made his son to pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and he consulted with the spiritists and the mediums.... (7) He even set up a carved image of Asherah which he had made in the house about which the Eternal Lord had said to David and to Solomon, his son: 'In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all of the tribes of Israel, I will place My name forever'" (2 Kings 21: 3, 7).

The prophet Jeremiah was the prophet whom the Eternal Lord choose to record the New Covenant. In it He promises the chosen people of Israel these things. (31) "'See, 'the Eternal Lord says, 'the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. (32) It will not be after the manner of the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. That covenant of Mine they broke even though I was as an husband to them' says the Eternal Lord. (33) But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. 'After those days' says the Eternal Lord, I will place My law in their inward parts and I will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they will be My people. (34) And they will teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the

Eternal Lord!" The reason is that they all will know Me from the least ones of them to the greatest ones of them,' says the Eternal Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember no more their sin" (Jer. 31:31-34).

Micah contrasts the way that the heathen continually have turned to idols and other abominations with the way that transformed Israel will worship the Lord in the future. **"For all peoples do walk, each one of them, in the name of his god, but we [Israel] will walk in the name of the Eternal Lord our God forever and ever" (Mic. 4:5).**

E. MESSIAH REGATHERS ISRAEL (4:6-7)

Already we have noted the great Aliyah, the regathering and return of Hagalut, the exiled peoples of the nation of Israel under their Lord. Micah describes that which will happen in the latter days. **"The Eternal Lord says: 'In that day I will assemble the lame ones. I will gather the outcasts and those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and I will make the outcasts a strong nation. In this way the Eternal Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and even forever'" (Mic. 4:7).**

This is the glorious day which Isaiah has described, directly linking it with the return of the Eternal Lord to the land of Israel in Isaiah 35:5-6. (5) **"Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. (6) Then the lame man will leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb man will sing because waters will burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:5-6).**

The New Testament scholar that reads this passage should remember that which is recorded in Luke 7 about this very passage. (19) **"...John, when he had called two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus saying: 'Are You the One Who is to come or do we look for someone else?' (20) When the men had come to Him [Jesus], they said: 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying: `Are you the Coming One, or should we look for someone else?' (21) And in that very hour He healed many who had infirmities, afflictions and evil spirits, and He gave sight to many blind people. (22) Then Jesus answered and said to them: 'You go and tell to John those things which you have seen and heard, that the blind people see, the lame ones walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf people hear, the dead are raised, the poor people have the gospel preached to them. (23) And he who is not offended because of Me will be blessed'" (Luke 7:19-23).**

It is obvious that the Lord Jesus was telling John the Baptizer that the many healings that He had performed plainly indicated that He fulfilled the promises of the Tenach about the One Who was promised to come to them.

Jeremiah gloriously reports in chapter 31 that which the Eternal Lord declares to the Gentiles about this future day of the return of Israel.(10) **"Hear the word of the Eternal Lord, O you nations, and announce it among the coastlands that are far off, and say this: 'He Who has scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him in the way that a shepherd keeps his flock. (11) For the Eternal Lord will redeem Jacob and will ransom him from the hand of one who is stronger than he is. (12) Therefore they**

will come and will sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the Eternal Lord . . . " (Jer. 31:10-12a).

F. THE KINGDOM RESTORED TO JERUSALEM (4:8)

The Eternal Lord promises Israel and the old citadel of Zion through the prophet Micah. "And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, it [the kingdom] will come to you, even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:8). The final element of Micah's great description of the events that would come in the latter days is the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom from the citadel that David had captured from the Jebusites. It is that of which Isaiah prophecies of the day when to Israel (6) "... a Child will be born," when "...unto us a Son will be given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. For His name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, The Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace.' (7) There will be no end of the increase of His government and peace upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from that time forward even forever" (Isa. 9:6-7).

It is of that day of which the Psalmist David reports in Psalm 2:6-8). "Yet will I [in spite of the rejection of the Messiah in verses 1-3] establish My King on My holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6). Hebrews 1 in the New Testament makes it clear that it is the Messiah Who quotes that which the Eternal Lord had said to Him in the eternal decree. (7) "I am determined to relate the details of the decree: 'The Eternal Lord said to Me: 'You are My Son. At this time I do become Your Father. (8) Ask of Me for I am determined to give You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. (9) You will smash them with a rod of iron. You will dash them into pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa. 2:7-9).

This quotation from Psalm 2 contains several crucial pieces of information.

1. It is the Son of God who is quoting that which the Eternal Father says to Him in the eternal decree. The quotation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:4-5 leaves no doubt but that these words in the decree are spoken to the Messiah in eternity past. As the book of Hebrews shows the infinite superiority of the Messiah to the angels, it says of the Messiah, (4) "...Being made so much better than the angels, as He by inheritance has obtained a more excellent name than they have. (5) For unto which of the angels did He ever say at any time, 'You are My Son. I this day do become Your Father.'"

2. It also is obvious that Messiah does not become the Son of God within the bounds of time. These words clearly are a part of the decree, for they are introduced by the One with Whom this relationship as Son with reference to the Father is established. This is a relationship between two members of the Godhead that was established in eternity past. And concerning this relationship the One Who now is called "Son" by the Father announces that He is relating that which was established in the eternal decree and not by some event within time as we humans know it. The One Who now will be called Son since that decree introduces this quotation from the decree very emphatically by a cohortative in this way: "I am determined to relate the details of the decree..." (Psa. 2:7).

3. A relation of dependence is being established within the Godhead by the establishing of this relationship in eternity past. As Son, the member of the Godhead being addressed now assumes a subordinate relationship with the Father. The implication of this subordination is seen in Psalm 2:8. The Father now says to the One who has assumed this relationship, **"Ask of Me, for I am determined to give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as Your possession."** It is obvious that the Son now will request things of the Father, thus indicating this newly assumed relationship.

4. It is obvious that the decree that was established between the members of the Godhead in eternity past is the basis for the absolute assurance of the Father concerning Messiah's future ministry as king. It is the basis for His declaration which so often has been obscured by the translators in Psalm 2:6. **"Yet will I establish My King on Zion, mount of My holiness."** The rejection of the Messiah by Israel and the nations in no way will thwart the intent of the Father to fulfil His promises to the nation of Israel concerning the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. According to Psalm 2:9 the day is coming when Messiah will not be being rejected and overthrown as king as interpreted in Acts 4:25-28. Instead, the day is coming when, in taking possession of all of the earth as His inheritance, Messiah will smash those who attempt to withstand the future establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Psalm 2:9 says this. **"You [the Messiah] will break them with a scepter of iron. Like a vessel of a potter You will utterly smash them into pieces."**

All of the wonderful things concerning Messiah's future kingdom that Micah has described will take place in the latter days of the people of Israel. But Micah now suddenly is led to turn to reveal that an entire series of events will precede that glorious day when King Messiah will come to earth, will return the rest of the exiled people of Israel to their native land. Many terrible things still awaited Micah's people, which would take place before the establishment of that glorious kingdom. It is only then in Israel's latter days that Messiah will come and will deliver them from their enemies, establishing His rule over the whole world from Jerusalem. Micah introduces many of these events by the adverb **"now"** in the great context of the rest of chapter 4 and most of chapters 5-7.

Chapter three:

EVENTS (NOW PAST) THAT WOULD PRECEDE

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM (4:9- 5:3a)

While Micah does not number the events that lay ahead of Israel from his time, altogether he explains that there would be fifteen major events that would befall the nation of Israel in punishment for her continual waywardnesses. All fifteen of these events would come to pass before their Messiah would arrive to establish the kingdom that had been promised so long ago in the great, unchangeable covenants. Some of these events stand alone and are introduced by the adverb "now." Others are related and are linked together with those descriptions of events that are linked by "Now." These grow out of those events that are introduced by the adverb.

A. THE AGONIES OF CENTURIES OF WAITING FOR MESSIAH'S KINGDOM TO COME

Event # 1. ISRAEL'S BIRTH PANGS BEGIN WITH THE LOSS OF THEIR RULERS (4:9a)

The first event that inescapably had to come upon the people of Israel and Judah relates to their rulers. Micah prophesied at about the same time as Isaiah in the late 700's B.C. The end of the single kingdom did not come until the early part of the sixth century B.C., He very plainly prophesied the end of the rule of the house of David over the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Furthermore, he clearly states that this event would occur before the great Messianic kingdom would be set up. "**Now** [that is, before the fulfillment of these great kingdom promises] **why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished?**" (Mic. 4:9a).

Micah's message parallels that which Jeremiah had spoken to Zedekiah, the final king of the Davidic dynasty. Zedekiah repeats it to Jeremiah in great anger. (3) "**...Why do you prophesy and announce: 'This is what the Eternal Lord says. 'See, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will take it. (4) Now Zedekiah, king of Judah will not escape from the hands of the Chaldeans but surely will be delivered unto the hand of the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye. (5) Then he will lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he will be until I visit him . . .'**" (Jer. 32:3-5).

A BARNYARD SOLILOQUY

(Isaiah 1)

Here stands the ox, a humble, faithful laborer
That pulls the cart and plow across the rocky field

To serve its master's will.
And here the ass who gives his little graying back,
A seat, a humble throne where master,
Seated back upon his hips, may ride.
These stand and feast upon the fodder and the grain
Within the master's barn--within the master's Trough,
Content to eat their fill.

But Israel, rebellious, sinful, stubborn, bold
And knowing not their Lord,
Weighed down with sin, iniquity,
Revolts and turns away. What bruises,
Sores and ragged, oozing, rotting wounds!
Her cities lie in ruins and strangers eat their crops
While few from Sodom flee!
Now come and wash!
You have no more a sacrifice
To cover all your sin—no offering to bring
That I should hear your prayer!
Now come to Me!
A fountain from My spear-pierced side
Is flowing yet for you to wash as white as snow
And cleanse you from your sin! You will not come?
Ah, nation full of harlotry, My furnace I will heat
To melt away your dross that you may be redeemed!

Ah, Israel! Soon you will blush with awful shame,
Embarrassed at your way.
Your warriors will be punk;
Their work will be a spark!
But you will come! And you will know
I am the Lord who came and gave His life
That you might come to live through Me.

Event # 2. ISRAEL'S EXILE TO BABYLON (4:9b-10)

The second tragedy which the prophet Micah proclaims must befall the nation before the Messianic kingdom would be established is a time of great trouble. This period of Israel's history is much like one that Jeremiah describes vividly. He says: (5) "For this is what the Eternal Lord says: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. (6) Ask now and see whether a man ever is in labor with a child? As a result, why do I see every man with his hands upon his loins like a woman who is in labor and having all faces turned pale? (7) Alas! For that day will be great so that

none is like it and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he will be saved out from it'" (Jer. 30:5-7).

Micah describes this time, the time of Jacob's trouble, in the same way, but he is not at this point referring to the same event. After he has described the cessation of the rule over the nation by king and counselor, he gives the explanation of this time of great trouble. (9) **"...For birth pangs will seize you like a woman who is in labor. (10) Be in pain and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman who is in birth pangs . . ."** (Mic. 4:9b-10a). In the context here in Micah it is clear that at this point Micah is not referring to the great tribulation which is fully described in the New Testament book of Revelation. He is referring to the awful chaos which came upon the nation when the Babylonians returned three times to encircle and harass Jerusalem, finally carrying away most of its people. That event is more fully described in the next event that still faced Judah in the days of Micah.

Event # 3. THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (4:10b)

Most of the pre-exilic prophets spoke of this third impending event, the carrying away of Judah by the Babylonians. This too had to take place before the Messianic kingdom could be established. It also is the subject of several of the Psalms. Micah briefly develops the subject in this chapter but plainly gives this captivity as the cause for the end of the Davidic dynasty and for the fierce agony which the nation must suffer before their Messianic hopes would be fulfilled. Micah says: **"For now you will go forth out of the city. You will live in the field and you will go to Babylon"** (Mic. 4:10b).

EXILE (Psalm 137)

By the slowly flowing rivers,
By the stream of Babylon,
There we hanged our harps in sorrow,
There we wept and wiped our eyes
As we thought of Zion's towers
In the courts of Babylon.

"Sing the songs of Zion, Captive!" "
Sing of mirth and happiness!"
Sing? The songs of our Jehovah?
Sing of Him in foreign land?
How can I forget my city,
Oh, Jerusalem, my Joy!

In Chapter one Habakkuk was informed of this terrible event by the Eternal Lord in this way. (5) **"Look among the nations and watch. Be totally astounded because I will**

do a work in your days that you would not believe even if it were told to you. (6) For surely I will be raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation that marches through the breadth of the earth in order to possess dwelling places that do not belong to them. (7) They are terrible and dreadful. Their judgment and their dignity comes from themselves. (8) Also their horses are faster than leopards and fiercer than wolves of the evening. Their chargers charge ahead; their cavalry comes from far off. They fly like the eagle that hurries to eat. (9) They all come for violence. Their faces are set like the east wind. They will gather captives like sand. They will scoff at kings and princes will be scorned by them. (10) They will mock at every stronghold because they heap up mounds of earth and seize them. (11) Then his spirit will change and he will transgress. He will commit an offense by ascribing the power to his own god" (Hab. 1:5-11).

The book of Daniel begins after the first wave of the Babylonian invasion had carried Daniel and his friends away to the Babylonian court. Jeremiah uses the illustration of two baskets of figs, one good and the other far over ripe, to convey the message that those who had been carried off to Babylon were the righteous ones who had been delivered from the horrors of the Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 24). The book of Ezekiel begins two years later. It is written by Ezekiel, one of the priestly family who also had been carried away. Seven years later he received the news in Babylon that Jerusalem had fallen (Ezekiel 33:21).

This great event series which culminated in the carrying away most of Judah fulfills the words of Micah when he says: "Now, why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor died...?" (Mic. 4:9a). But when Micah wrote, these things were still future, scarcely contemplated by his own people. His simple announcement that they would leave Jerusalem, living in the field (v. 10) as they traveled to Babylon nevertheless held great impact on those who would read his prophecy and believe.

It is the prophet Jeremiah who received the information from the Eternal in chapter 25 that the Babylonian captivity would last for 70 years. (8) "Therefore this is what the Eternal Lord of Hosts says: 'Because you have not listened to My words, (9) look. I will take all of the families of the north,' says the Eternal Lord, 'with Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant. I will bring them against this land, against those who live in it, and against all of these nations which live around it. I will utterly destroy them and will make them an astonishment, a hissing and continual desolations.

(10) Furthermore I will remove from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. (11) Then this whole land will become a desolation and an astonishment and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. (12) Then this is what will happen when the seventy years have been completed. I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity' says the Eternal Lord, 'and I will make it to be perpetual desolations '" (Jer. 25:8-12).

Event # 4. THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL FROM BABYLON (4:10c)

It was the prophet Daniel, now a high government official in Babylon after it had been conquered by the Persians, who read in Daniel 9 the words that Jeremiah had written and understood that the 70 years of captivity were near their end. (1) **"In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, (2) in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Eternal Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would complete 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem"** (Dan. 9:1-2).

Daniel began to pray earnestly over the sins of his people, confessing them as if he had been involved in them (Dan. 9:3-19). In direct response to Daniel's prayers the Eternal moved the heart of Cyrus, the king of the Persians who had conquered Babylon, and allowed the remnant of Israel to return from their exile to their own land (Ezra 1:1-4). In so doing this king fulfilled the words of the prophet Micah and brought the fourth event that stood in the way of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom into Israel's history. No longer must Israel wait for the fulfillment of the prophet's words: **"...And to Babylon you will go. There you will be delivered. There the Eternal Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies"** (Mic. 4:1).

Event # 5. THE GATHERING OF MANY NATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL BY THE LORD FOR THEIR JUDGMENT (4:11-12)

The fifth event which had to come to pass before the establishment of the long promised Messianic kingdom according to the prophet Micah is one which spans many centuries of Israel's history. **"Now also many nations will gather against you who will be saying, 'Let her become defiled and let our eyes look on Zion'"** (Mic. 4:11). One can interpret the prophet's words to refer to the many agonizing centuries of troubles which now are past, centuries in which the nation of Israel, both in their land and then in a greater exile, have suffered unjustly at the hands of many nations.

After all, the prophet Daniel had described the buffeting of Israel that yet awaited them at the hands of other nations. He had spoken of the four beasts that would arise out of the sea of the nations (Daniel 7:1-8). This vision had been interpreted for him as representing four great kingdoms, the latter of which would climax in the rise of ten kings. They in turn would be succeeded by yet another king who desperately would afflict Israel.

This is revealed to Daniel in chapter 7. (24) **"The ten horns are ten kings who will rise up from this kingdom and another will rise up after them. He will be different from the first ones and he will subdue those kings. (25) He will speak great words against the Most High and will persecute the saints of the Most High. And he will seek to change the times and the law. Then they will be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (26) But the court will be seated and they will take away his rule..."** (Dan. 7:24-26).

It is true that Israel suffered much throughout the four kingdoms that Daniel describes. And it is true that Antiochus Epiphanes did all of the things of which Daniel prophesies (Dan. 11:21-45). Cannot that suffering be a part of the trials prophesied by Micah? Perhaps. But on the other hand, these troubles still are continuing even though a remnant of the nation has returned to that little, war torn strip of land that lies between Europe, Asia and Africa. That which had been described by Asaph as happening in his own day has become horribly relevant to the trials of Israel in the land today. And the prayer of Asaph in Psalm 83 is so appropriate for God's troubled people there as they once again are faced by so many enemies round about and even far away.

(1) **"Do not continue to keep silent, O God! Do not continue to hold Your peace and do not continue to be silent, O God!** (2) **For see, Your enemies are making a tumult and those who hate You have lifted up their heads.** (3) **They have taken crafty counsel against Your people and have made a compact together against Your protected ones.** (4) **They are saying: 'Come! Let us cut them off from continuing as a nation in order that the name of Israel will be remembered no more.'** (5) **For they have talked together with one consent. They have formed a confederacy against You.** (6) **The tents of Edom and of the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagerenes, (7) Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Palestine and the inhabitants of Tyre. (8) Assyria also has joined with them. They are helping the children of Lot. Selah"** (Psa. 83:1-8).

Yes, Israel even today is going through continual trials as many nations repeatedly have joined themselves together to destroy the nation of Israel and to cause their memory to cease. Only recently one of the Arab leaders pompously announced that within two years Israel no longer would exist as a nation! Indeed, these very things were prophesied by Zechariah as events which would take place when Israel began to return from their worldwide exile after the sale of their Shepherd for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:1-17).

In the following chapter Zechariah looked forward to the day when returning Israel would live in the land which had been given to them by the Lord, but living outside of the Old City of Jerusalem. There they would constantly be troubled and forced to defend themselves against **"the peoples around and about them"** (Zech. 12:2-4). Zechariah also prophesied that, as a result of the repeated attacks of the Arab nations, Israel would come to dwell even in the old city of Jerusalem. He makes it clear that the brilliance of Israel's military leaders would appear on the surface to be the means of Israel's deliverance from the many attacks that would befall them. But he also announces that these very leaders, the **'alluphey y^hudah**, the very expression used in modern Hebrew for "the generals of Judah," will secretly recognize that what they had accomplished must have been done through the help of the Eternal Lord of Hosts (Zech. 12:5).

These **"peoples round about,"** obviously the Arab peoples whose lands surround and who would besiege the new city of Jerusalem repeatedly according to Zechariah 12, are the combined group of peoples mentioned in Psalm 83. They have three things in common, the Arabic language, the Moslem religion and their hatred for the ancient people of Israel. That hatred for the descendants of Jacob would drive them into fear and

trembling before the tattered, poorly armed little military force which defended the land from their enemies.

(1) **"The burden of the word of the Eternal Lord for Israel," says the Eternal Lord: (2) '...See, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to all of the peoples round about when they will be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. (3) Then in that day I will make Jerusalem to be a very burdening stone for all of the peoples [the peoples which have their kingdoms around Israel]. Everyone burdening themselves with it will be cut into pieces even though all of the peoples of the land will be gathered against it.'** (4) The Eternal Lord says: **'In that day I will strike every horse with astonishment and his rider with madness, but I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah and I will strike every horse of the peoples [the Arab peoples mentioned above] with blindness'"** (Zech. 12:1-4).

This passage does not refer to the battle of Armageddon as many students including my own Hebrew professor, Dr. Merrill Unger, mistakenly have concluded. That battle that gathers armies of the world is not described until Zechariah 14. It is an event that follows the conversion of part of the peoples of Israel who would be living in the land to their Messiah. It is shortly after the utterly miraculous defeat of an army of goyim, Gentiles, that a heavy burden of conscience sweeps throughout the land, apparently resulting in the conversion of one third of those in the land. The Eternal describes His own action of destroying their northern enemy (cf. Joel 2:18-20) in this way. **"Then this shall be in that day, that I will utterly seek to destroy all of the Gentiles who will be coming against Jerusalem"** (Zech. 12:9). Joel plainly identifies this as an army that unites and invades Israel from the north. Those in the land recognize that they are helpless before the power of this great invading force. They do not realize that it is the Lord Himself who will have gathered this invasion force as a means of bringing the yet wayward and independent nation to its knees before Him (Joel 2:11-14). Indeed, according to Joel 2, they will gather as one to call upon the Eternal Lord to deliver them.

(18) **"Then will the Eternal Lord become jealous for His land and He will begin to have pity upon His people. (19) Then the Eternal Lord will answer and He will begin to say to His people: 'Behold, I am about to be sending you corn and wine and oil, and you will be satisfied with it, and I will not give you any more to be a reproach among the Gentiles, (20) but I will remove the northern one far off from you, and I will cause him to be driven into a land that is barren and desolate with his face toward the eastern sea [the Dead Sea] and his back toward the western sea [the Mediterranean Sea]. Then his stink will arise and his stench will come up because he has done great things"** (Joel 2:18-20).

According to Zechariah 12, is this wonderful act on the part of the Eternal, that will come after so many desperate centuries, will awaken the independent hearts of the Zionists in the land. (10) **"Then [after the Eternal has destroyed the northern army about six months before the middle of Israel's seven great years of trials] I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplications. Then they will begin to look unto Me, the One Whom they pierced through, and they will mourn for Him like the mourning for the only child, and they**

will weep bitterly for Him like weeping concerning the firstborn one. (11) In that day the mourning will become great in Jerusalem like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. (12) Then the land will mourn, families by themselves, the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves, the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves. The family of the house of Levi will be by itself and their wives by themselves. The family of the Shimeites will be by themselves and their wives by themselves, all of the families that are left, every family by itself and their wives by themselves. (13:1) In that day a fountain will be being opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 12:10-13:1). Zechariah 13:2-9 briefly summarizes the three and one half most difficult years of the great tribulation's trial for the remnant as it is being purified before the arrival of their King.

Now it appears to be perfectly logical to say that the initial stages of the present return of Israel from their worldwide exile surely is prophesied here in Zechariah. Furthermore, the continual aggression that has troubled those in the land for all of the 20th century, including the series of battles since Israel became an independent nation, precisely harmonizes with Zechariah's prophetic words. Indeed, the astonished reaction of the generals of Judah at their victories against overwhelming odds also accords with their inner reactions at their amazing victories against the Arab armies.

The prophet Zechariah continues to describe the reaction of Israel's generals in this way. (5) "And the generals of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have been my strength through the Eternal Lord of Hosts!' (6) In that day I will make the generals of Judah like a fire pan in the pile of wood, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves. They will devour all of the peoples who live around about on the right hand and on the left hand, and Jerusalem will be inhabited [by Jews] again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (Zech. 12:5-6). It must be remembered that the Hebrew word which I have translated "generals" actually is the modern Hebrew word for Israel's generals.

But there are several events prophesied by Zechariah which have not yet been fulfilled at this point in Israel's history. While Jerusalem has been captured by Israel, it is by no means fully occupied by Israel. Even the holy temple site is occupied by their enemies who constantly maneuver to take away their land and their rights and to drive them into the sea. Furthermore, the ancient people to whom God's covenants and promises were given have not yet been invaded by the *goyim*, the Gentiles, (Zech. 12:9) who will invade them out of the north. This invasion is described in much more detail in Ezekiel 38:15 and in 39:2.

Already we have considered Joel's contribution concerning this invasion in Joel 2:20. I have said that this invasion would take place about six months before the outpouring of the Spirit which is described in Joel 3:1-5 (Heb. 2:28-32, 3:1-5 Engl.). The reason for this conclusion is that there are seasonal climate changes spoken of in Joel 2:21-27. Between the destruction of the northern army (Joel 2:20) and the outpouring of the Spirit while there are great heavenly signs lie both the former rains and the latter rains. The former rains normally fall in the three places in the world that have the climate of the land of

Israel during the period from October through December. These three places are Israel, the California coast and part of the coasts of Peru and Chile. The latter rains fall from January through passover. It is for this reason that one must conclude that approximately six months lie between the destruction of the northern army and the outpouring of the Spirit.

This great destruction of the invading armies is described by Isaiah 63 as an event that precedes the repentance of Israel. Isaiah graphically describes Israel's awakening to the divine intervention that will have saved them from the great invading army which will be marching through Trans-Jordan. (1) **"Who is this who is coming from Edom, garments crimsoned from Bozrah? This one is glorious in his apparel, marching in the multitude of his strength? `I am the One who is speaking in righteousness, mighty to save!"** (2) **Why is your apparel red, and your garments are like the one who has been treading in the wine vat?** (3) **`I have trodden the winepress by Myself and there was no one from the peoples [of Israel] who was with Me. So in My anger I trod them and in My fury I trampled them, and their lifeblood is splattered against My garments and I have stained all of My raiment.** (4) **[I have done this] because the day of vengeance was in My heart and the year of My redeemed ones has come"** (Isa. 63:1-4).

The response of Israel at that future day to their deliverance by the Messiah is described in Isaiah 64. That chapter also shows that this will take place in the land during a time when Israel's cities will be burned with fire. The temple which those of the 'aliah will have built either immediately before or during their time of great tribulation will have been destroyed already. Part of the prayer of the believing remnant in the land after this miraculous delivery, which reveals that the temple already will have been destroyed, is found in Isaiah 63. (18) **"In a little while they have driven out the people of Your holiness. Our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. (19) We have become like those over whom You never ruled, like those who are not called by Your name"** (Isa. 63:18-19a).

The agonizing prayer of the remnant, which is not recorded in Zechariah 12:11-14, actually is recorded in Isaiah 63:19b (Heb). **Oh that You would rend the heavens and You would come down, that the mountains would quake at Your presence!"**

Herein is the relationship of these two events that Zechariah 12 sets forth. It is the invasion by the goyyim. the Gentiles, that causes many in the land mentally to consider [the Hebrew word nabhat] Him Whom they pierced. (9) **"It will be in that day that I will seek to destroy all of the goyyim (Gentiles) that will come against Jerusalem. (10) And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplication. Then they will begin to consider Me Whom they pierced and they will begin to mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and they will grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son"** (Zech. 12:9-10).

The time of repentance, of Israel's conversion and cleansing which is described in Zechariah 12:11-13:9 also has not yet taken place. Neither has the invasion by the armies of Armageddon, long prophesied by the prophets, yet been fulfilled. These are events

which yet face the nation of Israel before the establishment of the great Messianic kingdom which had been promised to David concerning his greater Son. " (2 Sam. 7:12-17).

It is futile for the interpreter of the Davidic Covenant to seek to understand its fulfillment only in David's near son, Solomon. There are several elements in the prophecy which have only a near relevance, a pre-fulfillment which relates to Solomon. Through a prophetic technique, which is called "compensation," the prophecy also has an eschatological relevance. Its quotation by Hebrews one plainly shows that by far the most important relevance is to David's greater Son. Both sons of David are present in part of the covenant. This may be seen in 2 Samuel 7 in the Davidic Covenant. (12) **"When your [David's] days come to be full and you sleep with your fathers, then I will set up your seed after you, which will proceed out of your inward parts, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom always."**

Notice that in the conclusion of verse 14 Solomon begins to fade out of the scene being portrayed in the great covenant. At that point the focus of the prophecy moves exclusively to David's greater Son. The fulfillment of this part of the prophecy and of the great Davidic Covenant absolutely awaits another person who is far greater than Solomon. This section of the Covenant contains crucial elements that could not possibly relate to Solomon. The Eternal Lord says something through the prophet Nathan that translators have ignored for centuries. The Hebrew text actually speaks of the Son who would be born to the lineage of David, indicating a glorious relationship between the Eternal and this son of David. **I will proceed to be to Him as a Father, and He will be to Me for a son, Whom, in His being caused to be guilty [a causative passive verbal] of iniquity, I will cause [a causative active verb] the chastening of Him with the rod of mankind and with the strokes of the sons of men"** (2 Sam. 7:14). This statement, properly understood, is among the clearest statements found in the Tenach, the Old Testament, concerning the redemptive work of David's greater son, the Messiah. The day would come when this greater son of David would become the bearer of iniquity for others. It was of this that John the Baptist cried, **"Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world!"** (Jn. 1:29).

According to Isaiah 53:10 it was indeed the Eternal Lord Who brought about the bruising of His servant when **"...He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows..."** (Isaiah 53:4a), when **"...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we were healed"** (Isa. 53:4-5). The Hophal [causative passive] verb in 2 Samuel 7:14 which I have translated **"In His being caused to be guilty of iniquity . . ."** surely refers to the act of the Eternal Lord in making His Servant an offering for sin for us. This already has been fulfilled. It is spoken of in the great prophet, Isaiah. **"When You make His soul an offering for sin . . ."** (Isa. 53:10). The Hiphil verb [causative active] in the following clause already has been fulfilled. **"I will cause the chastening of Him [the Messiah] with the rod of mankind and with the strokes of the sons of men."** It has its counterpart in Zechariah's words, **"... Whom they pierced."** Both passages refer to the event prophesied by David in Psalm 2. (1) **"Why do the nations rage and the peoples imagine**

a vain thing? (2) The kings of the land set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Eternal Lord and against His Messiah, saying: (3) 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and throw away their cords from us.'"

It is upon this greater Son of David that the remnant of Israel in the land must look, concerning Whom they must repent, before that One establishes the great Davidic kingdom for Israel promised so long ago.

And, according to Israel's prophets and the prophecies of the New Testament, they still face a greater trial of many nations yet in the future, the battle of Armageddon. Micah introduces that event when describing the way that the nations in the final days of Israel's great trial, the tribulation, gather themselves to attack the poor little nation. **"But they do not know the thoughts of the Eternal Lord, neither do they understand His counsel. The reason is that He will be gathering them like sheaves are gathered on the threshing floor"** (Mic. 4:12). That which happens when the nations gather for the battle of Armageddon is the described in several of the great prophets of the Tenach.

Event # 6. MESSIAH AND ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER ISRAEL'S ENEMIES (4:13)

Micah's brief description of the resulting event which still lies ahead on Israel's horizon involves both the Eternal in His strengthening of the warriors of Israel and the fierce warfare of that nation as they throw off their enemies with His help. **"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I [the Eternal Lord] will make your horn like iron and your hooves like bronze. You will consecrate their gain to the Eternal Lord, even their wealth to the Eternal Lord of the entire earth"** (Micah 4:13).

Later in chapter 5 the prophet Micah will develop this theme of Israel's victories in their final great battle. (8) **"Then the remnant of Jacob will be among the Gentiles, even in the midst of many peoples, like a lion which is among the beasts of the forest and like a young lion which is among flocks of sheep, who, when he passes through them, both treads down and rips into pieces and no one is able to deliver them. (9) Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries and all of your enemies will be cut off"** (Mic. 5:8-9).

In Zechariah 14 the prophet describes this phenomenal strength of the warriors of Israel, fully empowered by the great Warrior, the Messiah Who will be fighting alongside of them. (13) **"This is what will happen in that day. A great panic from the Eternal Lord will be among them [the armies of Armageddon who will have gathered to destroy Israel]. Everyone will seize his neighbor's hand and will raise his hand against his neighbor's hand. (14) Judah also will fight at Jerusalem and the wealth of all of the surrounding nations will come to be gathered together, gold, silver and clothing in great abundance"** (Zech. 14:13-14). It is obvious that this great event which Micah has prophesied as an event still in the future of Israel still awaits her in the future. What great trials and victories lie ahead!

Now this remarkable victory by the remnant of Israel that will have returned to the land, is the subject of prophecy by Zechariah. And the message of that Prophet exactly parallels that which follows in Micah 5. Zechariah 9 begins by describing events that

would precede the arrival of the Messiah. Zechariah 9:1-8 remarkably foretells of the judgments which would the Eternal would bring by means of Alexander the Great upon Israel's surrounding nations even while delivering Israel from that judgment. The actual events are well described in Josephus as he described the campaign of Alexander as his army traveled south along the Levant through Israel into Egypt. I have actually seen a lewd representation of Alexander in a hieroglyph text at Karnak in Egypt.

But that which is parallel to the prophecy of Micah follows in Zechariah 9:9-11:17. That prophet describes the entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem ready to deliver the nation from their Roman oppressors at that time. **"Rejoice greatly, Oh daughter of Zion! Shout, Oh daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King is coming to you. He is righteous and having deliverance, lowly and riding upon a donkey, even a colt, the offspring of a donkey"** (Zech. 9:9).

The context that follows describes the deliverance of the nation which could have followed, had the nation received their Messiah. It is a context that describes those of Judah and of the Northern Kingdom overthrowing their traditional enemies as the Eternal appears over them, defending them and saving them. **"...The battle bow will be cut off. He will speak peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth"** (Zech. 9:10b). The prophecy anticipates the return of the exiles and apparently even the resurrection of the Old Testament dead, who at that time were confined as prisoners in the pit that had no water (Zech. 9:11). His defense and deliverance of them is dramatically portrayed. (14) **"Then the Eternal Lord will be seen over them and His arrows will go forth like lightning. The Eternal Lord God will blow the trumpet and will come with the whirlwinds from the south. (15) The Eternal Lord of Hosts will defend them. They will devour and they will subdue [their enemies] with sling stones.... The Eternal Lord their God will save them in that day"** (Zech. 9:14a, 15a).

The prophet describes the promise for the Messianic reign of His marvelous provision of rain on their land (Zechariah 10). Zechariah prophesies directly concerning the cause of their sins by their spiritual leaders and of the judgment that would fall upon those false religionists. (2) **"For the teraphim have spoken delusion and they have told false dreams. They have comforted in vain. For this reason the peoples wander in their way like sheep. They are in this trouble because there is no shepherd. (3) My anger is kindled against the shepherds and I am going to punish the goat herders because the Eternal Lord of Hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and He will make them like horses in the battle"** (Zech. 10:2-3).

Zechariah speaks of the transformation of a people who for centuries had been merchants. Suddenly they will become great warriors (Zech. 10:5-7). The prophet describes that which should have followed Messiah's appearance in Zion, the return of exiles who would have been scattered in the far countries of the world. (8) **"I will whistle for them and I will gather them because I will redeem them. Then they will increase in the way that they once increased. (9) I will have sown them among the peoples [the Gentiles] but they will be remembered in far countries. They will continue to live, together with their children, and they will return. (10) I also will return them**

from the land of Egypt and will gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon and room for them will not be found" (Zech. 10:8-10).

Rashi said of Zechariah 9:9, "This can only refer to King Messiah of whom it is said, 'And his dominion shall be from sea to sea,' since we do not find any ruler with such wide dominion during the days of the Second Temple."¹ "Ah," those who refuse to listen to the correct interpretation of Zechariah 9:9 given by Rashi, will say, "This could not possibly be referring to the Messiah because the deliverance of the nation from her enemies did not happen! The victorious war described did not happen! Instead, those who had returned to Israel from Babylon were overthrown by the Romans and exiled in 70 A.D. and in 135 A.D.! Surely the writers of the New Testament gospels were wrong when all of them used this to describe the ride of Yeshua to the temple on the colt" (Matt. 21:1-16; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-46 and John 12:1-14).

How often the intent of the Divine Author is perverted by interpreters who deliberately or unintentionally ignore the context of that which they misapply! This context describes the glories which should have followed the arrival of the Messiah at the temple after the deliverance of the nation from the terrible danger that came in the conquest by Alexander of much of the eastern world (Zech. 9:1-8). But the following context in chapter 11 describes the awful ruin of the nation by the Romans in 70 and in 135 A.D. which brought about hagalut which has lasted almost 1,900 years.

Once again it is well to listen to the words of some of the wisest of Israel's Rabbis. The Babylonian Talmud contains this painful recognition of the meaning of Zechariah's words that open Zechariah 11.

"Forty years before the destruction of the [Second] Temple . . . the doors of the Temple used to open of their own accord, until Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai rebuked them saying, 'O Sanctuary, Sanctuary! Why do you terrify yourself? I know well that your end is to be destroyed, for Zechariah the son of Iddo prophesied against thee long since: 'Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars.'"²

Other Rabbis also recognized in these words that Zechariah was prophesying the destruction of the temple which was rebuilt by Herod: Zechariah had prophesied: "**Open your doors, Oh Lebanon, in order that fire may devour your cedar woods! Wail, Oh cypress wood, because the cedar wood has fallen, because the mighty [woods] are ruined. Wail, Oh oak woods from Bashan, because the thick forest has come down. There is a sound of the wailing of the [spiritual] shepherds because that which was their glory is in ruins! There is the sound of the roaring of lions because the pride of the Jordan is in ruins**" (Zech. 11:1-3).

Rabbi Isaac who was the son of Tavlai said: "Why is the temple called Lebanon [white mountain]?" The answer was given in this way: "Because it makes white the sins of Israel." Rabbi Zutra who was the son of Tobiah asked this question: "Why is the temple called 'forest'?" He gave the answer, Because it is written, '**The house of the forest of**

¹ Cashdan, Eli, "Zechariah," Soncino Books of the Bible, Editor A Cohen. The Soncino Press Ltd., London. First Edition, 1952. p. 305.

² Op Cit., p. 313.

Lebanon" This is a reference to 1 Kings 7:2 where the temple of Solomon is so described. And there were other Rabbis who correctly recognized that Zechariah in 520 B.C. prophesied of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. They are Abarbanel, Joseph ben Gorim, Aben Ezra, Abraham the Levite, Alshech and Rabbi Isaac of Troki.³

The following context shows that in reality Messiah would not regather the nation but rather they would come to be sold as slaves and exiled from their land. **"Thus says the Eternal Lord my [Zechariah's] God, Feed the flock of the slaughter [i.e. the flock which is destined for the slaughter house], whose owners will slaughter them and will feel no guilt. Those who will sell them will say, 'Blessed is the Lord because I have become rich!' Furthermore their shepherds will not pity them. The reason is because no longer will I have pity on the inhabitants of the land' says the Eternal Lord. "But surely I will give everyone into the hand of his neighbor and into the hand of his king. They [the troops of the king] will attack the land but I will not deliver them out of their hands" As a result, I fed the flock to the slaughter, even the afflicted ones of the flock . . ."** (Zech. 11:4-7a). That is exactly what did happen to those who were besieged by the Romans in 70 A.D.. and then later after the crushing of the revolt of the false Messiah, Simon bar Kochba.

But there is even more specific detail here in Zechariah which describes the awful judgment which fell on Israel in 70 A.D.. The Prophet describes the end of the leaders of the three factions that warred with each other within the walls of Jerusalem even while the Romans were advancing to destroy them. **"I will proceed to cut off the three shepherds in one month, because My soul despised them and furthermore their souls despised Me"** (Zech. 11:8).

Josephus leaves no doubt concerning the meaning of this verse. In a section that describes events before the battle against Titus that brought the fall of Jerusalem he describes these leaders and their men in this way.

"Now this Simon, who was without the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves, as were the Zealots who were within it more heavy upon them than both of the others; and during this time did the mischievous contrivances and courage [of John] corrupt the body of the Galileans. For these Galileans had advanced this John and made him very potent, who made them a suitable requital from the authority he had obtained by their means. For he permitted them to do all things that any of them desired to do, while their inclination to plunder was insatiable, as was their zeal for searching the houses of the rich; and for the murdering of the men, and abusing of the women, it was sport to them. They also devoured what spoils they had taken, together with their blood, and indulged themselves in feminine wantonness, without any disturbance, till they were satiated therewith; while they decked their hair, and put on women's garments, and were besmeared over with ointments; and that they might appear very comely. They had paints under their eyes, and imitated, not only the ornaments, but also the lusts of

³ See David Baron in his commentary on Zechariah, pp. 378-381.

women, and were guilty of such intolerable uncleanness, that they invented unlawful pleasures of that sort. And thus did they roll themselves up and down the city, as in a brothel-house, and defiled it entirely with their impure actions. Nay, while their faces looked the faces of women, they killed with their right hands; and while their gait was effeminate, they presently attacked men, and became warriors. They drew their swords from under their finely dyed cloaks, and ran everybody through whom they alighted upon. However, Simon waited for such as ran away from John, and was the more bloody of the two; and he who had escaped the tyrant within the wall, was destroyed by the other that lay before the gates. So that all attempts of flying and deserting to the Romans were cut off, if any had a mind to do so."⁴

Eventually Simon gained control of Jerusalem after John of Gischala's men began a sedition. Josephus speaks of the three factions in the city in this way.

"And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other. Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred first-fruits, came against John in their cups. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon."⁵

It should be remembered that Zechariah prophesied of the destruction of these three leaders **"...in one month."** Josephus begins book 6 of his description of the wars of the Jews with this heading: "Containing the interval of about one month from the great extremity to which the Jews were reduced to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus." It was a horrible time that had been predicted in Deuteronomy 28:53-57. The unspeakable way that the people within the wall would treat each other, even to a woman eating her own offspring, is described there. Jeremiah also records the prediction of the eating of one another in the first captivity in Jeremiah 19:9 and Lamentations 4:10. Josephus tells of the ultimate fulfillment of this terrible prophecy when a woman named Mary roasted her own child and ate him.⁶

Throughout this whole time Josephus, who was outside of the city's walls with Titus, continued to beg his people to give up and not be slaughtered by the Romans. It is in this section of the history written by Josephus that Eleazar of Damascus, Simon, son of Giora and John of Gischala died. Actually Simon was taken to Rome for the triumphal procession and there slaughtered.⁷

Woe! Woe! Woe! Why did these terrible things happen instead of those things that Zechariah had prophesied would come after the arrival of the Messiah? The answer to this strange succession of events is found later in the same context. To understand the reason that the Prophet Zechariah gives for this terrible turn of events, one must understand the way that the Prophet unfolds the reason for the ruin of Jerusalem in the following verses. The prophet must be viewed in this chapter as acting out, not his own

⁴ Josephus, Flavius, The Works of Flavius Josephus . . . A History of the Jewish Wars. Transl. William Whiston. Philadelphia, David McKay, Publisher, [n.d.]. p. 789.

⁵ Op. Cit., p. 796.

⁶ Op. Cit., pp. 842-43.

⁷ Op. Cit., pp. 856, 858-59.

actions, but in a very special sense, as the representative of God. This is seen in such expressions which he utters as: "I cut off three shepherds in one month" (v. 8) and "...in order that I might break the covenant which I had cut with all of the people [of Israel]" (v. 10).

Neither Zechariah nor any other prophet made a covenant with the people, nor could they but the Eternal Lord only. He here is speaking the words of the Eternal Lord. Now Zechariah finally gives the reason for Messiah's failure to establish the promised kingdom when he had come riding into Zion on the colt (Zechariah 9:9). Now it appears that as a prophet, he actually is speaking the words of the disciple who would betray the Messiah into the hands of the High Priests who already had determined that they must kill them or their own little corrupt world would be turned upside down.

'Then I said to them, 'If it is satisfactory with you, give to me my wages, and if not, do not.' As a result, they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for my wages. Then the Eternal Lord said to me, 'Throw it unto the potter', that goodly price that they had placed on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and I threw them in the house of the Eternal Lord for the potter" (Zech. 11:12-13).

The good Shepherd of Whom Isaiah had prophesied in Isaiah 40:11 had been betrayed, tried and crucified. Is there any wonder that Zechariah then proceeded to prophesy of that false Messiah who arose 40 years later and demanded the subservience of all those remaining in the land as he began another utterly futile battle with the Romans (Zech. 11:15-17)? Simon was wounded on his right arm and his right eye in precisely the same way that Zechariah describes in verse 17.

It is obvious, then, that Zechariah clearly has described the great battle which could have taken place when Israel's King Messiah rode the colt into Jerusalem. It is obvious that the glories of that kingdom which could have been established are described in Zechariah 10 in a similar way that they had been described centuries before by the Prophet Micah in Micah 4:1-8. It is so sad that Messiah's people still do not recognize that both of these great prophets gave a crucial reason for the delay of the fulfillment of the Eternal's promises concerning the glories that would belong to the Chosen People in Israel's latter days. Like Zechariah, Micah now turns to the rejection of their Messiah as a major event that would take place before the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Indeed, the next event which would take place before the kingdom would be, along with the two kingdom's sins enumerated in Micah 1-3, a major cause for the delay of the long promised Messianic kingdom.

Event # 7. THE SMITING OF THE JUDGE OF ISRAEL UPON THE CHEEK (5:1-2)

Surely the Rabbis who rearranged the chapter division between Micah four and five recognized the danger of this passage to their angry teachings against Jesus. Here alone they refused to follow the normal chapter divisions established centuries ago and found in the translations of Micah. In the separating the first verse from the second verse with the chapter division, the pair of crucial events that still lay ahead of Micah's time appears to have been deliberately obscured to the reader of the Tenach in Hebrew and in

the Jewish translations of Micah. But the adverb that introduces the first verse of Micah five in English clearly shows that the events contained in the last verse of Micah 4 and 5:1 in the Jewish texts (Mic. 5:1-2 in other translations) are part and parcel of a very important event series. That event series would have to occur before the nation of Israel would see their Messiah set up the great kingdom which long ago had been promised to David.

TO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST

Jeremiah 17:5-13

The man who is trusting in man, who makes out of flesh his arm,
Whose heart departs from the LORD, who is trusting not in His Word,
CURSED IS HE!

But he who trusts in the LORD, whose heart is fixed on His Word,
Like a tree by the waters forever he spreads out his roots by the river
FOR BLESSED IS HE!

But Oh, how the heart leads astray! Deceitful and wicked its way!
To turn from the LORD as a fool, to cling to one's wealth as his pool---
HOW FOOLISH IS HE!

A glorious high throne is the place of Him Who gives us His grace.
Should one leave the searcher of hearts or the fountain of waters depart?
HOW FOOLISH IS HE!

This seventh great event which had to precede the fulfillment of the promises concerning the Messianic kingdom is introduced by Micah in the same way as several other of these events by the adverb "now." The Prophet says: "**Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops. He will lay siege against us. They will smite the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek**" (Mic. 5:1). This future event which faced Israel would be unintelligible apart from the obvious relationship of this verse with the context which follows and inescapably is linked with this verse. It is a sad thing that the rabbis of old, recognizing this problem to their rebellious position, divided these verses with a chapter division. The context of the verse that follows is crucial. And since that is true, it is of the utmost importance that the verse be examined and discussed in that light.

FOR OUR TRANSGRESSION

(Isaiah 53:1-5)

Who would have dreamed of that which we heard, this concerning God's Son:
"Born of a Virgin, Man and God!" Or thought that our king must be born?
Who ever dreamed that Galilee would raise One from Bethlehem town?
Capernaum? No! Nor Nazareth, the place where Messiah would be found?
When was the Arm of Jah revealed as He walked on our dusty roads,

Sapling from trunk of Judah's kings, this root grown up from dry clods?

What in that One was there to see of beauty or comeliness rare?
Cause for delight was not in Him nor form like a king for our care.
He was despised by all who saw, despised and forsaken of these;
Man with our pains acquainted well, Who healed all our fearsome disease.
Oh how our sin did blind our eyes that He should be hidden from us!
He was despised, considered not, no great One in whom we should trust.

But, were the truth then known to us, our sickness He carried away.
This One who healed the sick and the dead, bore all our pains on His way.
Hatred, yet joy prevailed within on seeing His kingdom work fail.
All did regard Him stricken there, yes, smitten, afflicted of El.
Scarce could we dream that this was done that He to that cross could be sent.
We did not see the plan of God or know what the purpose He meant.
But He for all our sins was bruised, was smitten of God with our grief.
He bore the sins of everyone there when He prayed on that cross by the thief.

**Event # 8. THE BIRTH OF THEIR JUDGE AND KING
IN BETHLEHEM (5:1 Heb.; 5:2 Engl.)**

The second part of this compound of two great events that are revealed in these chapters containing events that precede the establishment of the Messianic kingdom is as transparent as the preceding verse was obscure. When the wise men arrived at Jerusalem after traveling far from the East, they were asking the question: **"Where is He that has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and we have come to worship Him"** (Matt. 2:2). When Herod sought the answer for that question from the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They responded to him: **'In Bethlehem of Judea, for this was written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, you are not the least among the rulers of Judah because out of you will come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel'** (Matt. 2:4b-7). There was no doubt, at least at that time, concerning several important facts about the meaning of Mic. 5:1 (Heb.; 5:2 in Eng.).

1. The verse positively identified the birthplace of the Messiah as Bethlehem Ephratah, the city from which His human ancestor, David, had come long ago.
2. The verse also speaks of the exaltation of that humble little village since it had been revealed centuries before His human birth that it would be exalted as a result of His birth there.
3. Furthermore the verse looks forward to the One Who would be born there as the One who would become the Ruler in Israel.
4. Then the verse reveals a truth that will be difficult for most of Israel to understand. The indication that Messiah would have human ancestry makes it difficult for Israel to understand the means by which the Eternal had planned to provide redemption for all

mankind. The member of the Godhead Who assumed a Sonship relationship to the Eternal Lord in eternity past (Psalm 2:7) would both be perfect man and perfect God. It was necessary for Messiah to be a perfect human substitute Who would die in the place of and for the sins of every man. Furthermore, He had to be perfect God in order for this great act to be effectual for every man.

This great being, the Messiah, did not have His beginning with His human birth. Rather He is a being that is eternal. For the prophet said long ago: "**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, even though you are small among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you will come forth unto Me the One Who is to become Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting**" (Mic. 5:1 Heb.).

While Micah 5:1 (Heb.) of itself with its prophecy of the birth of Judah's future king does not cast much light upon the meaning of the previous verse, Micah 4:14 (in Hebrew, 5:1 in English), that which immediately follows in verses three and four suddenly gives that verse great significance and relevance. "**Therefore He will give them up until the time that she who is in travail has brought forth. Then He will stand and feed [his flock, Israel] in the strength of the Eternal Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Eternal Lord His God...**" (Mic. 5:2-3a Heb.). The word "**Therefore**" significantly introduces verse this statement. It is the clue that there is a very important link between verses one and two, since there is nothing in verse two which could by itself be antecedent to this word which says that the basis for Messiah's giving the people of Israel up lies in the preceding context. That leaves only verse one containing the factor which causes Messiah to give His people up.

What is it that is there in that verse which possibly could provide the cause for the "**Therefore**" which leads to the exile of Israel which is referred to in verse three? The answer can only lie in the last clause of Micah 4:14 in the Hebrew text (5:1 in the English text). "**They will smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.**" Suddenly the connection between the twofold pair of events, which lay far in the future for the nation of Israel in the times of Micah, now becomes obvious. The reference of verse one can only be to the rejection by Israel of the One Who would be born in Bethlehem. And that is precisely the reason given in Zechariah 11 for the delay of the promises concerning the establishment of Israel's glorious kingdom. That One Who would be slapped on the cheek by Israel, Who would have been born in Bethlehem, would have a direct relationship to the Eternal Lord to Whom He would come. He could only be perfect God and perfect man to fulfill the language of the prophecy. For Him to be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, He must be perfect man. For Him to have come forth "**...from of old, from everlasting,**" He must be perfect God. And this is the Judge of Israel Who, when He came to shepherd Israel, would be rejected by those whom He came to deliver.

SILVER ON THE TEMPLE FLOOR

1. FROM ZECHARIAH'S HAND (Zech. 11:1-17; 9:9-17)

A stream of rolling silver bells cascades upon the limestone blocks,
Bright shekels on the pure white temple floor. Its ringing clangor shatters holy calm.
The white-robed priests aghast are frozen, chilled with fear to hear the clamor loud.
The prophet's hand is high once more. The son of Iddo flings with might
The thirty silver pieces bright against the hallowed floor.
"Your doors of woods of Lebanon throw wide--throw open wide!
Howl, cedar, fir and oak within! The fire shall come and burn your beams!
Howl loudly! Oaks of Baashan! Howl for fire shall wrap its flickering tongue
Around your carvings, posts and beams. A fire shall climb your lovely veil.
Your roof shall crash in fiery sparks. Your golden treasures, golden streams
Will run, cascading to the floor to slip between the limestone blocks
And thus be seen no more!" Again the prophet's hand is filled
Within the hairy shepherd's bag that dangles at his belted waist.
Once more the coins are flung with tears. The prophet sweeps his shepherd's staff
Above the coins that roll upon the floor, then smashes crook with fearful force
Among the gleaming shekel horde. He turns unto the spellbound priests
Whose trembling robes show growing wrath and cries: "Here is my price!
Now cast these thirty silver coins unto the potter's muddy field!"
He throws the broken staff and turns. "Now lead unto the slaughter house
My flock, My wayward, wicked flock. To ruin they go, to ruin and death!
No longer will I hear their cry nor from their foes deliver them!"

The tears now flow upon his face. The prophet speaks but speaks as God.
He hears prophetic on his ears a donkey's feet upon a street
That joins both Kedron, Olive's ridge. He hears the happy children's cries,
The teeming crowds on temple's steps: "Hosanna! Save us now, Oh, Lord!"
He hears, but knows the bitter truth. "How oft would I have gathered you,
Jerusalem, my wayward flock, but you would not; but you would not.
Ah, woe! Three shepherds in one month will die with you, will fall to wrath!"

Again the prophet plays his part. Another staff is in his hand.
He draws a sword within the court! One swinging slice, the staff is split;
Another chops the staff in two. "So Israel and Judah now are split apart---
No brotherhood." The prophet bows with sobbing groans.
Again he takes a shepherd's tools and speaks for God in woeful pain
Of that which yet must fall on them beyond the dreadful Roman heel
Which soon would crush Jerusalem. "You'll kill the Shepherd that I send,
Your Shepherd King Who rides the colt, the just, the lowly Savior-King!
Now, little shattered, scattered flock, My little tattered, faithless flock
That will not bow before that King and those whom He will send to you,

Another shepherd will I give, a foolish shepherd for the land,
A son of darkness, not of light. No tender, loving shepherd this
To gently carry of His flock the poor and helpless little lambs.
This shepherd harsh will beat My sheep, will lead to judgment once again.
Behold what punishment is his! My sword will blind his willful eye
And wither helpless his right arm. Then you who know will understand."
The prophet slumps upon the floor. The weight of judgment presses down,
The burden of poor Israel. He sits among the silver horde
His hand had flung upon the floor and weeps. He sits and waits the word
That God would one day lift the load, would hear the scattered of the flock
Which He would send both far and wide. that message later comes.

The white-robed priests in white-faced fear stand rooted by the word they heard.
He asks: "Oh Lord, will Zion be restored? Will not Messiah keep His word?
Will He not come who rode the colt and break the bow from sea to sea?"
"**Hatikvah** ! He will come and save poor Israel by His own blood
Of covenant which they have shed! You prisoners! Come forth to Him!
Come out to Him! Turn from the pit! Cry out and call: 'He will return
And save Jerusalem!'" The prophet rises from the floor.
He leaves the shattered shepherd staves, the thirty shekels that betrayed
The king who yet would come to die. The burden of millennia
Now rests upon his weary back. He droops, then views with vision's eye
Jerusalem in siege again, His people weeping, heard of God,
Delivered! Weeping yet again! Once more a siege and bloody war!
They look for Him Whom they of old had pierced. They stand and look aloft for joy!
The Olive Mount is rent in two! The mountains tremble at His face!
He comes to free and save poor Israel who waited long before they called
For Him to come and save His own!

2. FROM JUDAS' HAND (Acts 1:16-20; Psa. 69:22-28; Psa. 109:1-20)

Once more the hallowed halls of sacred grounds in temple fairly rang.
The pealing silver clang of thirty coins from traitor's hand were flung.
Cascading down, they leaped in brilliant song that shattered age-long calm,
A loud, didactic psalm, accented then by bitter tears of pain.
Thrice raised the blood-stained hand the silver horde that once had charmed.
Thrice downward swept the arm till thirty peals like silver bells loud chimed,
A silver fall on stone that echoed long, that clamored, beating strong
For attention to a wrong against a soul more pure than sacred coin.
The beat of ringing coins died out. A single piece transfixes all.
Its dying spiral nears his feet. A welt of tortured, anguished sound
Leaps from tormented mind and chest. The dying coin soon rests in falling tears
That from his eyes now streamed. The wretched crying echoes through

Herodian halls of fair-carved stone. The figure stoops alone in shame
 And shrinks from once-loved shining glint. His bitter cries transfix the priests.
 "Betraying innocence I sinned! For these alone, alone I sinned!
 A spotless One by me condemned!" He turned with anguished, steps to death.
 None gathers silver wealth 'till finally one in fear stacks them in Chief Priest's hands.
 "And what to us? See you to that!" Contemptuous words had burned!
 "This sacred coin with blood is stained; for treasure chest of Holy Place not fit!"
 Against the darkening evening sky by Zion's hill a hanging figure turned.
 Close by the fire of potters burned; with flickering light the traitor's form outlined.
 The tortured rope now gave and broke. To shattered end a silent body plunged!
Aceldama, the field of blood, was bought with silver stained by righteous blood.

That the Messiah was to be the Judge of Israel is obvious from the way that the Eternal Lord introduces Him in Isaiah 42. He says of Him: (2) **"He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out neither raise His voice nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.** (3) **He will not break a bruised reed, neither will he snuff out a smoking flax lamp wick. He will bring forth justice according to truth.** (4) **He will not fail nor will He become discouraged until He has established justice in the earth and the isles will wait for His law"** (Isa. 42:2-4). Isaiah 11 already has spoken of the offspring of King David's father, Jesse, and of the remarkable rule that this Judge would come to have.

Undoubtedly many students of the Holy Scriptures have failed to grasp the fearful event series that is prophesied in Micah 5:1-3 in the English text. In Micah's presentation the order of the first two events is reversed. But the two events are arranged in the order in which they would occur elsewhere in the Tenach. I have just referred to Isaiah 42 and the clear message that the Servant of the Eternal Lord, the Messiah, would be the Judge of the whole earth. The Lord Who says of Him, **"He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles"** and **"He will bring forth justice according to truth"** (Isa. 42:1, 3) also says this to Him: **"I, the Eternal Lord, will call You in righteousness and I will hold Your hand. I will keep You and will give You to be a covenant of the people [Israel], as a light unto the Gentiles"** (Isa. 42:6). It is the Messiah Himself Who in Isaiah's prophecy addresses the Gentiles in Isaiah 49 to tell them of a sad turn of events in His relationship to the covenant people and of the benefit that now would come to the Gentiles. He speaks of the preparation of Him by the Eternal through His birth and the years of maturing before He assumed the role as the ideal Israelite through Whom glory would come to the Lord (Isaiah 49:1-4). But He also speaks of the responsibility that He as the Lord's Servant had been given of regathering the nation of Israel. **"And now the Eternal Lord says, the One Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him with the result that Israel would be regathered to Him..."** (Isa. 49:4).

These words make it positively clear that the attempt of the Rabbis of Israel to explain away the Servant of the Eternal LORD in most of Isaiah 42-53 as only a reference to the nation of Israel misses the truth. Previous contexts do indeed refer to

the nation of Israel as the servant of the Lord. However, those contexts also make it clear that this servant had failed the Eternal in the responsibilities given to the nation of Israel in their service as the Lord's servant. As a result of the failure of the nation of Israel to serve faithfully as the servant of the Eternal Lord, they would be replaced by Messiah the Servant. This truth strongly is developed in Isaiah 42. He alone could fulfill the promise of Isaiah 42:6 above. After all, the nation of Israel could not possibly become "...a covenant to the people [Israel] and a light to the Gentiles." The words of Isaiah 42:18-24 that speak of the failing servant could only be applied to the nation of Israel. (18) **"Hear, you deaf people and look, you blind people in order that you may come to see. (19) Who is blind but My servant or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as perfect, even blind as the servant of the Eternal Lord (20) who is seeing many things but you do not observe, opening the ears, but he does not hear. (21) The Eternal Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. He will exalt the law and He will make it honorable. (22) But this [the servant mentioned above] is a people that is robbed and that is plundered. All of them are snared in holes and they are hidden away in prison houses. They are for a prey but no one delivers; they are for a plunder, but no one says: 'Restore!' (23) Who among you will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear for the time to come? (24) Who gave Jacob for plunder and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the Eternal Lord, He against Whom we have sinned?"** (Isa. 42:18-24a).

This prophecy is set in a context that is prophesying Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity at a day far in the future. As so often is true in Old Testament prophecy, the event that now is in the past for us is only the local relevance of the prophetic utterance. But the situation against which the prophet speaks in his own day has been designed by the Divine Author also to be relevant to a nearly identical scene far in the future. That will be an event that the human author did not really understand. The Apostle Peter gives a remarkable explanation of this very phenomenon. He says that the writers of the Old Testament did not really understand the distant relevance of their prophetic ministry. He speaks of their inability to understand truths about Messiah and about the salvation that Messiah had brought. **"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and they have searched diligently. They prophesied about the grace [which would come] unto you, searching what, or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ [the Messiah] who was in them did indicate, when He testified beforehand about the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which would follow. Unto whom [unto these Old Testament prophets] it was revealed that they did not minister these things unto themselves which now are reported unto you by those who have preached the gospel unto but unto us"** (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Israel's failure to be a witness to the Nations concerning the greatness of the God Who ransomed them from Babylon (Isaiah 48) was the historical event which brought about Israel's replacement as the Lord's servant. This replacement was by the Lord's greater Servant, the Messiah. He was given the task of bringing God's wayward people back to Him.

The failure of the Messiah to accomplish His own task when He came to regather the nation of Israel is obvious in Isaiah 49:5-6.

Inescapably the meaning of these verses is that Israel had refused to be regathered by the Messiah and that Messiah now was given a far more significant ministry of providing salvation to the ends of the earth. And now the Eternal Lord speaks. He is the One Who formed the Messiah from the womb to be His Servant. Messiah's initial task given to Him by the Eternal Lord was the responsibility of bringing Jacob back to Him. The prophet Isaiah plainly is led to reveal that, as the result of their resistance to Him, Israel would fail to be regathered by Him when He would seek to regather them. Through the words of the prophet the Father says to the Messiah: **"It was a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel. I also will give you to be a light to the Gentiles in order that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth"** (Isa. 49:6).

Now Isaiah by no means is alone in presenting the fact that the Messiah would be rejected in His ministry of regathering the nation of Israel. Regrettably, there are many in the Church who make the dreadful mistake of concluding that, because of Israel's rejection of their King, the Eternal Lord has no more future for the people of Israel as a nation. They thoughtlessly forget that the Gentiles also were involved in His rejection and crucifixion. And in neglecting that fact, they ignore the consequences of their concluding that the covenant promises of the Eternal to the nation Israel were set aside by their rejection of the Messiah. If that indeed were true, which it is not, then no less would be true for the Gentiles. The great event that followed the crucifixion and the promises concerning the future of Israel found in the New Testament testify that that this absolutely is not so. Even though more than 1,900 years have passed since they cried, **"We have no king but Caesar!"** (John 19:15), the One Who remains faithful to His word will keep those great covenant promises to Israel yet in the future.

Isaiah 49 and numerous other great chapters in the Tenach reveal that the mistakes of some churchmen and those that the individual Israelite so often makes today about the promises of the Eternal are false. Indeed, when thoughtfully and prayerfully examined, Isaiah 49 absolutely devastates the misguided concept that God forever has set aside the nation of Israel. It totally denies the idea that He has taken His covenant promises from the nation of Israel and has given their blessings (ignoring their curses) to the Church because of their rejection of Christ. Many actually go so far as to say that the Church today is Israel. But the Eternal Lord absolutely denies this heretical, unbiblical doctrine. After the Eternal Lord has set aside the regathering of Israel as a light thing and after Messiah's recommissioning to be a light for the Gentiles, He makes it this statement. **"This is what the Eternal Lord says, the One Who will be redeeming Israel, His Holy One, to the One who will be despised of soul, to the One despised by the nation, to a Servant of rulers, `Kings will see [You] and they will arise. Even princes [will see You] and they will prostrate themselves because of the Eternal Lord who is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, for He has chosen You.'** **This is what the Eternal Lord says: `In an acceptable time I will hear You. In a day of salvation I will help You. The reason is that I will snatch You away [from your**

enemies] and I will give You to be a covenant of the people, to raise up the land [Eretz Israel]. You will cause the desolate inheritances to be inherited [again], saying to the prisoners: `Go forth,' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They will feed in the ways. Their pasture will be in all of the smooth heights" (Isa. 49:7-9).

It must be recognized that the Eternal promised that, in a yet future, acceptable time to Him, that the Eternal Lord would give the Messiah to be a covenant for the people Israel. That is a promise that He would keep His word just as He had promised in Isaiah 42. There He made specific promises that He would bring the people of Israel back to their own land from afar. These promises are strengthened in Isaiah 49:10-13. Isaiah anticipates the sad state of the people who, by that time, would have concluded that the promises of the Eternal were all just a myth and old mens' traditions. That anticipation is found in these words. "**But Zion will say, `The Eternal Lord has forsaken me and my Master has forsaken me'"** (Isa. 49:14).

That is precisely the attitude that has permeated so much of Judaism as they have turned them to secular humanism and its perversions. Strongly the Eternal denies that He has forgotten Israel. Absolutely He denies that the Jew has been set aside because of Israel's terrible sins of the past. "**Could a nursing mother forget her child and no longer have compassion on the son from her womb? Surely! They can forget, but I will not forget you!"** (Isaiah 49:15). Then Messiah speaks of the scars on His hands that have been a continual reminder of the terrible trauma through which He went on their behalf. "**See, I have you inscribed upon the palms of My hands. Your walls continually are before Me"** (Isa. 49:16).

How sad have been the centuries in which God's chosen people of old as they have fled through the labyrinthine passageways of time from the One Who longed to regather them into the great covenant promises of old! How far they have wandered from the beckoning hands that are marred with the very means of their redemption!

THE FLIGHT OF FEAR

(Psalm 42; Psalm 1)

Ah, for a moment's quiet peace beneath that cool and still retreat,
Ein Gedi's hidden waterfall! My heart is pounding wild with fear.
My flanks are wet and white with foam. My panting tongue is dry as dust.
Along the rocky limestone ridge, down through the fertile coastal plain
My foes have hard pursued like hounds behind a weary stag.
I tremble so to hear them cry. I pant for water brooks, alone.

*But why despair, my troubled child? Why listen to your mocking foe?
Is he who counsels flight your friend, Who scorns to rest in saving grace?
Remember well God's help of old. has He who keeps you failed before?
Remember Jordan long ago and how He stayed the flooding stream.
Now stand and rest. Now fly no more and never let your faith grow dim.*

I pause beneath a tree and gasp. I long for just one quenching drink.
Behind me comes the yelping pack. Before me stretches desert waste.
Above, rich boughs of verdant leaves with fruit abounding, hanging there.
Where shall I flee? How shall I go? These greening shrubs along the course
Of wandering streams beneath the sand provide a way that I must run.
My foes! In terror I must run!

*You could have scorned these driving fears that pound your heart and drive you on.
You could have stood, secure and strong and, like the tree by which you stand,
Thrust deep your roots to drink, transplanted here between two streams.
But you refuse to rest in me! Then run, my child, and thirst--and cry,
So driven as the weary hind until you fall into my arms. Then run!*

After Isaiah 53 has described that event when the Eternal Lord made Messiah an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10), He describes how Messiah will deal with Israel after His resurrection. The observant reader of Isaiah 64:1-66:8 will display Isaiah prophesying Messiah's appeal to the nation of Israel and to all who would come unto Him. In this passage Messiah is seen calling Israel to Himself to receive the righteousness that available from Himself alone. **"This is the inheritance of the servants of the Eternal Lord for their righteousness is from Me, says the Eternal Lord"** (Isa. 54:17b). In spite of what had happened in His rejection, Messiah is seen inviting them to receive the benefits of that which He had just accomplished for them. (1) **"Sing, barren one who did not bear! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who did not suffer pain [the pain that He suffered for them], because the offspring of the desolate one [Israel while they were away from the Lord and out of fellowship with Him] will be more than the children of the married wife [Israel in their former estate when they had been faithful to the Lord],'** says the Eternal Lord. ... (4) **Do not be afraid for you will not become ashamed. Indeed, you will not be confused because you will not come to be full of shame because you will come to forget the pale faced shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will not remember any longer.** (5) **The reason is that Your Maker will be your husband. The Eternal Lord of Armies is His name and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He will come to be called the God of the entire earth.** ... (8b) **With everlasting mercy I will show compassion on you'** says the Eternal Lord, your Redeemer. ... (14) **You will be established in righteousness. You will be far off from oppression because you will not come to be afraid. You will be far off from ruin because it will not come to be near to you.** (15) **If a people should gather [against you] its end will be from Me. Whoever will gather against you will come to fall on account of you"** (Isaiah 54:1, 4-5, 8b, 14-15).

The Eternal Lord describes how the post-resurrection invitation of the Messiah would be extended even to the Gentiles, offering all free bread and free wine, making it possible for Gentiles also to be included in Israel's worship service in their temple.

55:1) **"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come for water, and the one who has no money [is invited:] Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money without any price.... (3) Incline your ears and come to Me. Listen and your souls will come to live, for I am determined to make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.... [i.e., There is nothing that you can provide to buy or to deserve my salvation! It is free]! (5) Behold, you will call a foreign nation which you do not know, even a foreign nation that did not know you will run to you because of the Eternal Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He will wonderfully beautify you. (6) Seek the Eternal Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. (7) Let the wicked one forsake his way and the iniquitous man his thoughts, and let them begin to turn to the Eternal Lord for He will have compassion upon him, and to our God for He will cause the multiplying of your pardons.... (12) The reason is that you [the 'aliah] will go out with joy and in peace you will come to be led forth. The mountains and the hills will break forth before you into singing, and the trees of the field will begin to clap their hands.... (56:3) Neither let the offspring of the stranger who has joined himself to the Eternal Lord speak, saying, 'The Eternal Lord most certainly will separate me from His people.'... (6) The offspring of the foreigners, who join themselves unto the Eternal Lord to minister to Him and to love the name of the Eternal Lord, even to be His servants, everyone who continually is keeping the Sabbath from profaning it and who is continually holding fast to My covenant, (7) surely I will bring them to My holy mountain, and I will make them exceedingly joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar, for My house will come to be called 'a house of prayer for all of the peoples'"(Isaiah 55:1, 3, 5-7, 12, 56:3a, 6-7).**

Oh how glorious were these promises and offers that the prophet Isaiah prophetically heard the Messiah make to the nation of Israel after Messiah's resurrection from the dead! But at that very point, Isaiah is led to allow Messiah's tears to flow with the ink of his pen as the fact bursts forth that once again Israel would reject their Messiah after His resurrection and after this post-resurrection offer of His redemption and regathering of the nation. This offer again was repeated by the Apostles during the early years after Messiah's resurrection. This offer to Israel of the establishment of the kingdom is recorded in the book of Acts in the New Testament in Peter's words in Acts 3. (19) **"Therefore repent [Oh Israel] and turn back so that your sins may be wiped away and so that the times of refreshing may come from the face of the Lord, (20) and he may send the Messiah appointed for you, even Jesus, (21) Whom it is necessary for heaven to receive until the times of the restoration of all of the things of which God spoke through the mouths of all of the holy prophets from earliest times"** (Acts 3:19-21).

At the turn of a verse Messiah, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, begins to berate the leaders of Israel who are shepherds without understanding. They have refused that which Messiah has offered to them. With the announcement of that coming rejection there begins an awful section which speaks of Israel's judgment during this present time. In that he greatly expands the words of the Prophet Micah, his contemporary, who has

said: "Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor will have given birth" (Micah 5:3a). Isaiah seems to weep with anguish as he cries out: (9) "Every beast of the field, come to devour! Yes, come every beast of the forest. (10) His [Israel's] watchmen all are blind. They are without knowledge! They are all dumb dogs. They cannot bark, ravening, lying down, loving to sleep. (11) Yes, the dogs are fierce. They do not know when they are satisfied for they are shepherds who do not know understanding by experience. All of them turn to their own ways, each one to his unjust gain, every one of them. (12) [They say]: "All of you come! I will bring wine and let us fill ourselves with strong drink because the day, tomorrow, will be just like this one and it will be even more abundant" (Isa. 56:9-12).

How sad! So often the religious leaders of Israel are rebuked in the Tenach, the Old Testament, for their abuse and misleading of the flock of Israel! Ezekiel 34:1-10 summarizes the centuries of their failure to lead the flock of Israel in right ways and speaks sorely of their coming judgment. (1) "Then the word of the Eternal Lord came to me saying: (2) 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, to the shepherds: This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Shouldn't the shepherds be feeding the sheep? (3) You have eaten the fat and you have clothed yourselves with the wool. You have sacrificed the fatlings, but you have not fed the sheep. (4) You have not strengthened the weak ones, and you have not healed the sick one. Neither have you bound up the crippled one nor have you brought back the ewe that has strayed nor have you looked for the ewe that was perishing. Instead you have ruled over them with force and with harshness. (5) As a result they came to be scattered because there was no shepherd, and they came to be for food for every beast of the field and they came to be scattered. (6) My flock proceeded to wander through all of the mountains and upon every high hill, yes my flock scattered upon the face of all of the earth, yet there was no one searching or carefully seeking [for them]. (7) Therefore, hear the word of the of the Eternal Lord, you shepherds: (8) As I live, declares the Lord, the Eternal Lord, most assuredly because of my flock's becoming a prey and my flock came to be for food for every living creature of the field because there was no shepherd, and because the shepherds have not sought for my sheep but the shepherds habitually have fed themselves and they did not feed my sheep, (9) Therefore, you shepherds, listen to the word of the Eternal Lord. (10) This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord, says: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock from their hands. Surely I will cause them to cease from feeding a flock, and the shepherds will not feed them anymore, for I will deliver My sheep out of their mouths so that they will not be food for them" (Ezek. 34:1-10).

These foolish shepherds led the people of Israel in the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah. Then they misled them again in the rejection of the message of the Apostles concerning the resurrected and ascended Messiah. Is there any wonder then that Micah now is used to announce the ninth awful trial that Israel must face before the glorious promises of the kingdom that are found in Micah 4:1-9 will be fulfilled? This

ninth sad cup of woe is a trial through which the poor, exiled nation of Israel would have to pass before those wonderful last days of Israel when their kingdom at last would be given to them.

**Event # 9. MESSIAH'S GIVING UP OF ISRAEL DURING
THE TERRIBLE TIME OF TRAVAIL (5:3a)**

Already it has been necessary to refer to the amazing revelation concerning this sad event which, along with the two preceding events, still was far in the future for the nation of Israel from the time of Micah. In this portion of the revelation, utterly hidden to the prophet, but nonetheless placed there by the Divine Author for those in much later days, the agonizing centuries that include the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the charade of the false Messiah, Simon bar Kochba and the long, worldwide exile of God's chosen people are prophesied. That it is a prophecy that directly grows out of the two preceding events is shown by the first word of Micah 5:3, "**Therefore.**" Undoubtedly the words that follow in the verse have been covered with tears by the few who have understood their dreadful import. '**Therefore He will give them up until that time when she who will be in labor will have given birth....**' How swiftly the prophet's words encompass almost 2,000 years! And the word "**therefore**" unquestionably links two crucial verses that have been carefully separated in the Hebrew text and in all of the translations of Micah by Jewish scholars. The word "**therefore**" demands an explanation for its presence in verse 3 (v. 2 in Hebrew). There is nothing whatsoever in the previous verse that is cause for the Eternal Lord to give Israel up until some future, appointed time. That verse describes the glory that would come to Bethlehem Judah because that little town would be the birthplace of the One Whose existence would not begin with His birth. This would be One from Eternity! And He would become the ruler of the little nation of Israel. "**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though being little among the thousands of Judah, out of you will come forth One to Me to be ruler in Israel, but His goings forth [have been] from old, even from ancient days**" (Mic. 5:2; 5:1 in Heb). It is obvious that the word "**therefore**" inescapably links Micah 5:1-2 (5 4:14 and 5:1 in Heb.). Only in that verse does one find the cause for the terrible sentence of giving up of the nation of Israel for some extended time after the birth of the One who was to become the ruler in Israel. That text describes the day when the leaders of the people would reject Israel's Judge, the One Who was to be born in Bethlehem. "**Now you will assemble yourself in troops, oh daughter of troops. He [Israel's Judge] will lay a siege against us. [But] They will strike the Judge of Israel upon the cheek with the sceptre**" (Mic. 5:1).

Is this rejection of the Messiah by the leaders of the nation of Israel the subject of any other Old Testament prophecies? Oh yes! Psalm 2:1-3 is shown by Acts 4:25-28 to describe the rejection of their Messiah by Israel and by leaders of the pagans. It describes the attitude of the rebels in their revolt in this way: "**Why are the Gentiles in a turmoil? And why are the peoples [the nation of Israel] plotting a vain thing?**" It summarizes the activities of these rebels in their revolt as they planned to overthrow the

Messiah in this way: (2) **"The kings of the land position themselves and the rulers sit in conclave together against the Eternal Lord and against His Messiah...."** That which the leaders of Israel and the political leaders established by Rome were plotting is made clear in the next verse. (3) **"Let us determine to tear apart their bands and let us determine to throw their cords away from us."** The Eternal Lord's scorn at those who thought that they could thwart the eternal plan that had been decreed is obvious when verses four through six are correctly translated and properly related to verses 7-9. (4) **"The One who is sitting in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will proceed to have them in derision. (5) Then He will proceed to speak to them in His wrath and He will terrify them in His burning anger."** In verse six the Eternal Lord states His absolute determination to fulfill the promises concerning Messiah's rule from Mount Zion even though His death was intended to prevent that from happening. (6) **"Yet will I establish My King [Messiah--cf. V. 2] upon Zion, the mount of My holiness."** And a careful study of verses 7-9 will show that the eternal decree, here quoted by the Messiah Himself, gave promise to the One Who assumed the relationship as Son, subordinate to the Father, in order to accomplish all that was necessary in time on earth. That promise assured the Messiah that He yet would rule all nations as His inheritance to the ends of the earth. That decree is the basis for the irrevocable assurance that, one day yet in the future, Messiah would return to fulfill the decree's promises and the announcements of many Old Testament prophets concerning that earthly kingdom that will be ruled from the land of Israel.

Zechariah 11 is another extended passage that anticipates the rejection of the Messiah, the slapping of the Judge upon the cheek by the nation of Israel. It includes a detailed description of the destruction of the temple of Herod (Zech. 11:1-3). Apparently seeking to hide the obvious relationship of the destruction of that temple, the third temple, to the description of the rejection and sale of the Messiah for 30 pieces of silver, several of Israel's interpreters in the Talmud have attempted to relate this described destruction to the Second Temple and the exile of Israel's peoples. This was the temple that was built after the return in 539 B.C. from Babylon in the days of Zerubabel (See Ezra and Nehemiah). Several things in the chapter render that interpretation impossible. For example, the reference (11:8) to the cutting off of three shepherds, three leaders of Israel in one month was fulfilled when Simon, son of Giora, John of Gischala and Eleazar were killed in one way or another when the Roman prince, Titus, finally captured Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Josephus has a chapter describing this, which is entitled, "The events of which took place in the period of about one month." The 30 pieces of silver (11:12-13) unquestionably anticipates the betrayal by Judas. The later giving of the people remaining in Israel into the hands of a foolish shepherd and his demise in 135 A.D. (11:15-17) is perfectly fulfilled in the role played by the false messiah, Simon bar Kochba.

Isaiah 53:1-12, though sadly misunderstood by Israel, looked forward to the day that the rejected Messiah would give His own life as a man for the sins of the world. But the giving up of Israel during this present terrible time of travail and that nation's final restoral as described by Isaiah is even less understood. Messiah's failure to fulfil His

initial commission (Isa. 42:6) of regathering rebellious Israel is the theme of Isaiah 49. His inability to regather the nation occupies verses 1-4. His re-commission after Israel's refusal to be regathered to minister as a light of the nations occupies verses 5-6. (5) **"And now, says the Eternal Lord Who formed me from the womb [note that He obviously was to come and be born as a human.] to be His servant to bring Jacob back to Him, though Israel is not gathered, yet will I be honorable in the eyes of the Eternal Lord for My God will be My strength, (6) Yes, He has said, 'Your being a servant unto Me to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel is too light a thing. I also will give You for a light of the Gentiles in order to be my salvation unto the end of the earth'"** (Isa. 49:5-6).

But the covenant theologian who assumes that Israel's rejection of their Messiah caused them to lose all of the promises concerning the kingdom to which they were to be regathered ignores the import of the verses that follow. These make it clear that the Gentiles, in entering the Church, have not appropriated all of the promises once given to the nation of Israel. Far from that. Indeed Isaiah 49:7-26 makes it very plain, when it is not translated in a way that presumes to support the amillennial argument, that Israel nonetheless will have her promised future **"...in an acceptable time"** (Isa. 49:8) that will, of course, be determined by the Lord Himself.

The agony through which those who now for centuries have been in *hagalut* is incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it. However, it is a forgotten truth that many true Gentile believers, like the Anabaptists, also have suffered the pit of fire, burning at the stake and other terrible persecutions. This was at the hands of those who turned the true faith in the Messiah into a cruel political institution which demanded absolute subservience to its deviant traditions. We Gentile believers who follow in the bloody trail of our persecuted spiritual ancestors certainly should be able to understand the agony which misguided, political churches have brought to the Chosen People. Even though those Catholic and so called "Covenant" evangelicals never have understood the relevance to themselves of the words of *Yeshua* in the upper room with His disciples, certainly we should. He said: **"Oh you foolish ones and slow of heart to place your faith upon all that the prophets have spoken!"** (Luke 24:26). How sad it is that the words have become applicable to the Chosen People of the Eternal Lord as well as to the Church! But *baruch hashem*, **"blessed be the Name,"** the sad list of trials through which Micah says that the nation of Israel must pass before their Messiah comes to them will end. Indeed, Micah also prophesies that, in the last days of Israel, Messiah will indeed come to them and it is He Who will rescue them!

In Luke 24:26-27 *Yeshua Hamashiach*, Jesus the Messiah, was speaking of the fact that all of the Tenach from Moses, the Prophets, and indeed all of the Scriptures spoke of Himself. (26) **"Isn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory? (27) And beginning from Moses and from all of the Prophets He explained to them in all of the Scriptures those things concerning Himself"** (Luke 24:26-27). But it also is true that other prophets besides Micah spoke of the dreadful times that Israel would suffer because of their slapping their Judge upon the cheek. As we have seen, the prophet Isaiah is the primary contributor on this sad subject. His initial commission by

the Eternal had been clear in Isaiah 42:6. (6) "I, the Eternal Lord, have called You in righteousness and I will hold onto Your hand. I will keep You and I will give You to be a covenant to the peoples and as a light to the Gentiles, in order that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. But the Eternal Lord assures the Messiah that His work on behalf of the nation of Israel, to which He had been commissioned earlier, nevertheless would be completed one day in the future. (7) This is what the Eternal Lord says, the Redeemer of Israel, even His Holy One, to One who will be greatly despised and abhorred by the nations; the Servant of rulers, 'Kings will see and will arise; princes also, and they will prostrate themselves because of the Eternal Lord Who is faithful, because of the Holy One of Israel, Who has chosen You.' (8) This is what the Eternal Lord says: 'In an acceptable time I will answer You. I will keep You and I will give you to be a covenant to the peoples [of Israel] in order to establish the land [of Israel, their promised possession], to reestablish the desolate heritages [once distributed to each of the twelve tribes], (9) saying to the prisoners, 'Come forth,' even to those who are in darkness, 'Appear!' They will feed along the ways. Their pastures will be on all of the bare heights. (10) They will not hunger or thirst, neither will scorching wind or sun smite them for He Who has pity on them will lead them, and He will guide them by springs of water, [I have called you] to open blind eyes, to cause prisoners to come forth out from the prison, even those who are sitting in darkness, out of the prison house." (11) Then I will make all of My mountains to be a way, and My highways will be raised up. (12) "See, these will come from far off, and lo, these will come from the north and from the west, and these will come from the land of Sinim [China?]. (13) Oh you heavens, sing for joy, and oh earth, exult! Break forth into singing, you mountains! The reason is that the Eternal Lord will comfort His people and He will have compassion on His afflicted ones." (14) But Zion will have said, 'The Eternal Lord has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me.' (15) Can a woman forget her child that sucks with the result that she will not have any compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, even these may forget, but I will never forget you. (16) Look! I have you engraved on the palms of My [nail scarred] hands. Your walls are continually before Me. (17) Your children will hasten. Your destroyers and those who will have made you waste will go forth out of you. (18) Lift up your eyes all around you and see. These all gather and they will come to you. As I live, says the Eternal Lord, you will put all of them on like a garment. You will bind them on in the way that a bride does. (19) Surely your wasted and your desolate places and your land that has been devastated---surely now will become to narrow for all of your inhabitants, and those that swallowed you up will be far off.

Surely this wonderful passage that promises all that Messiah would do for the Gentiles in this church age and for the returning exiles of the nation of Israel in the great kingdom age is one of the most sorely damaged by those who have chosen to translate verbs in a very clear future context as if they were in a past tense. That has obscured the clarity of the great promises of the restoration of the nation of Israel in the future. But the work of translators also has obscured the actual flow of the events

that brought about this present time of the setting aside of the nation of Israel from the Eternal Lord's blessings. After the nation of Israel had refused to be regathered by Him, that commission first called Messiah to gather the peoples of Israel, given in Isaiah 42:5-7 and then become a light of the nations or Gentiles was reversed. (5) **"This is that which God, the Eternal Lord says, the One Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread the earth forth and everything that comes out of it, Who gives breath to the peoples that are upon it, (6) I am the Eternal Lord. I have called You [the Messiah] in righteousness. I have taken You by the hand and I have kept You. I have given you to be a covenant to the peoples [Israel] and to be a light for the Gentiles; to open the eyes of those who are blind and to bring the prisoners out from the dungeon, from the prison those who are sitting in darkness."** Note that originally the commission placed the completing of the covenant work with Israel before the bringing of the light to the Gentiles. But that order has been reversed because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah when He first approached them in His earthly ministry.

The prophet Isaiah later makes it clear to those who do not have a veil of darkness over their eyes (2 Corinthians 3:13-16) that it is only after Messiah's ministry to the Gentiles that the great covenant promises to Israel would be fulfilled. But this painful judgment for the slapping of their Judge upon the cheek is not a dead end street. There is a bright light yet far off for those who read Micah 5:3-4 thoughtfully. The verse does not end with the statement, **"Therefore He will give them up! "** as the covenant theologian and the Catholic would read the verse. It actually displays the wonderful light at the end of the tunnel for the nation of Israel by completing that sad announcement in this way. (3) **"Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor will have given birth. Then the remnant of His brothers will return to the children of Israel, (4) and He will stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Eternal Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Eternal Lord His God"** (Mic. 5:2-3 Heb., 5:3-4 Engl.).

THE GRAVES NEAR OLIVE'S HILL

The limestone crypts within the hill near Olive's ridge are cool and still within.
The stone that sealed the ancient door is gone. The early morning's light
Now filters through the trees and silhouettes each crooked limb.
A basin carved into the living stone beside the door awaits the seldom visitor.
No slender stream of cleansing flow now courses down the stone
For those who visit here today. A lizard bobs upon the rim,
Awaiting breakfast served on wing. The Seventy who ruled the land
By Jewish law are also gone from here. Each slender crypt
Into which each was slipped before the end was sealed
Lies empty, still and cold. It has been so from days of old
since Roman plunderers had spoiled their land and scattered wide their bones.

Not far away within another limestone ridge there lies another limestone tomb.
The stone that sealed the cross-marked tomb is gone.
One early morn an earthquake came. The stone was rolled away.
Then He who lay within stepped forth. Now we who love that One
Who rose there from the dead stoop low to enter in. We view the limestone couch,
The stony pillow where they lay His head, The narrow wall beside the crypt,
The niche where friends had dug a place in Joseph's tomb to lay His feet.

He is not there nor has He been for He is gone, arisen from the dead.
The morning light falls full upon the chiseled doorway of the tomb.
A singing bird awakes the morn as tourists come to see the place where once He lay.
But soon the long awaited day will come. Then Moses and the nation,
With its greatest king, old Jesse's son, will rise to meet that One
Who broke the bars of death and hell and walked to Olive's hill
With those He loved. Until that day a lizard crawls the rock
Where saints of old were once entombed, who even now
Exalt His name before His throne, beside the Lord's right hand.

Chapter four: EVENTS YET FUTURE THAT STILL PRECEDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM (5:3B- 7:16)

Event # 10. MESSIAH'S PROVISION FOR AND PROTECTION OF ISRAEL FROM THE ASSYRIAN INVASION OF THE FUTURE (5:4-6)

The tenth great event, one that Israel must face before the kingdom will be set up, directly relates Israel's Messiah to that nation. At first glance it would appear from the latter part of Micah 5:3 and 4 above that the verses describe the actual physical return of Israel's Messiah. But an examination of the several passages in the Tenach and in the New Testament that speak of Israel's great time of labor pains actually describe the scene that brings the Chosen People, still in unbelief, to the recognition that they long have been estranged from their Messiah. This period of Israel's great birth pangs is called by Jeremiah **"...the time of Jacob's trouble."** The prophet says: **"Alas, because great is that day. There will be none like it and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but out of it he [Jacob] will be saved"** (Jer. 30:7).

This subject of Israel's birth pangs already has been mentioned by Micah in chapter 4:9 where the imagery undoubtedly is used in connection with the rape of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and with their 70 year exile in Babylon. Here in Micah 5:3 the context is altogether different and must refer to that great trial of Israel that Daniel defines as lasting for one group of sevens or seven years (Daniel 9:27). This period of seven years that still lie ahead in the future for Israel has been preceded by a period of seven years and then by sixty two years, that is, sixty nine periods of seven years or 490 years. Those years clearly lead up to the rejection and death of *Yeshua Hamashiach*. **"And after the sixty two weeks Messiah will be cut off [suffer a violent death] but it will not be on His own account..."** (Dan. 9:25). That is, He would be dying for the sins of others, not any of Himself. This reference gives the exact date of Messiah's death, April 6th, 33 A.D., foreknown and planned for our behalf by the Eternal from eternity past. That date is calculated from the time that a decree went forth for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. And that decree was made by the Persian King Artaxerxes in his 20th year. **"In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.' I was very much afraid, but I said to the King, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?' The king said to me, 'What is it you want?' Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, 'If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.' Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, 'How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?'**

It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time" (Neh. 2:1-6 NASB). There are a total of 490 years that would pass after that assignment of Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem before the death of Messiah the prince. There is an excellent discussion of God's timetable concerning the time of the death of the Messiah found in Sevens' book, *Daniel, God's Man in Babylon*.²

It is rather obvious that the calendar describing the years that would follow Messiah's death for Messiah's people does not continue to be set forth prophetically in the same way that the years preceding Messiah's death were. Indeed, since that which follows in Daniel 9:26 has never happened in the centuries that have intervened, one must conclude that Daniel's words there describe a time yet future. In verses 26b and 27 yet another period of seven years is introduced. (26b) **"And the people of a ruler who will come will destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [the temple], but his end [that of the hostile ruler] will be with the flood [of judgment]' and unto the end of the war desolations [of Jerusalem] have been determined. (27) And he [the final hostile ruler] will make a firm covenant with many [temporarily bringing peace between the Arabs and those Jews who have returned in the preliminary 'aliah, return to their land] for [the final period of] one seven [years]. And in the midst of the [period of] seven [years] he [the final hostile ruler] will cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease [in the temple in Jerusalem]. Then upon the spreading of the detestable things he [the hostile ruler] will make it [the temple] desolate, even until the consummation [of the seventh year] and that which has been determined will be poured out upon that which is desolate [i.e., the temple in Jerusalem].** I conclude that the individual who brings about this temporary peace between the Arab and the Jew in the land will become the world ruler in the middle of those seven years. I conclude from Ezekiel 38:1-39:16 that a role that he will play in the destruction of the northern horde led by the leader of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, will catapult this individual into world dictatorship. It is plain from the book of Revelation that he will set up his throne in the tribulation temple in Jerusalem and that he will set up an idol, demanding its worship. This is but a small part of the chaos that will face the peoples of Israel in those last three and one half years of the time of Jacob's trouble.

Matthew 24:15-21 records that the Christ spoke of the reaction to this event that must sweep the peoples of Israel in the land when they see this take place. (15) **"Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whosoever reads, let him understand), (16) then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains. (17) Let the one who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house, (18) neither let the one who is in the field return back to take his clothes. (19) And woe to those who are pregnant, and to those who are nursing children in those days! (20) But pray that your flight will not be in the winter nor on the Sabbath day, (21) for then the great tribulation will be. It will be such as was not since the beginning of the world even to this time, nor ever will it be."**

² Sevens, Harold A., *God's Man Daniel in Babylon*. Chosen People Ministries, Charlotte, NC, 1994. Pp. 124-171.

There is no way that one can calculate the length of time that would pass before that future week of years would begin. It is clear, however, that the destruction of Jerusalem would occur before that week of years. Daniel is told: **"...And the people of a prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary..."** (Dan. 9:26b). The Prophet certainly is told of the future arrival of a ruler who would come from that same people who would destroy the city and the temple. The Romans are that people. Somehow and at sometime that yet is future a ruler will arise out of the Roman people. It is apparent from verse 27 that this ruler will have great political influence, for he finally brings about an important pact between the Arabs and the Jews. It is a pact that apparently promises that he will maintain peace between many peoples for seven years. But it is not a peace that will last. **"And he will make a firm covenant with many people for one week [week of seven years], but after half of the [period of] seven [years, i.e., three and one half years], he [this Roman prince of the future] will cause sacrifices and offerings to cease, even on the overspreading of detestable things that cause desolation, even until the consummation which is determined, it will be poured out upon the desolation [of the temple]."** This period of seven or seven years obviously is divided into two halves in Daniel 9:27. **"Then he [the ruler who will become manifested in this last seven years of Israel's trials] will confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will cause sacrifices and offerings to cease"** [in the temple in Jerusalem]. I consider it inescapable that the peace pact referred to here in Daniel will be between the '*aliah*, the peoples of the nation of Israel who will have been returning to their land throughout this last century, and with the peoples, who, according to Ezekiel 35:1-36:7, will have moved into the land, desolated by *hagalut*, the dispersion, and would be occupying it when a remnant from the nation of Israel would begin returning to it. Ezekiel is led to describe the struggle that would ensue and the dispossession of the land from the Arabs who would claim the land as their own in this way.

Ezekiel describes the conflict that would arise on Israel's return and the judgment of those related to ancient Mt. Seir or Petra and Edom in this way. (1) **"Then the Word of the Eternal Lord came to me saying:** (2) **'Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it,** (3) **and you shall say to it: 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord has said: 'Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir [representing the Arab peoples], and I will stretch out my hand against you and I will make you desolate and an astonishment.** (4) **I will make your cities a waste, and you will become an appalling thing, and you will know that I am the Eternal Lord.** (5) **[This is] because of your having an animosity from of old, and you have cast the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time when their iniquity [was coming to] an end.** (6) **Therefore, as I live, says the Lord, the Eternal Lord, 'surely I will prepare you unto blood, and blood will come to pursue you. Surely you have hated [those of] your own blood [i.e., those descended from Abraham as you are]. For this reason blood will pursue you.** (7) **And I will give Mount Seir to become a waste and a desolation, and I will bring about the cutting off from it both the one passing through and the one returning.** (8) **Then I will fill his mountains with his slain ones. Those who will be killed with the sword will fall in your hills, in your valleys**

and in all of your streams. (9) I will give you to be perpetual desolations and your cities will not be inhabited, and you will know that I am the Eternal Lord. (10) This is because of your saying, 'These two nations and these two countries [Judah and the northern country, Israel] will come to be mine, and we will possess it,' But the Eternal Lord was there. (11) Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord, the Eternal Lord, surely I will do according to your own anger and according to your own envy that you have done out of your hatred against them at the time when I will judge you. (12) Then you will know that I, the Eternal Lord have heard all of your blasphemies that you have spoken upon the mountains of Israel, saying: 'They have been laid desolate; to us they are given to devour.' (13) Furthermore you have made great with your mouths against Me, and you have multiplied your words against Me. I have heard it. (14) This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: 'When all of the land [of Israel] rejoices, I will make you a desolation. (15) In the way that you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel on account of its being desolate, even so will I do to you. You will come to be desolate, oh Mount Seir and all of Edom, even every bit of it, and you will know that I am the Eternal Lord. (36:1) Now, son of man, you prophesy to the mountains of Israel and you say, you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Eternal Lord. (2) This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: 'Because the enemy [the Arab peoples] has said this against you, 'Aha! Even the ancient high places are our possession,' (3) therefore prophesy and say: 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: 'In as much as, even because they have made you [the mountains of Israel] desolate and have been trampling upon you on every side, in order that you might become a possession to the rest of the nations [surrounding Israel], and you have been taken up on the lips of the tongue and are an evil report of the people, (4) therefore, you mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord, the Eternal Lord: 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says to the mountains and the hills, to the streams and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the cities that are forsaken, [cities] that were a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations that are round about [the land of Israel. See Zechariah 12:2 and 7]: (5) Therefore, this is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord, says: 'Surely I have spoken in the fire of my jealousy against the remainder of the nations, and against every bit of Edom, that have made My land for a possession for themselves with the joy of all of their hearts and with contempt of soul so that its open country was for a prey. (6) Therefore prophesy about the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to its streams and its valleys, 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: 'Behold, in My jealousy and in My fury I have spoken. It is because you [mountains] have borne the shame of the nations. (7) Therefore this is what the Lord, the Eternal Lord says: I do lift up My hand. Surely the nations that are all around you, they will bear their shame!

These Arab peoples are be an important part of the forces that the Eternal Lord is bringing against His peoples, Israel, in these latter days. And it will be an attempted seven year peace pact between the Arab peoples and the returned ones of Israel, brought about by the Roman prince of the future, the beast, that will initiate the seven awful

years of the tribulation, the time of Jacob's troubles, for the nation that even now is back in their land. One cannot help wondering if personages who even now are attempting to bring peace between Israel and the Arabs might be the very ones who will be involved in the signing of the seven year peace pact that starts the time of Jacob's troubles.

It also is obvious from a section of Daniel 9:26 that this ruler who brings about the peace pact between the Arabs and Israel ultimately faces great judgment. It is referred to in the words: **"But his [the Roman ruler of the tribulation] end will be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."** It is clear that even from Daniel's day the end of that cruel ruler already had been determined by the decree of the Eternal. That determination of the time of his end also is referred to in verse 27 in the words, **"... even until the consummation that is determined...."** Similar terminology was used of Antiochus Epiphanes, a ruler whose activities are a pre-fulfillment of the fulfillment of these words describing the time of conquest and final ruin that the Eternal had appointed for him (Dan. 11:29). The researcher must recognize that the language of Daniel 11, while clearly anticipating the activities of Antiochus, also has eschatological overtones that refer to the eschatological counterpart of Antiochus, the Beast of the tribulation. This overlapping of a near pre-fulfillment and a distant fulfillment in eschatology properly is called "compenetration." In the past it has been called "the law of double reference." In Antiochus, pre-fulfillment on the near scene can be recognized, but in the Beast of Revelation will be seen the fulfillment of the prophetic words spoken to Daniel. Yet another similar term in Daniel 11:36 speaks of the Divine limits placed on the shameful and devastating activities, both of Antiochus and of the more distant Beast. **"...He will prosper until the indignation [of the Lord against His Chosen People] is accomplished."** But one does well to study Revelation in the New Testament where he will discover that the fierce king of the tribulation, Jacob's time of trouble, will only be given his authority for forty two months (Rev. 13:5), in the Jewish calendar. Now this is 1,260 days. It is said in Revelation 12:1-6 that, after Israel goes through the time of birth pangs in which she recognizes that she already has brought forth the Messiah, it will be necessary for them to flee into the wilderness to a place prepared there for her by God for 1,260 days. (1) **"And a great sign was seen in heaven [It was] a woman having been clothed with the sun and with the moon underneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars were on her head. (2) And having a child in her womb, she cried out as she was in labor and being in great pain to give birth. (3) Then another sign was seen in heaven, and behold, [it was] a great fiery dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads were seven diadems. (4) And its tail was drawing down one third of the stars of heaven and it threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth in order that, when she might give birth, it might devour her child. (5) And she bore a male Son Who would become the shepherd of all of the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched up to God and to His throne. (6) Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had there a place that had been prepared by God in order that there they might nourish her for one thousand two hundred and sixty days."** This is a time when Israel will be protected by the Lord for time, times and half a time, or 1,260 days (12:13-14). These chronological

details agree perfectly with the words spoken to Daniel by the angel Michael. (Dan. 12:7). **"And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he lifted up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him Who lives for ever that it will be a time, times and a half, and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people [Israel], all of these things will be finished."**

This calculation of the three and one half years of the dreadful desolation of the temple which exists during the time in which Israel goes through her dreadful travail is referred to in several other passages that contribute to our knowledge of its horror. In Daniel 12:1-3 it has been revealed to Daniel that four crucial things will be true at the very end of the time of Jacob's long trials.

1. **"And at that time Michael [the Archangel] will stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people..."**
2. **"...And there will be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation even to that same time...;"** Israel will go through their most terrible time of trouble ever.
3. **"...And at that time your people will be delivered, every one who will be found written in the book."** At that time Israel will be delivered out of their great trial.
- 4 **"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life..."** (v. 2). Then those of Israel's Old Testament believers who were true believers will be resurrected from the dead.

In Daniel 12:7 it specifically is revealed to Daniel that the length of time during that Israel would go through the terrible time of Jacob's troubles would be three and one half times. It is revealed that it would take this period of time to break the resistance of Israel to that glorious One Who would be coming to deliver them. **"Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he raised his right hand and his left hand up to heaven and swore by the One Who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half of a time, but when the power of the holy people [Israel] would be completely broken, then all of these things would be finished"** (Dan. 12:7).

Further reference to this period of time will be found in Daniel 12:8-11. Daniel asks specifically about the end of these things. It is revealed to him that he would not be able to understand these things until the time of the end. (8) **"And I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said: 'Oh my lord, what will be the last end of these things?'** (9) **Then he said: 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and they are sealed until the time of the end. (10, but the wicked ones will continue to do wickedly. But none of the wicked ones will understand while the wise will understand. (11) But from the time when the continual burnt-offering will be taken away and the abominable thing that causes desolation will be set up, there will be one thousand, two hundred and ninety days"** (Dan. 12:8-11). This revelation concerning the three and one half times [three and one half Jewish years of 360 days each or 1,260 days] in Daniel 12:7 gives the exact period of time, 1,260 days, that the most terrible stage of the time

of Jacob's troubles will last. Only the believers who have come to the Lord in that period of time will understand that chaos which will be happening to the world in which they live.

But Daniel has been given yet another time period relating to these days in Daniel 12:11. In this final revelation found in Daniel's prophecy there is reference to the adding of thirty days to the 1,260 days. This information speaks to the specific time when the living tribulation believers would be judged. **"And from the time when the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation will be set up [in the middle of the time of seven years] there will be one thousand, two hundred and ninety days."** It is in this additional 30 days that **"...Many will be purified, made white and refined..."** (Dan. 12:10). Then these additional 30 days have an additional 45 pre days added, giving a crucial event that would take place after the great tribulation. This additional 75 day period now explains a crucial chronological factor that is not elsewhere explained in the Bible. That the conclusion of these additional seventy five days looks forward to the time when Old Testament believers will be resurrected is stated in verses 12-13 for Daniel is promised to rise with those of his own time to that inheritance in the earthly, Messianic kingdom which then will be theirs. **"Blessed is the one who waits and comes to the 1,335 days. And you [Daniel], go your way until the end comes, for you will rest but will stand for your inheritance at the end of the days"** (Dan. 12:12-13). The reference to this time 75 days after the end of the tribulation gives the precise time when the Old Testament Saints will be resurrected to enter into the earthly kingdom.

These chronological references above enable one to know the timing of certain events in Israel's future. But Micah 5:5-6 gives more specific details about the great pressures which will fall upon the nation of Israel in the land during these earlier events in Israel's last days before the kingdom becomes theirs. Micah says: (5) **"And this [Person] will be the peace when the Assyrian enters into our land. And when he treads within our palaces, then we [the nation of Israel] will raise seven shepherds and eight princes among men against him. (6) These will waste the land of Assyria and the land of Nimrod with the sword, even with the sharp edge of it. In this way He [Messiah] will deliver us from the Assyrian when he enters our land and when he treads within our borders."**

This passage in Micah points directly to the Messiah Who will, through the means of others, protect Israel from a people who come from the area of ancient Assyria. I conclude that this reference to Assyria does not indicate that the historical nation of Assyria will rise again but that the name describes a people who come from that geographical area and who come with the violence which characterized that ancient people. It is my conclusion that this passage refers to that invasion which comes out of the north against Israel at a time when they once again have become an independent nation. The national setting is referred to in Joel 2:17 in his report of the agonizing prayer which is raised to the Eternal as that invasion develops. **"Let the priests, who minister unto the Eternal Lord, weep between the porch and the altar. Let them say: `Spare Your people, Oh Eternal Lord, and do not give Your inheritance to be reproached so that the Gentiles should rule over them. Why should they say among**

the peoples, `Where is their God!'" Joel reports the response of the Lord to their prayers in verses 18-20. (18) "Then will the Eternal Lord be intensely jealous for His land, and He will have pity upon His people. (19) And the Eternal Lord will answer and He will say to His people: 'Behold, I am going to send corn, wine and oil to you, and you will become satisfied with it, and no more will I give you to be a reproach among the Gentiles; (20) and I will remove the northern one far off from you and I will drive him into a barren and desolate land with his face facing the eastern sea and his back side toward the western sea in order that his stink may come up, and his stench may come up, because he has done great things. (21) Do not fear, oh land! Be glad and rejoice because the Eternal Lord will do great things. He countermands the terrible famine that the nation is facing, which is described in conjunction with the locust plague in the earlier section of the book. He promises to remove the reproach which long has been upon Israel by the nations of the earth. But the verse which directly relates to this which Micah has said in Micah 5:5-6 is found in Joel 2:20. "But I will remove far from you the northern army and I will drive it away into a barren and a desolate land. It will face toward the Eastern Sea [the Dead Sea] with its rear toward the Western Sea [the Mediterranean Sea]. His stink will rise up, even his stench will arise, because he will have done great things."

In a more oblique but far more extensive way the prophet Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 38:1-39:16 this invasion out of the north and its end. I conclude that this invasion of the land of Israel will come shortly before the middle of the tribulation, the time of Jacob's troubles. The association of the passage with Micah 5:5-6 and with Joel 2:20 is logical because of the reference in Ezekiel 38:15 to the invasion force of Gog coming out of the north. It is oblique because of the Prophet's words in verse 17. "Are you the one of whom I have spoken in former times by means of My servants, the prophets of Israel, who were prophesying in those days for years that I would bring you against them?"

A search of the prophets will never uncover Gog's invasion so identified elsewhere in them. The only logical conclusion is that prophecies concerning the invasion of Israel by Assyria were designed by the Divine Author to have more distant eschatological overtones than were immediately obvious to the human author in his day. Indeed, that possibility actually becomes a necessity in the words of Micah's prophecy. The flow of thought in the context of Micah 5 makes it necessary for this invasion of the land of Israel by Assyria to follow in an undefined chronology the birth of Messiah in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2 Eng.). It must follow the slapping of the Judge of Israel upon the cheek (Mic. 5:1 Eng.). It must follow Messiah's giving up Israel temporarily because of that rejection of Himself (Mic. 5:3). That invasion by the Assyrian of the future and their destruction is the occasion of Messiah's remarkable elevation before and His recognition by Israel. The Prophet Zechariah speaks of that succession of events in this way. He has been speaking of the remarkable, seemingly impossible victories that those in the Land would have over "...all of the peoples around about," the Arab peoples, and the way that Israel's generals would begin to recognize the human impossibility of these victories (Zech. 12:1-8). Then the Prophet changes the reference to Israel's enemies. Whereas he has been

speaking of "the peoples around about," the Arab peoples whose nations encircle Israel, suddenly at Zechariah 12:9 he refers to an invasion by *haggoyim*, the Gentiles, and the destruction of all of these of the nations by the Eternal Lord. **"This is what will happen in that day when I will seek to destroy all of the Gentiles who will be coming against Jerusalem."** I conclude that the event described here parallels and describes the event series described in Ezekiel 38:1-39:17. Furthermore I conclude that Isaiah 63-64 also describes this remarkable deliverance of the returned nation by the Eternal Lord.

What is the purpose behind the act of the Eternal in allowing all of these trials that will come upon His Chosen People? Why would He even allow an invasion force of Gentiles to rise up against Jerusalem? The answer lies in the overtones of Isaiah 63 and 64. The nation of Israel begins to recognize that some supernatural being has overcome the northern invader that has been approaching the land of Israel by means of TransJordan. They ask a penetrating question that is answered in such a way that it is obvious that it is the Messiah Who has delivered them from the great invasion force. Isaiah 63:1-4 says: (1) **"Who is this one who is coming from Edom with deep red garments from Bozrah, this one who is glorious in his apparel, stately in the multitude of his strength?"** The answer comes back to the nation from their deliverer. **"I, the one speaking in righteousness, mighty to save!"** They ask again of Him. (2) **"Why is your clothing red and your garments like the one who is treading in the winevat?"** The answer comes back from Him. (3) **I have trodden the winepress by Myself, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. So I trod them in My anger and I trampled them in My wrath, and their lifeblood has spurted against My garments and I have stained all of my clothing.** (4) **The reason is that the day of vengeance was in My heart and the year of My redeemed ones has come."**

The passage speaks of Israel's recognition that someone has been fighting on their behalf over the Jordan River in Edom and Bozrah. They inquire as to the identity of the One Who has fought against their enemies on their behalf, splattering His garments with their blood. This remarkable battle in which Israel apparently has no part begins to turn their thoughts toward the way that the Eternal Lord has fought on their behalf in the past. They begin to recognize that their own way of rebellion against the Lord is very much like the way that Israel acted toward the Lord Who was leading them out of the wilderness. Isaiah 63:15-16 describes the way that the people of Israel begin to think of the One Who had delivered them as their Redeemer and ask for Him to look down from heaven on them. (15) **"Look down from heaven, and see from your holy and glorious place of dwelling. Where is Your zeal and Your mighty warrior acts, the yearning of Your heart and Your compassions [now] restrained toward me?** (16) **Because You are our Father, for Abraham does not know us and Israel [i.e., Jacob] will not acknowledge us. You, oh Eternal Lord are our Father, the One redeeming us is Your name from of old"** (Isa. 63:15-16).

For a moment they do that which seems natural to mankind. They blame the Eternal for that which has happened to them and for His hardening His heart toward them. **"Oh Eternal Lord, why have You made us to go astray from Your ways and why have You hardened our hearts from fearing You? Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes**

of Your inheritance" (Isa. 63:17). But through it all, one can recognize a softening of their own hardened hearts toward the One Who has delivered them from this great army of haggoyim by destroying it. They begin to cry out in the shame of the recognition that it has been because of their own waywardness that He has been so far away from helping them in their centuries of trials. They cry out: (63:19 Engl., 64:1 Heb.) **"Oh that you would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence. (64:2 Engl., 64:1 Heb.) Just as a fire ignites brush and fire causes waters to begin them to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries in order that the nations might tremble at Your presence (64:3 Engl., 64:2 Heb.), as when You were doing wonderful things which we did not even hope for. Come down so that before You the mountains will quake!"**

Finally, after turning away from their Messiah for centuries, they will be calling for Him to come down to them! And accompanying their cry for His presence there will come the confession for which He has waited on each individual. Isaiah reports the cry that the nation of Israel will cry in that future day when they begin to turn to their Messiah. (Isa. 64:5 Engl., 64:6 Heb) **"Therefore all of us have become like an unclean person and all of our righteousnesses are like the garment of an unclean woman. For this reason all of us have faded away like leaves for our iniquities have taken us away like the wind. (64:6 Engl., 64:5 Heb.) Indeed, there is no one who has been calling on Your name, who has been stirring himself up to take hold of You because You have hidden Your face from us and You have consumed us by means of our iniquities."**

Zechariah, after speaking of the marvelous destruction of the Gentile army of hagoyyim, explains what the result of that wonderful display by their Lord will be. It will finally result in the recognition of the Messiah by many of those of Israel who already will be in the land. It appears that one third of those in the land will willingly bow the knee to the Messiah. Zechariah 13 describes the believing remnant that will survive in the land until the coming of the Redeemer from heaven. (8) **"And this is what will happen in all of the land, says the Eternal Lord: Two parts of it will be cut off and will die, but the third part will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and I will test them in the way that gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will hear them. I will say, 'It is My people,' and they will say, 'The Eternal Lord is my God!"** (Zech. 13:8-9). That which will have brought about the remarkable conversion of these of Israel will be an act of the Eternal. **"Then I will pour out upon the house of David and upon those who will be living in Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Then they will begin to look upon [consider with their minds] Me whom they pierced. Indeed, they will mourn for Him in the way that a person mourns for his only son, and they will be in bitterness for Him in the way that a person is in bitterness for his first-born son"** (Zech. 12:10). As a result of their consideration of their Messiah, Whom the nation had rejected in the past, they will begin mourning for those years of separation. Private prayer meetings spontaneously will break out among the families in the Land (Zech. 12:11-14). And the result of these prayers, which directly fulfill Isaiah's prophecy in 64:1-7, many in the land will become the redeemed of the Eternal Lord as they are cleansed of

their sin and uncleanness. **"In that day there will be a fountain which will be opened for the house of David and for those who will be living in Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness"** (Zech. 13:1).

Event # 11. THE ELEVATION OF ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS
(5:6- 8 in Heb., 7-9 Engl.)

Throughout the ten preceding events, which inescapably would come before the fulfillment of the promises of the Messianic kingdom, the event series that will precede the kingdom have not been presented altogether in chronological order in Micah. In particular, it will be recognized that the slapping of the Judge of Israel upon the cheek has been presented before His arrival from heaven and His birth in Bethlehem. I conclude that this arrangement is deliberate, resulting in a certain obscuring of this great message before the eyes of the nation of Israel during their rebellion against the Eternal Lord and His program for Israel. Only then in "the last days" of Israel, during their greatest trial would the eyes of the chosen but rebellious people begin to be opened. During this extended delay of the promises found in Micah 4:1-8 only a remnant out of Israel would be saved according to the Apostle Paul in Romans 9-11. This deliberate presentation of parts of the event series out of the actual chronological order in which they would come to pass is true in this section also. The promise of the exaltation of Israel among the nations and their strengthening to become victorious over their enemies actually falls chronologically in the events near the end of Micah 7. This is taught by the Prophet Zechariah in chapter 13-14. And even then the fulfillment of the great covenant promises, made long ago by the Eternal Lord to the ancestors of the nation, will be fulfilled only in the believers among that people. The book of Micah closes with the absolute assurance that the Eternal will be faithful to all of His promises when the nation turns back to Him. It is then when Micah's words in this section will be fulfilled. **"At that time the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Eternal Lord, like showers upon the grass that wait for no man nor wait for a son of man. Then the remnant of Jacob will be among the Gentiles and in the midst of great peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion which is among flocks of sheep, who, when he passes through [the flock] will tread down and will tear [them] in pieces and no one will be able to deliver [them]. Your hands will be lifted up against your adversaries and all of your enemies will be cut off"** (Mic. 5:6-8 in Heb., 7-9 in Engl.).

The timing of this transformation of the people of Israel could be explained as occurring during either one of two events in the future of the nation. It may be that this event is developed in Zechariah 14:14 in a context that clearly is speaking of the glorious appearing of the Messiah to deliver the besieged occupants of Jerusalem in the Battle of Armageddon. **"Judah also will fight at Jerusalem and the wealth of all of the nations round about will be gathered together."** This is after Messiah has appeared on the Mount of Olives to rescue the remnant of the people from the hordes that will have invaded Jerusalem in the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the tribulation (Zechariah

14:1-7). And it may be at this crucial time in Israel's future that this strengthening of Israel to fight in that war will happen.

But it also is possible and more likely that these verses in Micah actually are speaking of a battle which, according to my calculations based on Joel 2:18-27, occurs about six months before the middle of the seven years of the time of Jacob's troubles. It must be noticed that, after the destruction of the northern army, the former and latter rains follow, bringing a miraculous crop when the world is facing famine. The Levantine climate of the coast of Israel is like that of only two other places in the world. They are the northern coast of California and the coast of Chile and part of Peru. In these three places the former rains usually begin in September or early October and last through December. The latter rains begin in January and continue through Passover. Thus there are approximately six months between the destruction of the northern army and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on individuals who have come to believe in their Messiah in Israel. Joel makes it clear that the northern army, which causes the nation to gather as a nation for earnest prayer to the Eternal (Joel 2:12-17), will be destroyed.

In Joel's chapter two the locust plague on the prophet's near scene and in the local, historical day of the Lord foreshadows a much greater invasion that yet is to take place in the future day of the Eternal Lord. I conclude in my doctoral dissertation, "Joel's Concept of the Day of the Lord" that the Day of the Lord begins when the one who is to become the Beast of Revelation succeeds in achieving a seven year peace pact between the Arabs and the Jews in the land. The Day of the Lord includes all of the seven years of Israel's tribulation. But it also includes all of the 1,000 year rule of Christ in the Millennium.³

The locust plague of Joel's day foreshadows and anticipates a similar invasion of the future that will bring the rebellious nation of Israel to its knees before the Eternal Lord, Who will have brought the invading army for that very purpose. Joel prophesies: "**Then the Eternal Lord will utter His voice in front of His army, for His camp will be exceedingly great. Yes, it will be mighty, accomplishing His Word. Surely the Day of the Eternal Lord will be exceedingly dreadful and who will be able to endure it?**" (Joel 2:11).

Joel then reports the words of the Eternal Lord as He calls the nation to Himself. (12) "**Yet even now**" declares the Eternal Lord, "**Turn to Me with all of your hearts and with fasting and with weeping and with lamentation, (13) and tear your hearts and not your garments, and return unto the Eternal Lord your God, for He will be gracious and He will be full of compassion, long in suffering and abundant in mercy. Surely He will repent concerning the adversity. (14) Who knows when He will turn and will repent and will leave a blessing after Him, a meal offering and a drink offering for the Eternal Lord your God?**" (Joel 2:12-14).

Instruction now is given to the people in the land of Israel to assemble and to pray earnestly for deliverance from the terrible invader. (15) "**Blow the shofar in Zion! Sanctify a feast! Call together a solemn assembly! (16) Gather together the people**

³ Northrup, Bernard E., Joel's Concept of the Day of the Lord. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1961.

[of Israel in the land]! Sanctify the congregation! Gather the elders together! Gather the children, even those that still are nursing the breasts! Let the bridegroom leave his room and let the bride leave her bridal chamber! (17) Between the [temple] porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and let them say: 'Have pity on your people, oh Eternal Lord, and do not give Your heritage to be a reproach with the result that the Gentiles should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples [of Israel], 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:15-17).

The response that would come from the Eternal Lord at the time of the repentance of His people follows. (18) "Then the Eternal Lord will be jealous for His land and He will have pity on His people. (19) And the Eternal Lord will answer and He will say this to His people: 'Behold, I going to be sending the corn and the wine and the oil to you, and you will be satisfied with them. No longer will I continue to give you as a reproach among the Gentiles. (20) But I will proceed to cause the removal of the northern one far off from on you. Yes, I will drive him into a land that is barren and desolate with his face toward the sea on the east [the Dead Sea] and his back side toward the sea on the west [the Mediterranean Sea]. Then his foul stink will go up and his stench will continue to go up because he prepared [himself] to do great things.'" (Joel 2:18-20).

Now the Eternal Lord assures the people of the land that the land that has been stripped bare by Israel's enemies now will begin to produce to meet their needs. (21) "Do not fear, oh land; Be glad and rejoice, because the Eternal Lord will do great things. (22) You animals of the field, do not be afraid, because the little pastures of the wilderness will spring up, because the trees will bear their fruit. The fig tree and the vine will produce their strength (Joel. 2:21-22).

The Eternal Lord then provides a remarkable clue that reveals the approximate timing of the invasion that has been described above. It is clear from verse 23 that the invasion of the northern one and his destruction will take place before the Eternal Lord restores the former and the latter rains that will provide the remarkable agricultural prosperity that is described in verses 21-22 of Joel 2. (23) "Then be glad, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Eternal Lord your God, for He will give you the former rains in adequate measure, and He will cause the rains to come down, the former rains and the latter rains as in the first time. (24) Then the floors will be full of grain and the vats will overflow with wine and with oil. (25) Then I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust had eaten, the lapping canker worm and the devastating caterpillar and the shearing palmer worm, My great army that I had sent among you. (26) Then you will eat plentifully and satisfyingly, and you will greatly praise the name of the Eternal Lord your God Who will have dealt wonderfully with you. Then My people will never become ashamed. (27) And you will know by experience that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Eternal Lord your God, and that there is no other one, and My people will never come to be ashamed" (Joel. 2:23-27).

...The Talmud (Taan. 6a) quotes this passage in the sense of former and latter rain (cf. Ps. Lxxxiv. 7). In Palestine, these rains descend in October and April, and are indispensable for the fertility of the land.⁴

I conclude that the Talmud is absolutely correct in recognizing that the dreadful famine that has troubled Israel during the time of oppression by the northern army is over and that the famine would be broken when the Lord would send the seasonal rains. These are known even today as the former and the latter rains. But I also insist that the invasion from the north and the destruction of that great army by the Lord, accompanied by the restoration of this six month period that follows, in which the land would receive its needed rains, helps in the determining of the timing of those events. When the provision of the phenomenal crops follows the unquestionable participation of the Eternal Lord in the defeat of their enemies, that plays a great part in the turning of many peoples in the land to the Lord. Joel 3 and the description of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those in the land, with the resulting response of the peoples to the Lord, is directly linked to the battle and the great rains that follow as described in Joel 2:18-27. The Prophet Zechariah clearly links the destruction of a great host of haggoyyim, the Gentiles with that day when many in the land of Israel begin to consider the One Whom they had pierced and to mourn for Him. (9) **"And this will come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all of the Gentiles that will have come against Jerusalem"** (Zech. 12:9). A study of the chapter will show that the Gentiles spoken of here are not the Arab peoples, "the peoples around about" whose lands entirely surround Israel. These are never spoken of as haggoyyim but rather as the peoples that at that time will live all around them (even as they do today). This overwhelming invasion of Gentiles and their remarkable defeat, obviously by the Eternal Lord Himself, is the key factor that leads to the conversion of many in the land of Israel. The Prophet describes that result in this way. **"Then I will pour out the Spirit of grace and of supplications on the house of David and on the peoples who live in Jerusalem, with the result that they will begin to look on Me Whom they pierced, and they will begin to mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him in the way that one mourns bitterly over a first-born"** (Zech. 12:10). That great change of heart will result in great mournings in prayer bands all over the land, with the result that **"...in that day a fountain for sin and for impurity will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem"** (Zech. 13:1).

Now exactly the same thing is found in the prophet Joel. In the Hebrew text this is separated from this great victory and the supply of rain and food for Israel into chapter three in the same way that Micah 5:1 and 2, which consecutively prophecy the smiting of the Judge upon the cheek and His birth in Bethlehem, are separated in the Hebrew Bible. It is this great battle, in which God destroys invading Gentiles, that brings about the great stirring within the hearts of God's wayward people Israel. The spiritual awakening of Israel is directly linked with the battle and God's miraculous provision of food for that

⁴ Lehrman, Dr. S. M., Joel. The Twelve Prophets, Dr. A. Cohen, Editor. The Soncino Press, Bournemouth, Hants. 1948. P. 71.

people by a key word in Joel 3:1 [2:28 Engl.]. That word is "afterward." **"And this will come to be afterward, that I will begin to pour out My Spirit upon all flesh [of those in Israel, not in all of the world]. (1 Heb.) Then your sons and your daughters will begin to prophesy. Your old men will begin to dream dreams. Your young men will begin to see visions, (2 Heb.) And also in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon the male servants and upon the handmaidens´ (Joel 3:1-2 Heb., 2:28-29 Engl.).**

This great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel after their deliverance is accompanied by a great display of heavenly signs that prepare the way for the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. The interpreter must carefully distinguish between "the Day of the Lord" and "the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord." The latter refers to the conclusion of the great tribulation whereas the former includes a period of one thousand and seven years. Both Ezekiel and Joel plainly associate great heavenly signs with the miraculous deliverance of Israel from the great northern invader. Joel 3:3-4 (Heb.) describes these in this way. (3) **"And I will give wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. (4) The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will be turned into blood before the great and terrible day of the Eternal Lord arrives."** Again it must be remembered that "the great and terrible day of the Eternal Lord" does not begin at the beginning of the tribulation as does the Day of the Lord. It is that extremely terrible time at the climax of the great tribulation.

Ezekiel also describes heavenly signs in conjunction with a great battle that takes place before Israel begins to turn to the Lord. That battle is described in Ezekiel 38:1-39:16. It is a battle so one sided that, in the beginning, the nation of Israel will not have the slightest hope of surviving this great confederation of northern nations that comes out of Russia, Iran, North Africa and Libya according to Ezekiel 38:3-5. (3) **"...say, 'This is what the Eternal Lord God says: 'Behold, I am against you, God, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. (4) And I will turn you about, and I will place hooks in your jaws, and I will bring you out [into the land of Israel] and all of your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great company bearing bucklers and shields, all of them wielding swords. (5) [These will come from] Persia, Ethopia and Put with them, all of them bearing shields and helmets, (6) Gomer with all of his troops, the house of Togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all of their troops, many peoples with you" (Ezek. 38:3-5).**

Ezekiel also describes the catastrophic signs that will accompany this invasion in Ezekiel 38:18-23. (18) **"And this will come to be on that day when Gog arrives against the land of Israel," declares the Eternal Lord God, "That my fury will mount up in My great anger. (19) Indeed, in My zeal and in My blazing wrath I will declare that on that day there surely will be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. (20) Then the fishes of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the fields, and all of the creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all of the men that are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence. The mountains will also be thrown down. The steep paths will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground. (21) Then I will call for a sword against him [Gog] on all of My mountains' declares the Eternal Lord God. Every man's sword will be turned against his own brother. (22) And I will**

enter into judgment with him [Gog] with a terrible rain, with hailstones, fire and with brimstone. (23) And I will magnify Myself and will sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the sight of many nations, and they will come to know that I am the Eternal Lord" (Ezek. 38:20-23). It will be seen from later in Ezekiel 39 that this, along with the Eternal Lord's utter destruction of the invading force, will be a major factor in Israel's ultimate recognition of the person and work of the Lord God. "And the house of Israel will know by experience that I am the Eternal Lord, their God, from that day and onward" (Ezek. 39:22).

What Israel will not immediately recognize is the fact that it is the Eternal Himself that will be bringing this great invasion force against them as both Joel and Ezekiel reveal. Through compenetration Joel 2:20-11 describes this invasion that still was centuries away in his description of the terrible locust plague in his own day. (10) **"Before them the earth will quiver, heavens will quake. The sun and the moon will be black and stars will withdraw their shining. (11) And the Eternal Lord will sound forth His voice before His army because His camp is exceedingly great, because it [His invading army] is strong that will do His word. The reason is that the day of the Eternal Lord is great and exceedingly fearful, and who will be able survive it?"**

The Eternal will be bringing this terrible army in order to demonstrate to His wayward nation once more, even after the battles described in Zechariah 12:1-7, that He still is there and that He has not cast them off forever. He will show forth Himself to his recalcitrant nation in a remarkable way when, against all hope, that great invading army is destroyed. This is the battle that is briefly described in Zechariah 12:8-9. It is shown to be the catalyst that finally will cause the nation to begin to turn toward that Shepherd Whom they had pierced so long ago. The battle is described in this way by Zechariah. **"In that day the Eternal Lord will proceed to defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then in that day the one who is stumbling among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like gods, like an angel of the Eternal Lord before them. And it will be in that day that I will be earnestly seeking to destroy all of the Gentiles which will be coming against Jerusalem" (Zech. 12:8-9). Isaiah also briefly speaks of the remarkable destruction of this invasion force. That prophet is led to utter the very words that the nation as it recognizes its miraculous deliverance will ask. **"Who is this that is coming from Edom with crimsoned garments from Bozrah? This One is glorious in His garments, stately in the multitude of His strength?"** The answer comes back from Him. **"I am the One Who is speaking in righteousness, mighty to deliver."** The prophet is led to give their response. **"Why are Your clothing red and Your garments like the one who has been treading [grapes] in the wine press?"** Again the prophet Isaiah is led to quote that which the Eternal Lord, their victor, will respond. **"I have trodden the winepress by Myself while from among the peoples [of Israel] there was no man with Me. So I proceeded to tread them in My anger and I proceeded to trample them in My fury. As a result, their lifeblood came to spurt upon My garments and I have defiled all of My clothing" (Isa. 63:1-3).** Isaiah does not speak in such a way as to indicate that Israel's delivering Lord actually would be visible to them at that time. Yet that suggestion seems to be strongly suggested by Zechariah's words in Zechariah 12:10.**

"Then I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of crying out for help, and they shall look to Me [The verb is from the root nabat, a verb that usually has reference to mental consideration and not to actual eye contact. An excellent illustration is found in Isaiah 51:1.] Whom they pierced and they will mourn over Him like the mourning over one's only son, and they will be in bitterness like one for his first born son" (Zech. 12:10).

This time Israel's deliverance will be so dramatically beyond any possibility of explaining it in human terms that they finally will be forced to consider that which they long had refused to consider. The effect that Israel's miraculous deliverance will have on the nation is described by Zechariah. (11) **"In that day the mourning will become great in Jerusalem like the mourning concerning Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. (12) At that time the land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by themselves and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan [the son of David?] by themselves and their wives by themselves. (13) The family of the house of Levi will be by themselves and their wives by themselves. The family of the Shimeites will be by themselves and their wives by themselves; (14) all of the families that will be left, every family will be by themselves and their wives by themselves"** (Zech. 12:11-14).

Event # 12. THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL'S DEFENSES

(5:9-10 in Heb., 10-11 in Engl.)

The preceding context of Micah 5:6-8 looks forward to the day when the nation of Israel, back in their land once again, will be valiant in battle and victorious over their enemies. But this context shows that the Lord will not allow the nation to remain lifted up and satisfied that they alone have been able to resolve their many political problems and the attacks of the nations around about them. Whereas the preceding verses speak of the remarkable way that they would be able to throw off their enemies, this context speaks of the devastation of their army in such a way that it only can be attributed to the Lord Himself. **"And this will come to pass in that day, says the Eternal Lord, that I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you, and I will cause the destruction of your chariots"** (5:9 in Heb., 10 in Engl.). It seems probable that this terrible desolation of the army of Israel actually will take place when the man of sin proceeds to make Jerusalem his capital in the middle of Israel's seven years of terrible times which normally is called **"the tribulation."** Daniel plainly speaks of this future day long after Messiah will have been cut off (Dan. 9:26). It also is after the day in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem and its sanctuary will have been destroyed by the Roman people, led by their prince, Titus. (Dan. 9:26). Daniel speaks of another prince who, long after the people of Rome have destroyed Jerusalem, will trouble Israel. It is easy to loose this individual in the text of Daniel 9:26-27. For this reason I isolate that prince who is of the people of Rome from the time of that destruction which took place in 70 A.D. **"...a prince that will come ... will make a firm covenant with many for one period of seven [years] but in half of the seven [i.e., after three and one half years] he will cause the sacrifice and**

the offerings to cease, and from an elevated position among abominable things [he will set up an image of abomination] and [it will continue to be there] until the extermination which is determined [by the Eternal Lord] will be poured out upon the thing which is making desolation" (Dan. 9:26-27).

The book of Revelation which closes the New Testament also speaks of this time when Jerusalem once again will fall into the hands of the Gentiles. The apostle John who wrote the book is instructed by an angel concerning the three and one half years when the Beast rules the world from Jerusalem. **"Then there was given to me a reed [a measurement about 10 feet long] like a rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Arise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it. But leave out the court which is outside of the temple and do not measure it because it will be given to the Gentiles, and they will tread down the holy city for forty two months. And I will enable my two witnesses and they will prophesy clothed in sackcloth for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands that are standing before the God of the earth. And if any man hurts them, fire will come out of their mouths and will devour their enemies, for if any man seeks to hurt them, he must be killed in this way. These will have power to shut up heaven so that it will not rain during the days of their prophecy, and they will have power over waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with all kinds of plagues whenever they will. But when they will have finished their testimony, the beast that will ascend out of the bottomless pit will make war against them and will overcome them and will kill them" (Rev. 11:1-7).**

**Event # 13. THE ELIMINATION OF ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY
(5:11- 13a in Heb., 12- 14a in Engl.)**

The prophet Micah continues to quote the Eternal Lord after he has promised a day when Israel will be left utterly defenseless and without their armament with which they previously had been able to throw off the nations round about. He says: **"And I will cut off witchcrafts from your hands and there will not be soothsayers for you; furthermore I will cut off out of your midst your engraved images and your pillars and no more will you worship the work of your hands. Then I will pluck up your sacred trees out of your midst."**

The Word of God is remarkably complete in its prophetic details when all of the prophets are consulted and their messages compared with each other. The prophet Isaiah actually foretells the very words that those of Israel who will be in the land will be crying out to the Eternal at that time. At first they will blame the Lord for their spiritual waywardnesses. Then they turn to acknowledge that the reason lay in themselves for the lack of interest in them in the past on the part of the Eternal. They confess their sins and plead for their Redeemer to return because they, as a people, are still scattered in dispersion.

Isaiah quotes that which those of the nation will say in that future time when their temple will have been rebuilt and then destroyed. **"Surely You, even You are our**

Father. Surely Abraham does not know us, and Israel will not give us acknowledgment. You, Oh Eternal Lord, You are our Father. Your name is 'The one redeeming us from old time.' Oh Eternal Lord, why have You caused us to err from Your ways and caused the hardening of our hearts from fearing You? Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your inheritance. For a little while they have trodden down Your holy people. Our adversaries have trodden down Your Sanctuary. We are like those over whom You have never ruled, like those over who were never called by Your name. Oh would that you would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains would quake at Your presence.... Therefore all of us have become like one who is unclean and all of our righteousnesses like garments polluted by a woman's period. Surely all of us fade like leaves and our iniquities like the wind have continued to drive us away for there is no one who has been calling on Your name, who rouses himself up to take hold of You because You have hidden Your face from us and you have melted us away by the hand of our iniquities. But now, Oh Eternal Lord, You are our father; we ourselves are the clay and You, eve You are our potter, indeed, all of us are the work of Your hand. Now, Oh Eternal Lord, do not continue being exceedingly angry and do not continue to remember iniquity always. Look! Please give consideration we pray, all of us are Your people. Your holy cities are a wilderness. Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The house of our holiness and our beauty where our fathers praised You is burned by fire and all of our pleasant things are wasted. Oh Eternal Lord, because of these things, will You continue to restrain Yourself? Will You continue to remain silent and continue to afflict us sorely?" (Isa. 63:16-19, 64:5-11 in Heb., 6-12 in Engl.).

Zechariah 13 is a chapter that largely focuses on that which will happen to believing Israel in the land after their miraculous deliverance from the northern army. Those of the nation who have returned to consider the One Whom the nation had rejected so long ago will be cleansed from their sin. **"In that day a fountain will be being opened to the house of David and to those who reside in Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness"** (Zech. 13:1).

The Church long has sung the great old hymn which says: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood loose all their guilty stains." Once the truth concerning the Messiah breaks through Israel's consciousness, that is precisely what will happen for them. And that which immediately happens among those who have placed their faith in their Messiah clearly demonstrates that they now are among the redeemed. That which they have realized concerning their Messiah immediately begins to transform the outlook of these believers concerning the idolatry, false prophecy and uncleanness which had filled their land.

The prophet Zechariah describes the day when the Eternal will begin drawing His chosen people back to Himself. **"The Eternal Lord of hosts says: 'And it will be in that day that I will begin to cut off the names of the idols out of the land with the result that they will not continue to be remembered any more. And I also will cause the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out from the land [of Israel]. And it will be that when a man begins to prophesy, then his father and his mother who**

birthed him will say to him: 'You shall not continue to live because you have spoken a lie in the name of the Eternal Lord!' Then his father and his mother that birthed him will thrust him through while he is prophesying. And it will be in that day that the prophets will be ashamed, each one from his vision, while he is prophesying; neither will they continue to wear a outer coat of hair to deceive. Then he will say: 'I, even I am not a prophet! I myself am a man who has been working the ground because a man caused me to possess it from my youth" (Zech. 13:2-5).

Surely the Eternal will fulfill His word spoken through the prophet Micah! "And I will cut off witchcrafts from your hands and there will not be soothsayers for you; furthermore I will cut off out of your midst your engraved images and your pillars and no more will you worship the work of your hands. Then I will pluck up your sacred trees out of your midst." (Mic. 5:11-13a in Heb., 12-14a in Engl.).

Event # 14. THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL'S CITIES AND OF THE DISOBEDIENT NATIONS (5:14b-15)

For generations now there have been those of Israel who had escaped the horrors of Hitler and the continual harassment of the Gentiles in their long exile and who now have returned to their land. For them the cry is no longer, "Hashshannah haba' biyrushalem." "Next year in Jerusalem!" Instead their cries have grown out of the agony of their sufferings in the land as their enemies around them and in their midst constantly have persecuted them and sought to push them into the sea. Repeatedly, against impossible odds, they have been able to repel their enemies, often making great territorial gains from those who sought to destroy them. But Micah has been led to reveal that, in the end, they will loose everything to an enemy that will ride over them and will leave them helpless before that unnamed force. Micah does not dwell on this sad, bitter cup which the nation yet must face. Indeed, his words occupy only one brief sentence as he announces this agonizing event which will take place in the last half of the time of Jacob's troubles. "**Then I will cause the destruction of your cities**" (Mic. 5:13).

Now the translation of the last word of this sentence is problematical. There are three texts where some scholars prefer to translate the normal Hebrew word for "cities" in another way. These are the examples that they give. In 1 Samuel 28:16 the prophet Samuel speaks of the Eternal Lord Who had "...become your adversary." Psalm 139:20 appears to use this word of Israel's enemies. "**Therefore you men of blood, leave me, you who exchange Your Name [the name of the Eternal Lord] for a wicked thought, being taken up in vain by Your enemies.**" Some, including Gesenius/Tregelles Hebrew Lexicon (p. 650), include Psalm 9:7 b as an illustration of this meaning. However I feel that "cities" best fits the context when translated this way. "...**And the cities which You uprooted, the memory of them has perished.**"

Actually the Hebrew word used in Micah 5:13 almost without exception refers to "cities." In the context of Micah 5:13, the statement immediately follows a description of the purification of the nation and the elimination of their wayward ways (Micah 5:12-14a). It is true that it immediately precedes the announcement of the future outpouring

of God's wrath on the Gentiles. In Micah 7:14 the Eternal says through the prophet, **"Then I will revenge Myself in anger and in fury on the Gentiles because they did not listen."** I take this act of vengeance to be a reference to the great battle of Armageddon which follows the repentance and turning to the One Whom they had pierced by approximately three and one half years if I correctly understand the chronology of the tribulation. I conclude that the closing clause of Micah 5:13, **"Then I will cause the destruction of your cities,"** has reference to the invasion of the nation by those armies which will be gathered together to destroy the nation of Israel at the end of the tribulation. In Micah this statement immediately precedes the prophet's description of the Eternal's judgment of living Israel (Mic. 6) which, according to other prophecies, results in Israel's being separated, the righteous from the unrighteous ones. Isaiah extensively describes that judgment in Isaiah 65:1-16.

Ezekiel describes the return of Israel's exiles and the separation of true believers from unbelievers in chapter 20:33-38. First of all the Lord describes the fact that, in the end time, He would begin bringing Israel back to their land and would subject them to Himself as their king. (33) **"As I live, declares the Lord, the Eternal One, 'Surely with a strong hand and with an arm outstretched and with outpoured fury I will become king over you. (34) Then I will cause you to come out from and lands in which you have been scattered. [I will do this] with a strong hand and with an arm outstretched and with outpoured fury.** It is obvious that those of Israel who are involved in the preliminary return from among the nations will suffer enormous pressures that ultimately come from the Lord Himself as He prepares His wayward people to come back to Him.

Then the Lord describes the distant day when He would so deal with His people that they would be forced to make a decision concerning Him, a decision that would determine whether each individually would be allowed to reside in His land and in His presence. (35) **Then I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there face to face I will plead with you. In the same way in which I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, even so I will plead with you' says the Lord, the Eternal One. (37) Then I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. (38) But I will purge out the ones who are [still] rebelling from among you and those I will bring them forth out of the lands where they have been temporarily sojourning and they will not enter into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Eternal Lord."** It appears from the prophecy that there is more to this covenant relationship than that which has been the normal state of Zionism for the centuries that are past.

Daniel in his last chapter also briefly describes this event, adding some new elements. In Daniel 12:1-3 he speaks of four exceedingly important events that will occupy the great time of trouble which will precede Israel's latter days. **"And at that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your [Daniel's] people and:**

1. **there will be a time of trouble such as never came since there came to be a nation even until that time . . . (v. 1a).**

2. and at that time every one of your people that will be found written in the book will be delivered (v. 1b).

3. Then many [not all, but only believers] of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some [at the resurrection of the righteous] to everlasting life, and some [at the resurrection of the unrighteous ones. 1,000 years later] shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt (v. 2).

4. "And those who are wise will shine [in Messiah's kingdom] like the brightness of the [earth's] atmosphere, but those who turn many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars for ever and ever" (v. 3).

In Daniel 12:7-13 the actual chronology of these events is given to Daniel. In verse 7 it is revealed that the terrible time of trouble (cf. 12:1b) will last three and one half times, that is, three and one half years, with the explicit purpose of breaking the power and will of the people of Israel. "Then I began to hear the man who was clothed in linen, who was up above the waters of the river, for he lifted up his right hand and his left hand toward the heavens, and he proceeded to swear by the One Who lives forever that it would be for a time, times and half a time [3 1/2 Jewish years or 1260 days]. But in the finishing of the shattering of the power of the holy people [Israel], all of these things will be completed." The chronology given here gives the bounds of that which is called "the great tribulation" in Revelation 7:14 and "the time of Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7. Both of these passages give the assurance that Israel would be returned to their land and would be delivered out of their great trial.

In Daniel 12:9-11 the Eternal further reveals to Daniel that immediately after the three and one half years or 1260 days of the great tribulation there would be another period of time of great importance. In the 30 days following the close of the great tribulation the judgment of living Israel would occur. Daniel had inquired of the angel that was revealing these things to him concerning what would happen at the end of the 1260 days. The response of the angel clearly speaks of the separation of the unrighteous of Israel from the righteous of that nation, and clearly pinpoints when this would happen. This judgment would take place in the thirty days following Israel's great tribulation. (9) "And he [the angel] said: 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and they are sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many will purify themselves and will make themselves white and they will be refined. [These are those of the nation of Israel who are willing to bow the knee and accept the rule of the One Who will become their king for the millennium following]. But the wicked ones will continue to do wickedly, and none of the wicked ones will come to understand, but those who are being wise will come to understand. (11) Now from the time when the continual burnt offering is caused to be taken away and the abominable thing which will be making [the temple] desolate is set up [in the new Jewish temple in the middle of the seven year period often called "the tribulation] there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. [This indicates that the judgment of living Israel will take place at the end of the three and one half years in the one month that follows]. (12) Oh the blessedness of the one who will be waiting and coming to the one thousand three hundred and thirty five days. [This indicates that a very important event will take place seventy five

days after the last three and one half years of the tribulation of Israel]. **But [Daniel,] go your way until the end [of the seventy five days after the tribulation], for you will continue to rest and will come to stand to your lot at the end of the days"** (Dan. 12:9-13). Now the glorious truth has been revealed to Daniel that Old Testament saints who have died will be resurrected from the dead at the end of the seventy five days that follow the great tribulation. This is the only place in all of Scripture where the actual timing of the resurrection of Old Testament believers is given.

Now it should be recognized that these chronological materials revealed to Daniel by the angel give an expansion to that which he revealed to Daniel in Daniel 12:1-2. There four great events in the future of Daniel's people have been revealed. Now three of these events are chronologically located in Israel's future. They are:

1. The time of great trouble. This focuses upon the final 1,260 days of the seven years of that which is called "the tribulation." Daniel has been told in 8:23-24 that this time begins when (23) **"...a king of fierce countenance ... will stand up, (24) and his power will be mighty, but not by his own power [since empowered by Satan], and he will destroy in an extraordinary way, and will prosper and continue, and he will destroy the mighty and the holy people [Israel].** This is the Beast described in chapter 13 in the New Testament book of Revelation. (2) **"...And the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.... (5) And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and authority was given to him to continue forty two months. (6) And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and those who dwell in heaven. (7) And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And power was given to him over all peoples and tongues and nations. (8) And all that live upon the earth will worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb Who was slain before the foundation of the world. If any man has an ear, let him hear"** (Rev. 13:2, 5-8).

2. Daniel has said: **"...And at that time every one who will be found to be written in the book of your people will be delivered"** (Dan. 12:1b). The deliverance of those of Israel who have come into right relationships with the Eternal Lord. The chronological information about the timing of this great deliverance referring to the deliverance of the righteous of Israel through the judgment of the nation of Israel in the period of 30 days after the 1,260 days of the great tribulation is given in Daniel 12:9-11. (9) **"And he [the angel] said: 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and they are sealed until the time of the end. (10) Many will purify themselves and will make themselves white and will be refined, but the wicked will do wickedly and none of the wicked ones will understand, but those who are wise will understand. (11) And from the time that the continual burnt-offering will be taken away and the abominable thing that causes desolation will be set up, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."** Zechariah 13:8-9 announces that one third of those in the land, i.e., those who have turned to the Lord as described in Zechariah 12:10-13:1, will be delivered while two thirds will not escape the judgments of those days. (8) **"And it will come to pass that two thirds in all of the land will be cut off and will die, but one third will be left in**

it. (9) And I will bring the third part through the fire and I will refine them in the way that silver is refined, and I will test them in the way that gold is tested. They will call upon My name, and I will hear them. I will say: 'This is My people.' And they will say, 'The Eternal Lord is My God.'"

In Luke's gospel in the New Testament Jesus repudiates the thinking of those who expected that the kingdom of God was on the verge of appearing at that very time. Both here in Luke 19:12-27 and in Matthew 25:14-46 He described the future day when He would return to receive the kingdom. It would be at that time that the judgment of living Israel which would take place before their entry into that kingdom. Matthew recorded His words in chapter 25. (14) "The reason is that it [the kingdom of heaven] is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to each of them. (15) And he gave five talents to one of them, to another [He gave] two, and to another [he gave] one, to each one according to his own ability. Then he immediately went on a journey. (16) Then the one who had received the five talents went and he traded with them and he gained [another] five talents. (17) And in the same way the one who had received two [talents] gained two more also. (18) But the one who had received one [talent] went and dug in the ground and he hid his lord's money. (19) After a long while the lord of those servants returned and he settled accounts with them. (20) And the one who had received five talents came and he brought five more talents, saying, 'Lord, you gave to me five talents. See, I have earned five more talents besides them.' (21) His lord said to him, 'Well done, you good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things. I will make you the ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (22) The one who had received two talents also came and he said: 'Lord, you gave two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents besides them.' (23) His lord said to him: 'Well done, you good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.' (24) Then the one who had received the one talent came and he said: 'Lord, I knew that you were a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed. (25) Therefore I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have that which is yours.' (26) But His lord answered and he said to him: 'You wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I do reap where I have not sown and that I do gather where I have not scattered seeds. (27) Therefore you should have deposited my money with the bankers. Then I would have received back that which was my own with interest. (28) Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. (29) The reason is because more will be given to everyone who has, and he will have abundantly, but from the one who does not have, even that which he has will be taken away. (30) Then throw the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there" (Matt. 25:14-30).

3. The angel then revealed to Daniel a third great event that would happen, an event relating to the Old Testament righteous of the nation of Israel. (2) "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life... (3) And those that are wise will shine like the brightness of the atmosphere, and those that

turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3). The angel actually reveals the chronological timing of this resurrection of the Old Testament saints in Daniel 12:12-13. (12) "Oh the blessedness of the one who is waiting and will come to the thousand three hundred and thirty five days comes [after the end of the 1,260 days of the great tribulation]. 13) Now you go your way until the end [of the 1,335 days after the great tribulation] for you will rest, and you will stand up [i.e., your dead body will arise from the grave] in your lot [i.e., the body of Old Testament saints] at the end of the [previously mentioned] days."

These verses in the angel's initial revelation of the events in Daniel 12:1-3 also speak of the resurrection of the wicked. But it is revealed in Revelation 20:4-15 that these, "...the rest of the dead..." would not arise from the dead until after the great reign of the Messiah for 1,000 years and after the judgment of Satan.

Micah's description of Israel's court trial before the Eternal is only preliminary. It does not fully develop the separation of the righteous from the wicked of the nation but rather shows that the nation does not have any offering whatsoever with which to appease the anger in the face of the Eternal (Micah 6:1-16). And that description in Micah 6 in turn precedes Micah's struggle as he attempts to understand how it will ever be possible for the Eternal to pardon the sins of his people. He does not understand How the Eternal Lord can turn again to his rebellious people and ultimately fulfill the great kingdom promises which He had made so long ago to the fathers of the nation (Micah 7:1-20).

The Eternal Lord's words to Isaiah so appropriately warn against the impossibility of Israel's attempt to provide their own righteousness after Messiah has given His life to bear the sins of the many (Isaiah 53:10-12). He says in Isaiah 54:17b, "This is the inheritance of the servants of the Eternal Lord, for their righteousness is of Me, says the Eternal Lord." His words anticipate the great words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21. "He [the Eternal] has made Him [the Messiah] Who knew no sin to be sin for us in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The Apostle Paul also indicates in Romans 3:21-28 that there is no room for one's boasting in having gained justification before God by works. He demonstrates that all of mankind, Jew or Gentile alike, all are saved in only one way. (21) "But now the righteousness of/from God [It could be either or both.], apart from the law has been manifested, being witnessed to by the law and by the prophets, (22) even the righteousness of/from God that is by means of faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all those that believe, for there is no difference, (23) for all sinned [It is not a perfect tense but refers to the fact that we all were in our ancestor Adam and as Adam participated in the garden rebellion. As a result, every human being has a sin nature. Romans 5:12 refers to this fact also.] and come short of the glory of God, (24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God [i.e., sins committed before the redemptive work of the Messiah on the cross], (26) to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who

believes in Jesus. (27) Where then is [there room for] boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of works? No, but [it is excluded] by the law of faith. (28) Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, wholly apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:21-28).

Since Micah's description of God's revelation of the impossibility of the nation (or of anyone) succeeding in providing their own righteousness before Him so closely parallels several great prophetic passages, I conclude that it is only after the nation has looked (with their minds as in Zechariah 12:10) upon Him whom they pierced that this judgment will take place.

Event # 15. THE TRIAL OF ISRAEL BY THE ETERNAL LORD (6:1-16)

The fifteenth great event that will precede the fulfillment of the Eternal's promises concerning the great Messianic kingdom is one discussed by several of the prophets. It actually is an event that follows the arrival of the Messiah to establish His earthly kingdom in Israel. But like several of the other great events that have been enumerated in Micah 5-6, this one also deliberately is not placed in order. In this case it appears that the Eternal's great court case against Israel deliberately is discussed before the final discussion of the book concerning the arrival of the Messiah. This is because of the impact that this great section should have on Messiah's people who have gone astray from Him.

This trial of living Israel also is described by the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 20 as he reports the words of the Eternal on the subject. After the Eternal has described the continual rebellion of the nation of Israel as they always turned away from Him, He nevertheless speaks of that day yet in the future when He would deal with the nation. Then He would designate those who would be allowed to return to the land from their worldwide exile to live in His presence in the great Messianic kingdom. (33) **"As I live, ' says the Lord God, 'surely I will be king over you with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm. (34) And I will cause you to come out from the peoples and I will gather you out from the countries among which you have been scattered, with a hand of strength and with an outstretched arm, even with fury that is poured out. (35) And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples [apparently the reference is to Trans-Jordan] and I will plead with you there face to face. (36) In the same way that I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, even in that way I will plead with you' says the Lord God. (37) 'Then I will cause you to pass underneath the rod and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. (38) Then I will purge out the ones who continually are rebelling from your midst, even those continually transgressing against Me. I will bring them out of the land where they have stayed [as temporary residents] but they will not enter into the land of Israel, and you experientially will know that I am the Eternal Lord'" (Ezek. 20:33-38).**

As noted earlier, the prophet Daniel received specific information about the precise time when this great judgment of Israel would take place. At his inquiry about the latter end of the time of Jacob's troubles, the three and one half times of Daniel 12:7, he was

told that the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous would take place 30 days after the end of those times. That is to say that the judgment of living Israel would take place 30 days after Messiah's arrival and the resulting deliverance of those in the land of Israel from their enemies that would have encircled them (Zech. 14:1-15). But it clearly takes place 45 days before the actual establishment of the kingdom that had been promised long ago in covenants. This is necessary because those promises included the ancestors of the nation of Israel. For example, it is promised in Ezekiel 34:23-25 that resurrected David at that time will minister over God's special people, Israel in the land. (23) **And I will establish one shepherd over them [over Israel in the land during the reign of Christ], and he will feed them, even My servant David. He will feed them, and he will be their shepherd. (24) And I [the Messiah], will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will cause the bad creatures to cease out of the land, and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and they will sleep in the woods. (25) And I will make them and the places around about My hill [of Zion] a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in its season. There will be showers of blessing. (27) And the tree of the field will yield its fruit, and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be safe in their land, and they will know that I am the Eternal Lord when I will have broken the bars of their yokes and will have delivered them out of the hands of those who will have brought them into captivity. (28) And no more will they become a prey to the Gentiles, neither will the beasts of the land devour them, but they will dwell safely, and no one will make them afraid. (29) And I will raise up a plant of renown for them, and they will no more be consumed by hunger in the land, neither will they bear the shame of the Gentiles any more. (30) In this way they will know that I, the Eternal Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord God. (31) And you, My flock, the flock of My pasture, will be men, [but] I [will be] your God,' says the Lord God."**

Daniel was briefly is revealed information in Daniel 12 about the separation of the wicked ones from the ones who have purified themselves. (8) **"And I heard, but I did not understand. As a result I said: 'My lord, what will be the latter end of these things?' (9) And he responded, 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are shut up until the time of the end. (10) Many will purify themselves, will make themselves white and they will refine themselves. The wicked ones will cause wickedness and none of the wicked ones will understand'" (Dan. 12:8-10).** Then, as we have seen, Daniel was given the chronological setting in which this separation of the righteous from the wicked of Israel will take place. The judgment of Israel will take place 3 1/2 Jewish years of 360 days and one month more after the defilement of the tribulation temple in the middle of the time of Jacob's troubles. Daniel is told, **"And from the time in which the continuous burnt offering will be taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up there will be one thousand, two hundred and ninety days"** (Dan. 12:11).

A final event of great significance and its precise timing of event that will occur at this time but is not mentioned through the Prophet Micah. It is the resurrection of Old Testament believers who have died. The timing of the resurrection of Old Testament saints often is mistakenly associated with the rapture of the Church. However, Paul in

First Thessalonians 4 and in Second Thessalonians 2:1-3 was led to reveal clearly that the up-gathering-together of the Church, which takes place just before the beginning of the seven year period of Jacob's troubles, the beginning of the Day of the Eternal Lord. On the other hand, it has been clearly revealed in Daniel 12 that the resurrection of Old Testament believers will not take place until 75 days after the end of the tribulation. The angel revealed this fact to Daniel as recorded in the last verses of that book. (12) **"Oh the blessings of the one who continues waiting and who comes to the one thousand and thirty five days. (13) Now go your way [Daniel] until the end of the days [of the 45 days beyond the judgment of the living or 75 days after the end of the tribulation] for you [i.e., your bodies, those of believing Israel, not of the Church] will continue to rest, but you will stand up in your lot at the end of the [1,335] days"** (Dan. 12:12-13).

Like Micah, Isaiah does not give chronological information in much detail when he speaks of the judgment of living Israel in Isaiah 65:1-16. Yet there are important chronological clues concerning the time when this would happen in the preceding context. It will take place at a time when the people of Israel will temporarily have come into possession of the place of the Eternal Lord's sanctuary and will have built their tribulation temple there. But this judgment of living Israel in preparation for their entry into the kingdom will occur only after Israel's tribulation sanctuary has been trodden down by the Gentiles. It is revealed that Israel in the land actually will be blaming the Lord for their own departure from Him that resulted in the loss of the tribulation temple. **"Oh Eternal Lord, why have you made us to depart from Your ways, and you have hardened our hearts from fearing you? Return for Your servants' sakes, the tribes of Your inheritance. The people of Your holiness [Israel] have possessed it for only a little while. Our adversaries have trampled down Your sanctuary"** (Isa. 63:17-18 in Engl., 64:9-10 in Heb.). This event is prophesied several times in the book of Daniel. Further information about this sad event is detailed very near the end of the New Testament in Revelation 11:1-2. The Apostle John describes that which was revealed to him about the ruin of Israel's tribulation temple. (1) **"And there was given to me a reed that was like a rod. Then the angel stood, saying, 'Rise up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those that worship in it. (2) But leave out the court, which is outside of the temple, and do not measure it, for it is given to the nations, and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty two months [the last 1,260 days of the seven years of Israel's trial]."**

But most important, the judgment of living Israel will take place after some of the nation has awakened to their waywardnesses and have become conscious that none of their own acts of righteousness have been worthy of His acceptance. (5) **"You met with favor those practicing righteousness, those who remembered You in Your ways. Look, You were angry for we missed our opportunity through them of old so that we might have been saved. (6) Therefore all of us have become like one who is unclean and all of our righteousnesses are like the garment of a woman in her period. We all are caused to fade like a leaf because our iniquities take us away like the wind. (7) Indeed, there is no one who had been calling on Your name [the name Yehoshua, "the Eternal Lord will save"], no one who has been rousing himself up to take hold of You.**

Surely You have hidden Your face from us and You have consumed us through the hand of our iniquities" (Isa. 64:5-7 in Engl., 64:4-6 in Heb.).

Notice that once again the crucial flow of a crucial prophetic passage has been re-divided in the Hebrew chapter divisions in such a way that it makes it more difficult for the Hebrew reader to recognize the full significance of the flow of the context. And notice that this is a context describing Israel's future repentance and confession. It acknowledges the passing of many years for the ancient people of God of wrong doing with reference to Him. It is a context in which Israel begins to call upon the Eternal to come down and to deliver them. It is a context which begins for the moment with man's natural reaction, for it begins by blaming God for all of the nation's wanderings away from Him. **"Oh Eternal Lord, Why have You made us to err from Your ways and have hardened our hearts from Your fear? "** (Isa. 63:17a). But the prophet Isaiah makes it clear that in one day in the future that attitude will change. This errant prayer is followed by an appeal for the Eternal Lord to return. (63:17b) **"... Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance! (64:1) ...Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might quake at Your presence (2) in the way that fire ignites the bushes and fire causes waters to begin to boil. [Do this] in order to make Your name known to Your adversaries that the Gentiles might begin to tremble at Your presence, (3) even as when You did wondrous things which we did not even hope for. Do come down with the result that the mountains might tremble at Your presence!"** (Isa. 63:17b, 19, & 64:1-2 in Engl., 63:19, 64:1-2 in Heb.).

It is in such a context in the Isaiah 65 that the Eternal Lord begins to speak of the separation of the wicked from the righteous, declaring the awful ways of those who turned from Him to practice all kinds of wicked ways, including their scorning of the poor Gentiles. In the very next chapter the Eternal rebukes them for their attitude toward the Gentiles. (2) **"I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people who have been walking in the way which is not good, after their own thoughts. [They are] (3) A people provoking Me continually to my face, sacrificing in the gardens and burning incense upon the bricks. (4) They have been sitting among the graves and they stay in the burial vaults. They have been eating the flesh of pigs and broth from abominable things that are in their bowls. (5) They are saying: 'Come near to yourself! Do not come near to me because I am holier than you are!' These things are smoke in my nostrils, a fire which continually burns all of the day. (6) See, it is written before Me: 'I will not continue to remain silent except I give back in return. Indeed, I will return into their bosoms (7) your own iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together those things which they offered upon the mountains and they have blasphemed Me upon the hills. Therefore first of all I will measure out their wages into their bosoms' says the Eternal Lord. "** (Isa. 65:2-7).

But it is in such an awful context of judgment of Israel that the Eternal Lord begins to speak in Isaiah 65 of the sparing of the righteous of Israel by separating the wicked of Israel from them. (8) **"This is what the Eternal Lord says. 'Even as when grape juice is found in the cluster, then one says: 'Do not destroy it because there is a blessing in it, even so will I do for my servant's sake with the result that I might**

not destroy all of them. (9) This is because I will bring forth a seed [a remnant] out of Jacob, even one that will inherit My mountains. [I will do this] in order that My elect ones may inherit it and my servants may reside there permanently. (10) For Sharon will be a fold for flocks and the valley of Achor will be a place where herds will lie down for My people who have sought me" (Isa. 65:8-10).

The Eternal continues to reveal through the prophet Isaiah in chapter 66 the awful judgment which will fall upon those who have turned away from Him and have chosen to walk in their own wicked ways. (3b) ". . . Just as they themselves have chosen their own way and their soul has delighted in their abominations, (4) I Myself also will choose their mockings and I will bring the things that they feared upon them. The reason is that I called but no one answered. I spoke but they did not hear. Instead they continued to do that which was the evil thing in My eyes and they chose that thing in which I did not delight" (Isa. 66:3b-4).

But the Eternal Lord also has a wonderful word of encouragement for the remnant who were despised by the rebels of Israel. Isaiah speaks of the entirely new conditions that will be provided for those who enter Messiah's kingdom. Indeed, Isaiah 66 gives the reader a glimpse of the glory of the Messianic kingdom when Messiah the King Himself will be present in Israel's midst. "Hear the word of the Eternal Lord, You who have been trembling at His word: 'Your brothers who have been hating you, driving you away because of My name's sake, [who mockingly have said]: 'May the Eternal Lord be glorified with the result that your joy may be seen!' But they will be ashamed!" (Isa. 66:5).

In intervening sections between the promises of the Eternal for the righteous in Isa. 66:15-20, Isaiah continued to speak of the judgment by means of which the Eternal will bring about the separation of the wicked from the righteous of Israel. (15) "For see, the Eternal Lord will be coming with fire and His chariots will be like the whirlwind to bring His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. (16) The reason is that the Eternal Lord will enter into judgment by means of fire and by means of His sword [He will contend] with all flesh. And those who will be slain by the Eternal Lord will be many. (17) Those who have been setting themselves apart and purifying themselves [to enter] into the gardens behind the one [the leader in pagan worship or the god being worshipped] who is in its midst, eating the flesh of pigs and the detestable thing and the mouse will be consumed together' says the Eternal Lord. (18) The reason is I [know all about] their works and their thoughts. It [the time] will come to gather all of the Gentiles and all of the language groups, and they will come and they will see My glory. (19) For I will perform a sign in their midst and I will send from those who escape [of Israel] to the Gentiles, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, those who draw the bow, to Tubal and Greece, [and to] the islands which are far off, to those who have not heard of My fame and have not seen My glory. And they will make known My glory among the Gentiles. (20) 'Then,' says the Eternal Lord, 'they will bring all of your brothers out from all of the Gentiles upon horses, in chariots, in litters and upon mules and on swift animals to My holy mountain Jerusalem for an offering to the Eternal Lord.' It will be even the way that the children of Israel

bring their offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Eternal Lord'" (Isa. 66:15-20).

How glorious will that future day be for Israel when they are gathered back into the presence of their Messiah! The One Who has Israel engraved on the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:15-16) already had promised that He would do this for the dispersed nation of Israel. That promise is found in Isaiah 49:22-23. (22) **"...See, I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles and I will set up My ensign for the peoples [Israel]. Then they [the Gentiles] will bring your sons in their bosoms and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders. (23) Then kings will be your foster fathers and queens will be your nursing mothers. They will bow down to You with their faces to the earth and they will lick the dust of your feet, and you will know that I [the Messiah] am the Eternal Lord, for they will not be ashamed who will be waiting for Me."**

It should be noticed that this return of Israel in the hands of believing Gentiles appears to follow the initial resettling of the land of Israel as described in previous verses. In Isaiah 49:18-21 speaks of that initial regathering. (18) **"Lift up your eyes all about and see. All of them gather themselves together and they come to you. 'As I live,' declares the Eternal Lord, 'You will clothe yourself with them as with a garment and you will be dressing like a bride. (19) It will be because your waste places and your desolate places and your destroyed land will be too small for the inhabitants, and those will be far away who were swallowing you. (20) The children of your time of bereavement will say in your ears, 'The place is too narrow for me! Give me a place so that I may reside! (21) They you will say in your heart: 'Who has fathered these for me, for I have been bereaved and I have been solitary, an exile, even wandering to and fro? And these, who has raised these up? See, I was left alone. Where were these?"** That this actually reveals the chronological order of events as Israel begins to go back to the land even before the Messiah reveals Himself to the nation is confirmed by other prophetic passages.

Ezekiel 36 is one of the great prophetic passages which clearly indicates that the nation will come back to life politically and will be settled in the land in unbelief by the Lord, the Eternal One. This would be done in order that He might judge them, blot out their failures and cleanse them as He is setting His great name apart. Ezekiel 35 and the early part of 36 describe the situation which the early part of the '**aliah** , the initial return of Israel's exiles to the land which had been promised to them long ago. This section announces nearly 2,600 years before its complete fulfillment began to come to pass that the Edomites and those related to Mt. Seir or Petra would occupying the land and claiming it as their own. The Eternal gives seven reasons for the dispossession of that people before the exiles of Israel as they began to return to their homeland. These reasons are:

1. The perpetual hatred of the descendants of Ishmael and other Arab ancestors. **"...Oh Mount Seir, behold, I am against you and I will give My hand against you and I will make you exceedingly desolate, and you will know that I Myself am the Eternal Lord. The reason is there has been to you a perpetual hatred..." (Ezek. 35:3-5a).**

2. The second reason for the desolation of Idumea (36:5) grows directly out of that undying hatred which its inhabitants have always had toward Israel. (5b) **"...And you have delivered the children of Israel to the edge of the sword in a time of their calamity (Obad. 13), in the time of the ending of their iniquity. (6) Therefore, as I Myself live,' declares the Lord, the Eternal, 'most surely I will prepare you to blood and blood will pursue you. Most surely you have hated blood [the blood of your blood brothers of Israel]. Therefore blood will pursue you. (7) For I will make Mount Seir to be an exceedingly desolate and I will cut off from it the one who will be passing through and the one who is returning. (8) And I will fill its mountains with its slain and in your hills and in your valleys and in all of your streams those having been slain by the sword. (9) I will make you perpetual desolations neither will your cities come to return, and you will know that I Myself am the Eternal Lord"** (Ezek. 35:5b-10).

3. The third reason for the utter desolation of Idumea which is given through Ezekiel by the Eternal Lord focuses upon the occupation of the territories of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, Israel and Judah, after the Eternal Himself had removed its Jewish populations in judgment for their sins. As I have mentioned, I was fascinated to discover that the Paite, Manipuri and Tedim Chin peoples of East India keep the feast of unleavened bread every spring just as God's people had been instructed in the book of Leviticus while they still were in their wilderness journey out of Egypt. Since then a member of the Manipuri tribe has also told me that his people have very similar conduct concerning uncleanness as is described in the book of Leviticus. This includes the period of uncleanness after a mother has born a child, her period and such things.

The Arab peoples moved into Israel when they found it emptied and, because of their long stay there before the return of Israel began, they claim it as their own and even call it Palestine after the Philistines to remove the name of Israel from it. In Ezekiel 35:10-11 the Eternal says this of their occupation and grasping after the land of Israel. (10) **"Because of your saying: 'These two nations and these two lands have come to belong to me and we possess it.' But the Eternal Lord was there. (11) 'Therefore, as I live,' declares the Lord, the Eternal One, 'Surely I will do according to your anger and according to your envy which you have done out of your hatred against them [i.e., those of Israel] when I will judge you"** (Ezek. 35:10-11).

4. Once again the next reason for the judgment of the Arabs by the Eternal grows out of the previous reason. This is found in Ezekiel 35:12-15. All of their blasphemies against the Eternal and against His land that He had given to Israel have been noted by Him. (12) **"And you will know that I Myself am the Eternal Lord. I have heard all of your blasphemies that you have spoken upon the mountains of Israel in saying: 'They have been laid desolate. to us they have been given to devour.'** (13) **Furthermore you have magnified yourselves against Me with your mouths and you have multiplied your words against Me. I have heard.'** (14) **This is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says: 'When all of the land rejoices, I will make you desolate. (15) As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it had become desolate, even so will I do to you. You will become desolate, Oh Mount Seir and all of Edom, even all of it, and they will know that I Myself am the Eternal Lord"** (Ezek. 35:12-15).

5. The fifth reason for the judgment of the Arab peoples by the Eternal Lord relates to their occupation of the ancient temple site which had been selected by David and on which the temple of Solomon had been built by his son, Solomon. Indeed, that same site had been the place where those who returning from the Babylonian exile had built the Second Temple, the temple of Zerubabel. It was that temple, rebuilt by Herod, that had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. The occupation of that holy site and the building of the Dome of the Rock now is given as a further reason for the desolation of Israel's blood brothers that long had despised them. Ezekiel is told in the beginning of chapter 36: And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say: (1b) **'You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Eternal Lord: (2) This is what the Lord, the Eternal One says: 'Because the enemy has said 'Aha!' against you, 'Even the eternal high places belong to us!' (3) 'Therefore prophesy and say, 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says. 'Because, even by the reason that they have made you desolate, even trampling on you on every side in order that you might be to them as a possession to the rest of the [Arab] nations, and you have been taken up on the lips of talkers and the report of the people. (4) Therefore, you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord, the Eternal One: 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says to the mountains and to the hills, to the streams and to the valleys, to the desolate places and to the cities which have been forsaken, which were a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations which are around about [the nation of Israel]. . . "** (Ezek. 36:1-4).

As a consequence of the way that the Arab nations have treated the land of Israel, The Eternal Lord then speaks of the judgment that would fall upon those nations. (5) **"Therefore this is what the Lord, Eternal One, says: 'Most surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the remainder of the Gentiles and against all of Edom, against those who have appointed My land to themselves to be a possession with the joy of all hearts, with contempt of soul so that its open country was for a prey. (6) Therefore prophesy about the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the streams and to the valleys, this is what the Lord, the Eternal One says. 'See, in My jealousy and in My fury I have spoken because you [mountains of Israel] have borne the shame of the Gentiles.'** (7) **Therefore this is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says: 'I have lifted My hand up. Surely the Gentiles that are around about you will bear their shame"** (Ezek. 36:5-7).

Following such a series of statements about the judgment of the Edomites and of those related to Petra, that ancient city Mt. Seir, one will find the climactic promises of the preliminary return of some of the nation of Israel from their exile. (8) **"But you, mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and you will lift up your fruit to my people Israel, because they are near to [their] return. (9) For see, I am for you and I will turn to you and you will be farmed and sown. (10) For I will multiply man upon you, even all of the house of Israel, even all of them, and the cities will be inhabited and the waste lands will be built, (11) for I will multiply man and beast upon you. Then they will become many and they will bear fruit and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and I will do better [to you] than in your**

beginnings. Then you will know that I am the Eternal Lord. (12) Then I will cause man to go up upon you, even my people Israel, and they will possess you and you will be to them for an inheritance... " (Ezek. 36:8-12a).

That this is return which even now populates many of the formerly desolated hills of Israel is only preliminary is shown by Ezekiel 36:24. In the verses that intervene it is clear that the Eternal has brought this preliminary return back to the land in order that He may deal with them about their relationship to Him. There have been many who have said that perhaps this return is only temporary and those who have returned to the land may be destroyed or ejected from the land of Israel. The Eternal makes it clear in six powerful statements that this will not be so. The larger context from chapter 35 has described how the Arab peoples would be settled in Israel's territories and would be claiming it as their own when this return would take place. In that context the Eternal Lord emphatically says to the mountains of Israel that His people Israel will be caused to reoccupy them once again to become their inheritance. Six times He insists that this return will never be interrupted by an expulsion. He says:

1. **'...You [mountains of Israel] no more will bereave them [the people of Israel] of children after this" (Ezek. 36:12b).**

2. **"...You [mountains of Israel] will not devour men any more..." (Ezek. 36:14a).**

3. **"...Neither will you bereave your nations [Judah and Israel] any more says the Lord, the Eternal One" (Ezek. 36:14b).**

4. **"...Neither will I cause the shame of the nations to be heard against you [you mountains of Israel]..." (Ezek. 36:15a).**

5. **"...Neither will you [oh you mountains of Israel] suffer the reproach of the Gentiles any more..." (Ezek. 36:15b).**

6. **"..Neither will you [you mountains of Israel] cause your nations [Judah and Israel] to stumble any more' says the Lord, the Eternal One" (Ezek. 36:15c).**

The purpose of this preliminary return to the land of Israel today plainly is set forth by the Eternal in Ezekiel 36:16-23. The initial stage of the exile in which some of Israel have returned to the land that was given to them by the Eternal Lord long ago is described in verses 16-19. **"Furthermore the Word of the Eternal Lord came to me saying: (17) 'Son of man, [when] the house of Israel was living upon their own land, then they defiled it in their ways and in their doings. Their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. (18) Therefore I proceeded to pour out my fury on them on account of the blood which they shed upon the land and they defiled it with their idols. (19) Therefore I scattered them among the Gentiles and they came to be dispersed among the countries. I judged them according to their ways and according to their doings."** It had been the uncleanness of their ways that had brought about their exile. I have met these exiles in places as far away from Israel as East India. The Eternal Lord explains their wickedness that brought their dispersion in order to show that He would have been just in never returning them from their exile. Indeed, the Eternal shows in verses 20-21 that Israel's conduct among the Gentiles, while they were expelled from their land, in itself would have justified His discarding the nation except for the wonderful fact that His holy name was involved. (20) **"And**

whenever they came unto the Gentiles wherever they went they profaned my holy name. They did this in that men were saying about them: 'These are the people of the Eternal Lord but from His land they are gone out. (21) But I became full of pity for My holy name which the house of Israel had profaned among the Gentiles wherever they went" (Ezek. 36:21).

As a result, the Eternal promised through the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36:22-23 that the day would come that He would begin to return them to the land that He had given to their forefathers long ago. But He assures this wayward people that it is because of His own holy name and not because of anything special in them that will cause Him to begin that return from exile. (22) **"Therefore speak to the house of Israel: 'This is what the Lord, the Eternal One, says: 'I will not be doing this for your sake, oh house of Israel, but rather for My holy name which you have profaned among the Gentiles wherever you went, (23) for I will set apart My name, the great one [probably the name Jesus, which means "the Eternal Lord will save"], which was being utterly profaned among the Gentiles, which you utterly profaned in their midst. Then the Gentiles will know that I am the Eternal Lord,' declares the Lord, the Eternal One, 'in my being set apart in you before their eyes'" (Ezek. 36:22-23).**

Ezekiel 36:24-25 appears to indicate that a much greater return to the land, which will be accompanied by great cleansing and transformation of the nation, will follow that preliminary return which already has been taking place. These verses also declare the purpose of this greater return that will immediately precede the full reestablishing of the nation back in their land, fully restored to the Eternal Lord through His dealing with them. This will be done precisely as had been promised long ago through the prophet Jeremiah in the New Covenant as described in Jeremiah 31:31-34. (31) **"Behold, the days will be coming, declares the Eternal Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (32) It will not be according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand in order to bring them out of the land of Egypt, in as much as they broke My covenant even though I was a lord over them' declares the Eternal Lord. (33) But instead this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days' declares the Eternal Lord. 'I will place My law in their inner parts and I will write it in their hearts. Then I will be their God and they will be My people, (34) and all of the people will never more teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the Eternal Lord,' for all of them will know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, declares the Eternal Lord. The reason is because I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.**

Here in Ezekiel 36:24 the physical return to the land is first promised. **"For I will take you out from the Gentiles and will gather you out of all of the countries and I will bring you into your own land."** In Ezekiel 36:25-31 the Eternal promises the spiritual return of the people of Israel to their Lord. **"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I fully will cleanse you from all of your uncleannesses and from all of your idols" (Ezek. 36:25).** Now most of Israel has never openly indulged in idol worship since the terrible judgment of the Babylonian captivity. But that is not so

of some of Israel who have been scattered for 2700 years out of the northern kingdom among the pagans. I have spoken of my contact with old Jam Khothang from East India in 1993. He was one of the national translators who gave me clear indication that his was a people who still practiced some of the Levitical regulations found in the books of Moses. While this great spiritual leader has faithfully worked for years in order to have the entirety of God's Word in the hands of his people, many of whom now love the Eternal, it was not many years ago that this people were idol and demon worshippers. Since 1947 this beloved pastor, teacher and Bible translator has watched the Gospel drive demon worship from the 50,000 tribal peoples who live in northeastern India. He says: "All of our people have heard the Gospel. Thirty-one thousand have turned to the Lord. Our 120 churches eagerly are waiting for a reliable Bible in the Paite language." As a result of the excellent work of Bibles International, these now have their New Testaments and parts of the Old Testament completed.

Since then I have talked with another Manipuri tribesman who now is a translation consultant, trained in the Biblical languages and checking work done by national translators of his own tribe and of other tribes. He confirmed that which Mani Singh rightly had told me about the practices of Levitical cleanness that still are practiced by members of the Manipuri tribe. He described to me several more of the rules of uncleanness that had been given long ago through Moses, that still were being practiced by this people of East India. The thousands of these tribes, which have blood roots in the northern kingdom called Israel, who have accepted their Messiah, will ascend with the Church when He comes in the air for them before the start of Israel's time of trouble. Others will be regathered seven years later when their Messiah returns to the Mount of Olives and delivers those of the land who are trapped in Jerusalem by the armies of the world. Surely this latter event is one of the sad cups which Israel must drink before the ultimate establishment of the great Messianic kingdom on earth, administered from the capital, Jerusalem.

a. THE ETERNAL LORD'S COURT CASE AGAINST ISRAEL (6:1-4)

Micah 6-7 marvelously states the confusion of the prophet Micah as he wrestles mentally with the fifteen delays that long have stood in the way of the fulfillment of the great covenant promises made long ago by the Eternal Lord with the ancestors of the nation of Israel. Micah recognized the utter plight of the defendant, the nation of Israel, as the nation one day would stand before the bar of justice of the Eternal. He introduced that which caused his confusion in Micah 6:1-4. Already in Micah 1-3 the prophet has reported the awful judgment that had to fall upon the wayward peoples of both Israel and Judah because of their waywardnesses. He now in these last two chapters of his book is faced with the fact that the nation one day must stand at the bar of justice before the Eternal. He is told in the beginning of chapter six that the land itself which had been stained so often by the rebelliousnesses of both of the nation's kingdoms was to be the jury. (1) "Hear now I pray that which the Eternal Lord is saying: 'Rise up! Contend in court before the mountains and let the hills hear your voice. (2) Hear, you

mountains and you enduring rocks [which form] the foundations of the land, hear the court case of the Eternal Lord. The reason is that a court case is possessed by the Eternal Lord with His people, and He will enter a plea against Israel. (3) 'My people, what have I done to you and in what have I wearied you? Answer against Me. (4) For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage I redeemed you and I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam before you.'" (Mic. 6:1-4).

This call of the nation of Israel to court before the Eternal Lord echoes the way that the book of Micah began. There, even as here, the prophet spoke forth the words of the Eternal to the divided kingdoms, Judah and Israel. There the Eternal also called the peoples of these two kingdoms as the defendants in His court. But in Micah six all of the peoples of the earth are called to join the jury and hear the presentation as the Eternal Lord, the prosecuting attorney presents His case against His wayward people. This actually appears to be a major theme of the book of Micah. The call to court begins in Micah one in this way. (2) **"Hear peoples, all of you! Give ear, oh earth and all of its fullness, and let the Lord, the Eternal One, begin to be a witness against you, even the Lord from His holy temple. (3) For see, the Eternal Lord is coming out from His place and He will tread upon the high places of the land. (4) Then the mountains will be molten under Him and the valleys will be split open like wax which is before the fire, like waters being poured down a steep place. (5) All of this will be for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?"** (Mic. 1:2-5).

In Micah 6:3 the Eternal Lord asks this of the nation after He has explained many of the hardships and events and judgments which must precede the establishing of their great Messianic kingdom. **"... What have I done to you and in what have I wearied you?** It is this twofold question that focuses all attention on the fact that the failure has not been the failure of the Eternal Lord. It has been the failure of the people of the divided kingdoms that has brought all of the trials which have been unfolded between Micah 4:9 and this point in the text. Ultimately this factor becomes the source of the prophet's agony that continues on into chapter seven as he wrestles with the problem of Israel's lack of an adequate sacrifice to bring about the forgiveness of their sins.

b. THE LESSON FOR ISRAEL FOUND IN BALAAM'S WORDS (6:5-8)

Micah is an agonized prophet who, speaking for the Eternal, details the Divine Judge's plea as He seeks to bring the wandering people of Israel back to Himself. We have seen Him cry: **"My people, what have I done to you and in what way have I caused you to be weary? Respond against Me"** (Mic. 6:3).

As the prophet, speaking for the Eternal, seeks to help the nation to recognize their utter inability to offer any righteous act that would bring about their forgiveness, he quotes the words of that wayward prophet, Balaam. Through this means he seeks to show to them how far short of delivering themselves they are before the Eternal. The Lord calls upon the people of Israel to face up to this fact and realize that they have no basis

for justification before their great Judge. **"My people, please remember what Balak, the king of Moab, devised and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim to Gilgal in order that you may know the righteousness of the Eternal Lord"** (Mic. 6:5). These words that follow, that Balaam spoke at that time, are known only from this context. The agony of the soul of Balaam is obvious in his words. He acknowledges that there is no sacrifice which man may offer which could possibly take away the awfulness of his sin. He himself repeatedly had attempted to curse God's people. Then he apparently had counseled Balak to bring judgment on Israel by sending prostitutes among their men (Num. 25:1-18). His groaning highlights the impossibility of any man doing anything or offering anything that could take away his sin. God alone could accomplish that through the then future work of the Messiah. He speaks of his plight before God in this way. (6) **"With what may I come near the Eternal Lord? Shall I bow myself down to God on high? Shall I come near to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? (7) Will the Eternal Lord be satisfied with thousands of rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Should I give my firstborn child for my transgression or the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (8) It has been told to you, oh man what is good, and what the Eternal Lord is requiring from you: only to do justly and love mercy and to be humble with your God"** (Mic. 6:6-8).

The plea of the Eternal Lord which He makes to wayward Israel includes this agonized cry of Balaam to show the nation of Israel the hopelessness of any attempt to gain redemption or a righteous standing before Him. It is obvious that there is nothing that they might bring to God and there is no act that they might do which will achieve the holiness which one must have to stand justified before a holy God. It will be seen from the final chapter of Micah that even the prophet Micah did not know at that time how the Eternal could possibly forgive the Northern and Southern Kingdoms for the sins which have been detailed in Micah 1:1-5:1 (Engl). But it is clear from the last chapter of Micah that the prophet, completely trusting in the covenant promises of the Eternal, was certain that somehow He would provide that means. The writer of the New Testament book written to the Hebrews resolves this dilemma. (1) **"For the law, having a shadow of good things to come and not having the very image of the things, can never by means of those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make perfect those who came to it. (2) for then wouldn't those sacrifices have ceased to be offered because the worshippers, having been once for all cleansed, no longer would have consciousness of sins. (3) But on the contrary, there is in them a reminder of sins yearly (4) because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"** (Heb. 10:1-4). The writer then speaks of the one means by which sins were fully paid for and completely taken away. (11) **"Now on the one hand every priest stood ministering priestly service daily and offering often the same sacrifices. (12) But He [Messiah], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins unto the end of time, sat down on the right hand of God"** (Heb. 10:11-12).

It is also clear that every man on earth needs to understand the truth understood by Balaam, the prophet of God. It is a truth that the apostle Paul strongly emphasizes in Romans 4. There the apostle shows that there is no work that a man can do, no work that

another can do upon him which will result in his having a righteous standing before the holy God. (4) "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as a debt. (5) But to the one who does not work but believes on the One Who justifies the ungodly ones, his faith is counted to him for righteousness, (6) even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes [to one's account] righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:4-6).

c. THE DISCIPLINE OF ISRAEL BY THEIR LORD

The prophet Micah in this section of his book (6:1-16) reveals the helplessness of fallen man to accomplish anything that will help God to redeem his soul. (9) "Now hear that which the Eternal Lord says: 'Rise up! Plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, (2) Oh you mountains, listen to the Eternal Lord's court case, even you strong foundations of the earth. The reason is because the Eternal Lord has a court case against His people, and He will bring His charges against Israel. (3) Oh My people, what is it that I have done unto you? And how have I caused you to be weary? (4) Testify against Me, for I brought you up out of the land of Egypt. I redeemed you out of the house of bondage, and I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam before you. (5) Oh My people, remember now that which Balak, the king of Moab, counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor responded to Him from the Acacia Grove to Gilgal, in order that you may come to understand the righteousness of the Eternal Lord. (6) [For Balaam said:] 'With what can I come before the Eternal Lord to bow myself down before the High God? Could I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves one year old? (7) Will the Eternal Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Could I give my firstborn for my transgression, even the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' [And the Eternal Lord responded], (8) He has shown you, oh man, that which is good. And what is the Eternal Lord require of you but that you should do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:1-8).

The Eternal first addresses each man, setting forth the just requirement which He Himself had set before the nation of Israel (Mic. 6:8). He literally is addressing every person in the nation when He says: "He has told you, oh man, that which is good, and that which the Eternal Lord is requiring from you, but that you should do justice and love mercy and humbly walk with your God" (Mic. 6:8).

Then the Eternal makes it clear that nothing that a man can give or do can clear him of his iniquity or cause God to count him pure. (9) "Listen! The Eternal Lord cries unto the city, and it is wisdom to fear Your name. Hear the rod and Who has appointed it. [i.e., the Eternal is the One Who has brought the unending waves of judgment upon the nation over the centuries of their suffering]. (10) Are the treasures of wickedness still in the house of the wicked and the scanty measure that is abominable [to God]? (11) Shall I be pure with wicked balances and with a bag of deceitful weights, (12) whose rich men are full of violence and whose residents have spoken lies and their tongues are treacherous in their mouths?" (Mic. 6:10-12). In this section the Eternal

makes it very clear that He will in no way compromise with the sinner. Discipline is all that can be expected for the wicked because the Eternal will not bargain with them for their forgiveness. Those who give great gifts for the building of temples or for caring for the poor are following the wrong way in seeking to gain righteousness. Righteousness lies at the pathway followed by those who will turn to a walk by faith.

Now the Eternal One explains the extensiveness and the terrible nature of the punishment that those who continue to stray from the Eternal may expect from Him. (13) **"Therefore I also will begin to smite you, making you desolate because of your sins. (14) You will eat but you will not come to be satisfied. Yes, your sickness will be in your innermost body. Yes, you will conceive but you will not bring forth, and whoever you do bring forth I will proceed to give to the sword"** (Mic. 6:13-14). This judgment which the Eternal would bring upon His erring people would ruin their efforts to remain farmers. (15) **"You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olives but you will not get to anoint yourself with oil. [You will tend the vines] but you will not get to drink the wine (16) because you keep the statutes of Omri and all of the works of the house of Ahab and in their counsels you continue to walk. [I will do this] in order to make you to be an astonishment and the residents of it into a hissing, for you will bear the reproach of My people"** (6:15-16).

The horrors of all that Israel was destined to face because of sins like those listed in Micah chapters one through three overwhelm Micah. He turns now to the apparent impossibility that any of Israel should escape this awful judgment series and yet survive. And yet he comes to the realization, which many of Israel today have forgotten, that the Eternal never goes back on His word. That which He has promised He also will keep even though He may delay for centuries until His judgment has run its course. He will keep those things which He promised through Micah in Micah 34:1-8 even though this dread series of fifteen events, fifteen bitter cups, which the prophet has listed will precede the fulfillment of the great covenant promises of the Eternal. Nevertheless the agony which tore the soul of the prophet deeply stains the early verses of chapter seven as the prophet wrestles with the apparent impossibility of their fulfillment because of the waywardnesses of the children of Israel.

UNTIL THE TIME

(Micah 6)

Help me, my Lord, that I may know the righteousness of my God!
We as a nation long have sinned, ignoring Your Shepherd's rod.
How may we stand within Your court, forgiven of all of our sin?
Wherewith shall we before You come that You may restore again?

Rivers of oil? A thousand rams? Or calves for an offering?
Or, like the heathen all around, the fruit of our bodies bring?
"Often He showed you what is good and what He required of you.
What can the Judge of all the earth but righteousness swiftly do?"

"Are there yet treasures with the rich that He will now count them pure?
Should He deceitful scales now use or judge by His counsel sure?"
Smiting and bruising He will give until you will return to Him.
Exile and travail will be yours who smote Him from Bethlehem.
But in the last days you will come. Your trouble will make it be,
Pain like a woman in deep travail until you will turn to Me.

How difficult it is for one in great travail to recognize the ultimate purpose that the Eternal has for that trial! Oh to learn to **"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS . . ."** (Phil. 4:4). What trials, what agony lies heavily on those who know not for whom they wait!

HOW LONELY NOW YOU SIT!

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How lonely now you sit! How like a widow you who long ago was great!
How bitterly through day and night you weep alone, Oppressed by friends who now are foes,
By those whose cedars once stood high as temple beams. How long among the nations
Scattered wide you mourned, so far from Him Who was your Lord betrothed!

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Your streets are filled with throngs
And yet you weep, for still your exiled children wait for what they do not know,
Who know not who they are, the ten lost tribes in Indian hills,
By cruel kings now scattered wide, their home forgot!
I pray for you and for the day that you will wake,
Look up with joy to see Him come, your Lord and King.

Chapter Five:

THE FULFILLMENT OF ISRAEL'S PROMISES IN THE LATTER DAYS

IN SPITE OF THEIR WICKED WAYS (7:1-20)

A. THE PROPHET AGONIZES AT THE APPARENT IMPOSSIBILITY OF THAT DELIVERANCE (7:1-6)

The prophet's first thoughts, when the realization of the awful judgments that would face his people penetrates his thinking, concern the hopelessness of his people. It would appear that they have been left with no way to escape the judgment of the Eternal! All of his people have gone in their own way with nothing to commend them to the justice of their God. Like Elijah he mourns, thinking that he alone is left of the righteous (1 Ki. 18:21-22). Israel's sins are universal.

Micah cries in his agony in chapter seven. (1) **"Woe is me! The reason is that I have become like the last of the summer fruits, like the gleaned grapes left from the harvest. There is no cluster for one to eat, no choice fig for my soul. (2) The saint has perished out from the land and the upright among mankind no longer exists. All of them lie in wait for blood. With a net each man hunts his brother. (3) There hands are upon the hurtful thing to do it diligently. the prince and the judge both are continually asking for a bribe, and the great man is speaking the thing which in his soul. In this way they weave it [their sin] together. (4) The best of them is like a thorn. The upright one is more than a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, even your visitation [with punishment] has come. Now their perplexity has come. Do not trust in a neighbor. (5) Do not come to place confidence in a close friend. Keep the doors of your mouth from the one who is lying in your bosom. (6) The reason is that the son is utterly dishonoring the [his] father. The daughter will rise up against her mother-in-law. The enemies of a man will be the people of his own house"** (Mic. 7:1-6).

WHO IS LIKE JAH?

Micah 6-7)

Who is like you, Oh Jah, my God, Who pardons iniquity
While our transgressions passing by, delighting in mercy free?
Who is like you, Oh Jah, my God? But how can you pardon me?
Lord, we have sinned but we will wait; Your righteousness we shall see!

Covenant promise you will keep, the mercy that you have sworn.
Nations will fear when you return our heritage from us torn.
Who is a God like you, our God, whose promises all are true,
Who, after judging all our sin, will somehow our sin subdue?

B. MICAH WAITS FOR THE ETERNAL TO KEEP HIS PROMISE (7:7-10)

The prophet sets forth his own anguished wait for the promised latter days of blessing that had been promised to Israel so long ago. In a remarkable way he sets forth the agony of each Israelite who waits, without understanding of the means by which the Eternal will keep His covenant promises to the nation. The faith of the prophet is beautiful. He painfully is aware of the Eternal's great covenant promises for the Lord's people. He bows his head as he faces this great series of events that must intervene before the great Messianic kingdom would be established for his people in their land. Yet through it all, there is an unshaken confidence that, after all of the trials that face them, the Eternal will hear their cry of repentance and will respond. Micah's words which boldly express his confidence in the Eternal and in His faithfulness should be the expression of each of God's chosen people as they wait for the One who is ever faithful in spite of their unfaithfulness. (7) **"But as for me, I will look to the Eternal Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. (8) Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. when I fall down, I will arise. When I sit in darkness the Eternal Lord will be my light. (9) I will continue to bear the indignation of the Eternal Lord until He comes to plead my court case and brings my justice because I have sinned against Him. He will bring me out into the light. Finally I will come to see His righteousness"** (Mic. 7:7-9).

It is sad that for so many in Israel that unshakable faith in the promises of the Eternal has faded away and they no longer can see the glories of the kingdom ahead which He promised through Micah in chapter 4:1-8. But He will come just as He promised to deliver the nation that for centuries has struggled through the troubled waters which have been described in Micah 4:9-6:16. With eager anticipation the prophet looks forward to the day when Gentile oppression will cease. No longer will he and his people suffer the mockery of those who long have denied that Israel would ever have a future in their land under His covenant promises made long ago. No longer will Micah and his people suffer the mockery of those who denied that Israel would ever have a future before the Eternal Lord. **"Then my enemy will see and shame will cover her, that one who continually was saying to me, 'Where is the Eternal Lord, your God?' My eyes will look even on her. Now she will come to be trodden down like mire in streets"** (Mic. 7:10).

THE SOUNDS OF HIS COMING

I hear the sound of the ruffle of drums far away. Whence can it come? From a hill?
From the field? Is it borne on the wind? Does it call? Does it warn?
What is the message I hear on the wind, That rustles with the leaves
As they tremble on the wind?

'Tis the thrum of a drum to announce to the worldf the coming of the King,
of the massing of His troops, Of the coming of the judgment of His foes.
Who will stand? Who will fight? Who will fall like the chaff
That is driven on the wind? Hear the drums?
Hear the trumpets as they peal?

C. THE BEAUTIFUL DAY WHEN MESSIAH WILL SHEPHERD THE RESTORED FLOCK OF ISRAEL (7:11-17)

The prophet Micah greatly anticipates that glorious day when the Gentile lies which have attempted to strip Israel of the promises of future glory which the Eternal Lord had given to them. He revels as that future scene is unfolded in vision prophetically before his eyes. There is an exuberance Micah's words which are filled with an absolute confidence that the Eternal will keep His word. He has not given up in his wait for that glorious, promised day which yet awaits the nation which he had rebuked in earlier chapters. He looks forward over the years of discipline for sin to that day when the cities of the land of Israel will be rebuilt under Messiah's blessing. He says: (11) "[Oh Israel,] **A day [will come] for the building of your walls even though that day is removed far off.** (12) **That day, even your time, will come [when yet again your enemies will come] from Assyria even to the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt and unto the river [perhaps the Euphrates] and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.** (13) **Then the land [of Israel] will be desolate with regard to those previously having inhabited it because of the fruit of their doings"** (Mic. 7:11-13).

Micah looks forward to the day that had been promised in the writings of his contemporary, Isaiah (40:11), when Messiah would tend Israel like a shepherd. The Eternal Lord speaks of the nation as his flock. "**Tend Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your inheritance, which is dwelling by itself in a forest in the midst of a field that is like a vineyard. Let them feed in Bashan and in Gilead even as they did in days of old**" (Mic. 7:14). It is clear that the Eternal answers the intercessory plea of the prophet as he has prayed for that future day when the Eternal will protect His flock like a shepherd. The Eternal responds: "**As [it was] in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show wonderful things to them**" (Mic. 7:15).

The prophet marvels as he remembers the promises of the Eternal Lord's dealings with the Gentiles in the day when Israel will be delivered from their grasp. It appears that he is thinking of the day of Messiah's arrival and His execution of Israel's long promised miraculous deliverance. He says: (16) "**The Gentiles will see and will lay their hands upon their mouths. Their ears will be deaf.** (17) **They will lick the dust like a serpent. Like the things which crawl on the earth they will come out of their strongholds. They will come in great fear to the Eternal Lord our God and they will be afraid because of You**" (Mic. 7:16-17). Surely either one of the contemporaries, Micah or Isaiah, is echoing the other's prophetic words as they describe that future glorious day. It may be that Micah is remembering the words of the Eternal Lord spoken through Isaiah. (13) "**Behold, My servant will prosper. He will be exalted and will be**

lifted up high. (14) Even as many were astonished at Him [when] His appearance was so marred so as to no longer appear human and His form beyond the sons of men, (15) even so He will startle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths because of Him because they will see that which had not been told to them. Surely they will understand that which they have not heard" (Isa. 52:13-15).

The day that is being described by these two prophets is that day is so powerfully described by the prophet Zechariah in chapter fourteen. That prophet describes the awful plight of the new believers of Israel who will be trapped by encircling armies in Jerusalem, then describes the arrival of the Messiah on the Mount of Olives. He will deliver His people from the armies of Armageddon as they escape through a new valley which splits between His feet. The awful scene of judgment that follows describes the terrible sentencing of those nations and their armies that have mustered against God's chosen people. This is that terrible day of judgment which briefly is described by the prophet Joel as the gathering of Israel's enemies in the valley of Jehoshaphat, the valley where the Eternal Lord Judges (Joel 3:19-17 Engl., 4:9-17 Heb.).

D. ISRAEL'S FUTURE ADORATION OF THE GOD WHO WILL HAVE FULFILLED ALL OF HIS COVENANT PROMISES (7:18-20)

One of the most beautiful sections of the book of Micah is this one which closes the writing of that prophet. He marvels with unbounded amazement as he considers a God so great that, in spite of Judah and Israel's terrible sins that have brought all of their trials, yet somehow He yet will be able to forgive their sins. Micah's absolute assurance that the Eternal will keep His word is built upon faith that believes even though he does not in the least understand the means whereby the Eternal will be able to do that. He could not understand how the Eternal could possibly keep His word that He had promised in covenant to the Fathers of the nation, Abraham and Jacob. He did not understand the concept which later would be presented by the Eternal through the writings of Jeremiah that one day He would take care of Israel's sin problem (Jer. 31:31-34). The glories of Messiah's work and His part in making the forgiving of Israel's sins possible was a truth closed until the days of the apostle Paul.

Micah's inability to understand that to which he already has referred as he had described Israel's smiting of the One born in Jerusalem upon the cheek perfectly illustrates that revealed through the apostle Peter. That New Testament writer spoke of the salvation that is provided for the believer in this age, stating that the prophets did not grasp their own references to the means by which this salvation was provided. Peter said in First Peter one: (10) **"...Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and they have searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, (11) searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ Who by them was indicating when He testified beforehand [i.e., in the Tenach] the sufferings of Christ and the glories which would follow. (12) It was revealed to them that it was not unto themselves but unto us that they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you by means of those who have preached the gospel to you by means of**

the Holy Spirit Who was sent down from heaven, which things the angels long to look into" (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

As a result of this veil that prevented full understanding of the means which the Eternal would use to redeem His wandering people, the prophet Micah is swept up in a remarkable paean of praise. **"Who is a God [the meaning of the name, Micah] like unto You, taking away iniquity and passing over the transgressions of the remnant of His inheritance? He does not harbor His anger forever because He delights in mercy. He will return and He will have compassion on us. Yes, He will throw all of their sins into the depths of the sea." (Mic. 7:18-19a).** The prophet now directly addresses the One who will do all of these things for His wayward people. **"You will cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give [the long promised] truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, that You swore to our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:19b-20).** Ah, may the remnant of God's people grow, who cling fiercely to the assurance that He promised long ago! May they learn to keep His word some day in the near future! He Who has promised will not fail for He is the Eternal Lord!

E. THE ARRIVAL OF ISRAEL'S LONG AWAITED, GLORIOUS, LATTER DAYS IN THE PROPHETS

Micah's name, **"Who is like the Eternal,"** is an expression of the wonder and astonishment of the people of Israel as they wait for the fulfillment of the promises given to them by their Eternal Lord long ago. In the light of all of the suffering which that people have experienced in the centuries that they have continued on in their waywardnesses following one false Messiah after another since Simon bar Kochba has caused the light of Micah's hope to flicker out in many of their hearts. Micah has been led to describe their waywardness and its consequences in Micah 1-3. The consequences of this waywardness has been described in detail in Micah 4:9-7::6. And yet practically all of these fifteen last cups of sorrow which Micah was led to predict for the people already have come to pass precisely in the way that was revealed to that great prophet.

Has Israel's cause for hope faded? Or is *hatikvah*, the hope, still a reality? Are Micah's words in Micah 4:1-8 the words of a deluded prophet or are they indeed the words of the Eternal Lord as spoken through that prophet? After all, He has said in chapter four: (1) **"But in the latter days it will come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established on the top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills and many peoples will flow into it. (2) Many Gentiles will come and they will say: 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths, for out of Zion the law will go forth and the word of the Eternal Lord from Jerusalem. (3) He will judge between many peoples and will rebuke strong nations that are far off. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, neither will nation lift up the sword against another nation nor will they learn war anymore" (Mic. 4:1-3).**

Is this promise merely a promise that little Israel, that little troubled nation which now occupies a part of the promised land, would be the means of educating the backward nations? Is it only a promise that multitudes from Africa's backward peoples and other nations far behind in technology would come to Israel for education as they do today? I have heard Isaiah 4:1-6 and Micah 4:1-8 interpreted in that way in the land of Israel as early as 1965 by one no less than the president of the Israeli Bible Society. Is the remarkable development of technology which has blossomed in the nation of Israel in the decades since Israel became an independent nation once again that which is promised by the prophet here? Or do the prophet's words accurately present precisely that which the Eternal Lord will do for the troubled nation in the latter days? Is Micah alone in encouraging the wayward people of the Eternal Lord to look forward to a glorious day when He will be present in their midst, the One who will be worshipped by the nations of the world? What do others of Israel's prophets say about Israel's future? Is the glorious day for which the prophet Micah waited, as he described in his final chapter, the hope of this prophet alone? Or has the Eternal Lord described the future of that nation in their latter days through other prophets as well? Indeed, the latter is true. This is a theme that is consistent and harmonious throughout all of the prophets.

Daniel is another of Israel's prophets who waited in agony for the glory which was promised to the people of the Eternal Lord in the future. In Daniel 11 it has been revealed to the prophet that in a day yet in the future yet another false "Messiah" will trouble the land of Israel. **"And he will place the tents of his palace between the seas [the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea] and the glorious, holy mountain [the place where Solomon's temple once stood]"** (Dan. 11:45). Daniel is told the timing of the event series that would follow that future day when Israel would be polluted by this presence and the **"abomination of desolation"** which that false leader would set up. (1) **"At that time Michael will stand up, that great prince who keeps watch over the sons of your people. Then there will be a time of trouble such as never has been since there was a nation, even unto that time. And at that time your people [the nation of Israel] will be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. (2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to life everlasting, but some to shame and to everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the atmosphere, and those who have turned many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever"** (Dan. 12:1-3).

Daniel was told that these three future events which had been revealed through him would not be understood until the time of the end. (Dan. 12:4). And that harmonizes perfectly with that which was revealed through several other prophets of the Eternal Lord. He revealed through the writer of Psalm 102 about the glorious Messianic future when Messiah would arise **". . . and have mercy on Zion...."** That would be the **"...time to show grace to her..."** (Psa. 102:13). In that day (15) **"...the Gentiles will fear the name of the Eternal Lord, and all of the kings of the earth will fear Your [Messiah's] glory, (16) for the Eternal Lord will build up Zion. He will appear in His glory. (17) He will pay attention to the prayer of those who are destitute and will not despise their prayers"** (Psa. 102:15-17).

But it also is revealed through that prophet that this would not be understood by Israel. It would be understood by another people instead. **"This is written for the generation to come and a people that will be created will praise the Eternal Lord"** (Psa. 102:18). The apostle Peter explains this strange verse which promises both obscurity and understanding of this revelation of events that still are future for Israel. He speaks of the spiritual deliverance of those who believe in this present age and of the salvation which those who believe in Jesus Christ receive with **"... joy unspeakable and full of glory"** (1 Pet. 1:8). To those who to believe in Him assurance is given of their **"... receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"** (1 Pet. 1:9).

At that point Peter explains that there were many things about the salvation which the Lord provides to those who believe in Jesus the Messiah which the Old Testament prophets were not allowed to understand. (10) **"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied about the grace which would come to you, (11) searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of the Messiah Who by means of them was indicating when He testified beforehand about the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. (12) To them [the Old Testament prophets] it was revealed that they were ministering not to themselves but to us, the things, which now have been reported to you by means of those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit who has been sent down from heaven, which things the angels long to investigate"** (1 Pet. 1:9-12).

Isaiah, the contemporary of Micah, was led to utter the very cry that Israel would utter at that future day when the cities and even the temple of these who would have returned to their land from exile would have been burned with fire. (Isa. 64:1-3 Engl., 1-3 in Heb.) . **"For from old times men have not heard, neither has the ear understood, neither has the eye seen a God besides You Who is working on behalf of the one who intensively is waiting for Him"** (Isa. 64 :4 Engl., 3 in Heb.). It is a fascinating fact that the apostle Paul quotes this verse as he is explaining the fact that there were things hidden from Old Testament believers by the Lord. He uses the word **"mystery"** of this fact, explaining here and elsewhere that it means that the plans of the Lord were not always made known to Old Testament believers. He says: (7) **"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God had ordained before the ages for our glory, (8) which none of the rulers of this age knew, for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But as it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have there entered into the hearts of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him'. (10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, indeed, even the deep things of God"** (1 Cor. 2:7-10).

Thus it is clear that the Old Testament prophet, Micah, was not allowed to understand the wonderful means by which the Eternal Lord would resolve the problem which faced the two nations, Israel and Judah. He was left with the fact that the sins of these two nations were beyond human solution, for there was no offering which man could lift up before the Eternal which would expiate their sins. All that Micah could do was accept the promises of the Eternal that He would provide the means of redeeming those who would

wait on Him. He was left believing that the Eternal was faithful and true. In some way yet unknown to him and his companions, some means of taking away their sins and of providing righteousness of such a quality that they would be able to stand without condemnation in His presence when He did fulfil the great covenant promises made to Israel's ancestors. Micah and his contemporaries, indeed so many of the nation of Israel even today, have not grasped the fact that the cross is the key to the enigma that they long have faced. For it is through the cross on which Israel long ago "...crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8) that the Eternal has provided that necessary work of redemption which man alone could not provide. Paul speaks clearly of that which God has done for fallen man in 2 Corinthians 5:21. He says of this great act which the Eternal has performed for us in the Messiah: (18) "Now all things are of God, Who has reconciled [brought us back into right relationships with Him] us unto Himself through Jesus Christ, and He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. (19) That is to say that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, just as if God were pleading through us, we beg you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (21) The reason is because He [God] has made Him [Christ, the Messiah] to be sin for us, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]" (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Perhaps this great statement by one of the greatest Jews of all times will help God's wandering people better to understand the burden that many believing Gentiles feel for them and for their need.

Chapter Six:

THE GLORY OF ISRAEL'S LATTER DAYS FINALLY ACHIEVED

(Mic. 4:1-8)

A. THE YET FUTURE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL'S KINGDOM TEMPLE (4:1)

I now repeat the glorious promises concerning the future establishment of Israel's kingdom under the Messiah. It is so easy, after considering all of the sorrows that have faced the exiled nation of Israel, to forget the beauty of the amazing portrait of that glorious day when finally Israel will not only be fully restored to her land. Yet it must not be forgotten that under the Messiah, will enter a place of glory over the nations of the world. In reconsidering these promises, one better can understand the agony of Micah as he marveled when he considered the unchangeable covenant promises concerning Israel's glorious future. For that reason I repeat much of the first chapter and its glorious description of the glories of Israel's kingdom under her Messiah.

Micah's heart has poured out its grief as he has been instructed by the Eternal Lord to call all of earth's peoples and the earth itself to listen to the Lord's charge in His court that was to be executed against Judah and Israel (Mic. 1:2-5). Micah, in bringing the Lord's sentence against His people, has reported His promise to pour the stones of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, down into the valley below (Mic. 1:5-7). He has agonized over Judah as he has reported in Micah 3 the waywardnesses of Judah's kings and prophets. He has brought the sentence coming from the court case of the Eternal against them in this terrible declaration. **"Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field. Jerusalem will become heaps of ruins and the mountain of the house [the temple, the house of the Lord] will become like the high places of the forest [used for pagan worship]"** (Mic. 3:12).

With such a terrible backdrop, the words of the prophet from the Eternal Lord that open Micah 4 are utterly startling. In the light of the preceding context they are the most improbable words that he possibly could have uttered. Yet the Spirit of the Eternal Lord has lead him to say this: **"But in the latter days it will come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established on the top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills and many peoples will flow into it"** (Mic. 4:1).

There have been many Gentiles who have been touted as great Old Testament scholars, but who have refused to believe that the words of the Eternal Lord would ever be fulfilled concerning the rebuilding of the ancient temple of God's people on earthly Mount Zion. Somehow, wholly without justification except that they follow traditional theology, they have sought to transfer the meaning of these words to the Church,. They have denied in the process that God would ever deal with His ancient people, the nation of Israel, once again. They have sought to transfer Mount Zion to heaven. I regret that many churches still sing "We are marching to Zion," not realizing that they are continuing the false teaching of the amillennialist. Those misguided teachers have supported the

claims of Israel's ancient Arab enemies, not only to the land but even to that holy site Mt. Moriah where the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod once stood. They have even dared to say that the Eternal Lord never would respond to the agonizing contemplation of Asaph when he cried: (1) "O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger continue to smoke against the people of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation which You purchased long ago, the tribe of Your inheritance that you redeemed [out of Egypt]. Remember this Mount Zion where You dwelt! Lift up Your feet toward the perpetual desolations. (2) The enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary. Your enemies have roared in the midst of Your meeting place.... (8a) They have said in their hearts, 'Let us destroy them altogether!'

(10) "...O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy continue to blaspheme Your name forever? (18) ... Remember this, O Lord, that the enemy has reproached and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name! (19) Oh do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast and do not forget the life of Your poor one forever. (20) Have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of cruelty. (21) Oh do not allow the oppressed ones to return ashamed! Let the poor and needy ones praise Your name. (22) Arise, O God, plead Your own cause! Remember the way that the foolish ones reproach You daily. (23) Do not forget the voice of Your enemies for the tumult of those who rise up against You continues to increase" (Psa. 74:1-2, 8a, 18-23).

Has the Eternal Lord forgotten? No! Or is it that His people have forgotten His promises? Moses warned of that. He said: "...I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt and will turn away from the way that I have commanded you. Then evil will come upon you in the latter days because you will practice evil in the sight of the Eternal, provoking Him to anger through the works of your hands" (Deut. 31:29).

The Eternal Himself has said to His people Israel through Moses: (36) "For the Eternal Lord will judge His people. But He will have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone and no one is remaining shut up or left at large.... (39) Now see that I Myself am He and there is no other God besides Me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal, neither is there anyone who can deliver another out of My hand. (40) The reason is that I have raised My hand and I have said: (41) 'If I whet my glittering sword and My hand takes hold on My judgment, I will begin rendering vengeance on my enemies and I will repay those who have hated Me'" (Deut. 32:36, 39-41).

He will keep His promise in that time that is promised in the words of the New Testament, "...when the fullness of the times is come..." (Gal. 4:4). How beautifully this matter of the Lord's controlling of the timing of events is stated in the Tenach! "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all of its inhabitants will be dissolved. I have set it up on its pillars firmly. Selah" (Psa. 75:3).

But perhaps the words of the Eternal Lord to Messiah best demonstrate His complete control over the timing of such events as His having compassion on His wayward people.

His words follow the recommissioning of the Messiah and are addressed to Him. Whereas Messiah formerly had been commissioned to regather the nation of Israel, in the light of His coming rejection by Israel He is recommissioned in Isaiah 42:6 and especially in 49:6 to be a light of the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6). The Father then speaks to the Messiah concerning the yet future time when Israel would receive through Him the fulfillment of the kingdom promises. (8) **"In an acceptable time I will hear you, and in the day of salvation I will help you. I will preserve you and will give You as a covenant to the people [of Israel] to restore the land [of Israel], to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages, (9) in order that you may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth;' to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves!' They will feed in the ways and their pastures will be in all high places"** (Isa. 49:8-9). That promise relates to the yet future day of which Micah speaks in the rich truths unfolded in Micah 4:1-8.

The Eternal Lord, Who promised to have compassion on His servants, has promised this through Micah: **"But it will come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of house of the Eternal Lord will be established on the top of the mountains and it will be exalted above the hills. Then peoples will flow into it"** (Mic. 4:1). He will keep His word. He has assured the nations of the world and His own nation of that which yet would come to pass even yet in our future. **"Yet will I establish My King [Messiah] on Zion, mount of My holiness"** (Psa. 2:6).

This mount is the one where David established his rule over the United Kingdom. Most certainly it is not speaking of some mythical and remote rule of the Messiah from heaven as imagined by amillennial scholars. These have chosen to insist that there never will be an earthly kingdom in the land of Israel over the restored nation of Israel. Most certainly they are not justified in ignoring all of the curses that were imposed upon Israel for disobedience while transferring only the blessings to the church!

The assurance of the future of the nation of Israel will be found to be established in the divine decree which He made in eternity past concerning the future of the land of Israel and concerning her long promised King, the Messiah. Messiah, the son of David, had been rejected exactly as David had prophesied long ago (Psalm 2:1-3 and Acts 4:25-28). In that future day when the Eternal Lord would establish the Messiah and His great kingdom on earth, He would establish that rule exactly as He had promised the Messiah in the decree. (8) **"Ask of Me for I am determined to give [a determinative cohortative verb form] to You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. (9) You will break them with a rod of iron. You will smash them into pieces like the vessel of a potter"** (Psa. 2:8-9).

In that future day, as prophesied by Isaiah and Micah, the peoples of the earth will flow into Jerusalem and into the presence of the King of the entire earth. (20) **"This is what the Eternal Lord of Hosts says: 'Peoples still will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. (21) The people who live in one city will go to another saying: 'Let us go and pray before the Eternal Lord and seek the Eternal Lord of Hosts. I myself also will go with you.' (22) Indeed, many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the Eternal Lord of Hosts.'** (23) **This is what the Eternal Lord of Hosts says: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations will take hold of the sleeve of a**

Jewish man and will say: 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zech. 8:20-23).

B. THE RESPONSE OF GENTILE NATIONS (4:2a)

The prophet Micah, along with Isaiah in Isaiah 2:3, now prophesies precisely the same thing. **"Many nations will come and they will say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, and we will begin to walk in His paths . . .'" (Mic. 4:2a).**

In 1965 when I first came to the land of Israel on a scholarship with the State of Israel and the United States, I heard the president of the Israeli Bible Society teach the group of college and seminary professors with whom I traveled. He spoke from this verse but misapplied it to events that were happening in Israel at that time. He spoke of how Israel had shared their technology and skills of farming in a very arid country with those of the nations that lay around the perimeter of the great Sahara Desert. He spoke of the many young scholars from places like that who were flowing to Israel for the excellent education that they could receive from the great schools of the land of Israel. But then, regretfully, he limited the text entirely to that present scene, totally ignoring the greater context of the Lord's work of restoring the temple and Messiah's kingdom when this verse would see its fulfillment.

Micah plainly had said: (6) **"The Eternal Lord says that in that day I will gather the lame ones and will assemble the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. (7) I will make the lame ones a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation. In this way the Eternal Lord will begin to reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. (8) And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come, even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem"** (Mic. 4:6-8).

Later, after everyone had left the room but the speaker, I dared to point out to the President of the Israeli Bible Society that Micah actually prophesied that there would be fifteen crucial events that had to precede that glorious day. I showed him that Micah prophesied that these promises would be fulfilled only in the latter days. It was only then that the mountain of the house of the Eternal Lord would be established on earthly Mount Zion. That promise certainly is not fulfilled today since an Arab structure stands on the platform where once the temples of Solomon, Zedekiah and Herod had stood, one after another. Only at that future date would peoples flow into it to fulfill Isaiah's great prophecy in his great second chapter.

When that great leader of Israel suddenly saw from Micah that not only the Babylonian captivity but the birth and the rejection of Israel's king was promised in Micah's future, Israel's birth pains in the tribulation, and other painful events were in that great prophecy, he abruptly had to leave. I sadly watched as he departed with his hat shaking in his hand. My heart long has ached for the scene that I saw the next day. He stood with our group of visiting teachers on the top of a building near the artificial dividing line that at that time divided the people of Israel from old Jerusalem and from

the site of the temple where his ancestors once had worshipped. There was a look of longing anguish on his face as he looked across the little valley that lay between us and that great ruined city where so many crucial events had taken place in the past.

Since then, even though I have been privileged to walk through that old city's streets and visit so many of its sacred sites several times, my heart still longs for that day when not only Israel in exile but hordes of Gentiles will flow through its gates to worship the Messiah, their long promised, Davidic King.

C. MESSIAH TO BEGIN HIS RULE OVER THE WORLD (4:2b-3)

The reason for the flood of Gentiles pouring into Jerusalem now is plainly stated by Micah. He continues to speak of the work of the Messiah. He says: "**For the law will go forth out of Zion and the word of the Eternal Lord will go forth from Jerusalem**" (Mic. 4:2b). How these words are like the words that the Eternal Lord speaks as He introduces His Servant, the Messiah, in Isaiah 42:1, 3-4! (1) "**Behold My Servant Whom I will uphold, My Elect One in Whom My soul delights! I will place My Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles...**" (3b) "**He will bring forth justice for truth.**" (4) "**He will not fail nor will He become discouraged until He has established justice in the earth and the isles continue to wait for His law.**"

The "reformed" or "covenant" theologians (what misnomers!) imagine that this promise is being fulfilled in an imagined reign by the Messiah as king over the earth from heaven today. How little the chaotic scene here on earth today is like the glorious kingdom promises given so long ago to the nation of Israel! These who follow the errors of Augustine utterly ignore the unchangeable, the non-revokable Word of the Eternal Lord which He spoke in the Biblical covenants to the ancestors of the nation of Israel. Because of their misguided eschatology, these scholars attempt to rewrite the intent of the Divine Author in the words of the prophets and transfer their promises to the Church. It is fascinating to note how carefully they skirt the curses and judgments of the great Biblical covenants and refuse to apply them to the Church!

But that perversion of the original intent of this revelation from the Eternal Lord utterly ignores the impact of the following verses and their yet future fulfillment. "**He [Messiah] will judge between many people and He will rebuke strong nations that are far off. They will beat their swords into plowshares and they will beat their spears into hooks for pruning trees. One nation will not lift up a sword against another nation, neither will they learn war anymore**" (Mic. 4:3). How far we are from that day! It most certainly is not being fulfilled today! Instead, nations war against nations. Helpless believers are slaughtered by their enemies. Nations tremble in fear of other nations.

How this great prophecy, found also in Isaiah 2:4, parallels that which has been found in Psalm 2:6-9! There a careful examination will reveal that the promises of the earthly Messianic kingdom are directly based upon decisions made by the Godhead in the decree in eternity past! It is the Messiah Himself Who utters the details of the decree relative to the yet future establishment of the kingdom under His rule in ancient Zion (Psa. 2:7).

The rejection of the Messiah by Israel and by the Gentiles is described in Psalm 2:1-3. This interpretation is confirmed by the prayer of the early church in Acts 4:25-28. Immediately after that description, the Eternal Lord expresses His determination to establish His king upon Mount Zion. "Yet will I establish My King [Messiah] upon Zion, **mount of My holiness**" (Psa. 2:6). And immediately following in the Psalm, David is led to speak the words of the Messiah as He gives the decreed basis for that determination and the assurance of the Eternal Lord concerning Messiah's future kingdom. "

The great book of Hebrews in the New Testament confirms the fact that verses 7-9 of the Psalm are spoken by the Messiah in its quotation of part of these words in Hebrews 1:5. In the Psalm Messiah emphatically says: "I am determined to relate the details of the decree [very emphatic syntax]: 'The Eternal Lord said to Me [the Messiah], 'You are My Son. This day [note that this is part of the decree!] I do become Your Father. [This describes an economic (a working) relationship between members of the Godhead in the decree.] Ask of Me for I am determined to give to You [This is another emphatic determinative in the Hebrew text. The Father's determination will be fulfilled!] the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You [the Messiah] will break them with a rod of iron. You will smash them in pieces like the vessel of a potter'" (Psa. 2:7-9).

The beautiful epistle that was written to the Hebrews says this of the Messiah. "God, Who at different times in different ways spoke in past times by the prophets, has spoken to us by means of a Son [the Messiah] in these last days, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds [or "fashioned the ages']. He Who, being in the brightness of His glory and in the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is so much better than the angels, in as much as He has, by means of inheritance, received a more excellent name than they have. For unto which of the angels did He [the Eternal Lord] ever say [as He did to the Second Person of the Godhead in eternity past]: 'You are My Son. This day I do become Your Father.' And again [He said], 'I will be to Him as a Father, and He will be a Son to Me'" (Heb. 1:1-5). This last verse is quoted from the great Davidic Covenant in Second Samuel 7. The Covenant promises that, one day in the future, a descendant of David would sit upon the throne of Israel, and that He would rule there forever.

The expression, "**this day**," in Psalm 2:7, quoted by Hebrews, does not refer to some point in the time which lies between the eternities. It is part of the eternal decree that the Eternal Lord made before the foundation of the earth. Failure to recognize the implications of the clause that introduces this great statement by the Eternal Lord to the Messiah in eternity past has resulted in all kinds of theological confusion.

The prophet Micah speaks of the establishment of that glorious, Messianic kingdom in the land of Israel in this way. He focuses on the result of that great battle in which Messiah would subdue the nations and deliver the ancient people Israel from their enemies "...around about" (Zech. 12:2, 6). "He will judge between many people and will rebuke strong nations that are far off. They will beat their swords into plowshares

and they will beat their spears into hooks for pruning trees. One nation will not lift up a sword against another nation, neither will they learn war anymore" (Mic. 4:3).

But how unlike Micah's words are the words that were spoken through the prophet Joel in Joel 3:9-16 (in the English text) concerning the divine invitation that would bring the nations together to the battle of Armageddon. This would bring about the subjection of the nations of the world to Messiah's rule! There that prophet looks forward to the final battle before the Kingdom age. Using remarkably similar language to that used by Micah, Joel focuses upon the call of the Eternal to the nations to gather for that battle in which Messiah would subdue them!

Joel says: (9) **"Proclaim this among the Gentiles: 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men! Let all of the men of war come near. Let them come up. (10) Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak ones say: 'I am strong!'** (11) **Assemble yourselves and come, all of you heathen, and gather yourselves together around about. O Eternal Lord, cause Your mighty ones to come down there! (12) Let the heathen be awakened and let them come to the valley of Jehoshaphat [The Eternal Lord will judge!], for there I will sit to judge all of the heathen around about. (13) Put in the sickle because the harvest is ripe. Come! Get down because the winepress is full and the vats overflow because their wickedness is great. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision because the day of the Eternal Lord is at hand in the valley of decision. (15) The sun and moon will become darkened and the stars will withdraw their shining. (16) The Eternal Lord will also roar out of Zion and He will utter His voice from Jerusalem. Then the heavens and the earth will shake, but the Eternal Lord will become the hope of His people and He will be the strength of the children of Israel. (17) So you will come to know that I am the Eternal Lord your God who is dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem will become holy and no strangers will pass through her any more"** (Joel 3:9-17).

Joel, like Micah and Isaiah, is speaking of the initiation of that great battle that will bring in the kingdom for Israel. But Micah and Isaiah primarily look at the results of that great battle when the land of Israel will abound in that peace for which the nation long has longed. Joel looks at the invitation sent out by the Eternal that will gather Israel's enemies for their great judgment before the kingdom is established. That is the battle that is so powerfully described by the prophet Zechariah in chapter 14.

D. THE WONDER OF ISRAEL'S LATTER DAYS (4:4-5)

One of the remarkable themes found in several of the Old Testament prophets is the transformation of the land of Israel in that future day when the great Messianic kingdom will be established. It is obvious that the barren old hills of Israel would be totally transformed under the hands of the remnant of the exiled people that already have been returning and repopulating to the promised land. On my first trip to Israel in 1965 I watched one of the poorly trained professors who was traveling in our scholarship group as he looked out over the ruined terraces and desolate hills. He shook his head in

amazement. Then he uttered that which has been on the minds of many tourists who have seen the same scene. "Land of milk and honey! What on earth?" He did not recognize the desperate ruin of the land that had been brought by the Arab occupation in the last millennium and more. This past October I stood once again in the same place. The barren hillside south of the Eretz Ts'vie hotel now is filled with great condominiums that are filled with people that have returned to the land and who work to develop it in its beauty once again.

Years ago a British biologist, whom I have forgotten, was commissioned by the Arab king who then ruled the land the land of Israel to write a book about the land. His first statement in his book condemned the rape of the land by the tragic overgrazing of the land by the herds of sheep and goats of the Bedouin. He spoke of the destruction of the once beautifully terraced hills when their rich cover of grapevines were stripped away to satisfy the command of the Koran. Rain now washed away the soil as it was trampled by the sharp feet of the animals. The grass was eaten by them even below the surface and was killed. This destroyed the terracing which now lay without ground cover. He also spoke of the way that the sheiks in latter years found delight in pursuing the wild animals of the land in their automobiles and gunning them down with machine guns.

But it will not be so in the latter days. The prophet Micah briefly describes the idyllic scene of that future day in this way. **"But everyone will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree and no one will make them afraid because the mouth of the Eternal Lord has spoken it"** (Mic. 4:4). He is speaking of the same future period as Amos who makes it clear that he speaks of the day when the Eternal Lord will **"...raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen, and I will close up the breaches of it and will raise up his ruins and will build it as in the days of old"** (Amos 9:11). Amos describes the prosperity of that glorious future day in the close of that chapter. No amount of verbal shenanigans by the theologian who refuses to believe that hagalut, the exile, will be restored to its land can transform these words about the land of Israel to promises for the Church.

1. THE PROSPERITY AND PEACE OF THOSE DAYS (4:4a)

The description of the bounty of the land of Israel in that future day when the Davidic kingdom will be restored closes the book of Amos. **"See, the Eternal Lord says, 'the days are coming when the plowman will overtake the one who is reaping and the one who treads the grapes will overtake the one who sows the seed. Then the mountains will drop sweet fresh grape juice and all of the hills will melt. Then I will bring the captivity of My people of Israel, and they will rebuild the waste cities and they will live in them. Then they will plant vineyards and they will drink the wine from them. Also they will make gardens and eat of the produce from them, and I will plant them upon their land, and no more will they be pulled up out of their land which I have given to them,' says the Eternal Lord your God"** (Amos 9:13-15).

The bountiful richness, fertility and productivity of the land and the peace which will bless that old land, so long troubled by war, is delightfully summarized by the words of

the prophet. Both the prophets Isaiah and Micah have spoken of the fact that, under Messiah's worldwide rule, the instruments of war will be converted into tools of agriculture (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). Isaiah describes the transformation of the land itself from a wilderness and a wasteland into a place of abundance and great joy at the arrival of their God in the day when He would bring vengeance on their enemies and salvation to His chosen people. **"Wilderness and parched land will be glad and the Arabah will rejoice and it will blossom like the rose. It will blossom very abundantly and it will rejoice, even with joy and with singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it and the splendor of Carmel and of [the plain of] Sharon [will be given to them] (Isa. 35:1-2a).**

Yes, the land will be gloriously transformed in that future day. Three of the prophets speak of the elevation of the water tables of the land that makes possible the transformation of the barren and fruitless places of the land of Israel. The great prophet Ezekiel devotes much of his forty seventh chapter to this geological phenomenon which will follow the arrival of the Messiah. He prophesies about **"...water flowing from underneath the threshold of the temple toward the east for the front of the temple will face west. The water will be flowing from under the right side of the temple on the south side of the altar" (Ezek. 47:1).**

Ezekiel describes the vision that he had of the continual swelling flow of this water as it flowed toward the east in this way. **"And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits. Then he brought me through the waters. The waters came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand [cubits] and brought me through the waters. The waters came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and he brought me through it. The water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand [cubits] and it had become a river that I was not able to cross because the waters were too deep, waters in which a person must swim for it was a river that could not be crossed" (Ezek. 47:3-5).**

I personally have concluded that the waters which well up in northern Israel to supply the Sea of Galilee comes through the deep fractures of the great African Rift Valley from the highlands of Africa. Someone else has pointed out that there is a fish that is common only to the Sea of Galilee and to Lake Victoria. It appears that the raising of Israel's water tables at the arrival of Messiah will result from a change in the flow of this water at the great geological movement when the valleys are lifted up and the mountains are made low. **"The voice of the one who (Isa. 40:3-4).**

The prophets also describe the effect of Messiah's raising of the water tables of the land in that day. Ezekiel speaks of the transformation of the vegetation that will result from this remarkable event. **"When I came back, there were very many trees there along the banks of the river on both sides. ... Along the banks of the river on both sides will grow all kinds of trees that are useful for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. They will continue to bear fruit every month because of the waters that will flow from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves will be for medicine" (Ezek. 47:12).**

Isaiah indicates that the same remarkable change of water tables will transform the wilderness into a place with standing pools of water. (6b) **"...Waters will burst forth in the wilderness and streams [will flow] in the desert. (7) The parched ground will become a pool and the thirsty land [will develop] springs of water. There will be grass with reeds and rushes in the habitation of jackals where they lay"** (Isa. 35:6b-7).

The prophet Joel turns to the mountains and hills of Judah, joining his description of the changed water tables with its effect on the productivity of the land. **"And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains will drip with grape juice. The hills will flow with milk and all of the brooks of Judah will be flooded with water. A fountain will flow from the house of the Eternal Lord and it will water the Valley of Acacias"** (Joel 3:18 Engl., 4:18 Heb.). But surely the words of the prophet Amos most graphically describe that which happens to the land of Israel when the Eternal Lord fulfills His ancient promises to reestablish the rule of the house of David over the land and indeed, over all mankind. But perhaps the words of Amos most graphically describe that glorious day yet in the future. **"Behold,' the Eternal Lord says, 'the days will be coming, when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the one who treads the grapes will overtake the one who sows the seed. The mountains will drip with grape juice and all the hills will flow'"** (Amos 9:13).

2. THE SOURCE OF THE PEACE OF THAT DAY (4:4b)

Peace has been the longing of Jewish hearts for centuries as the ancient people have been driven, slain, tormented and uprooted from one land after another by Gentiles. These foolishly refused to believe that the Eternal ever would fulfill His great covenant promises to these blood descendants of Abraham. But the prophet Micah describes the peace of that future day in simple language which, without errant presuppositions, any child should be able to understand. **"...No one will make them afraid because the mouth of the Eternal Lord of Hosts has spoken it"** (Mic. 4:4b).

No description of that great day of peace that yet is ahead for the nation of Israel is more beautiful than that brought by the prophet Hosea. He says: (4) **"I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely because My anger will have turned away from them. (5) I will be like the dew to Israel. He will grow like the lily and he will lengthen his roots like Lebanon. (6) His branches will spread. His beauty will be like an olive tree and his fragrance will be like Lebanon. (7) Those who live under His shadow will return. They will be revived like grain and they will grow like a vine. Their remembrance will be like the wines of Lebanon. (8) Ephraim will say: 'What do I have to do with idols anymore? I have heard and I have observed Him. I am like a green cypress tree. Your fruit is found in Me. (9) Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him understand them because the ways of the Eternal Lord are right. The righteous ones will walk in them, but the transgressors will stumble in them"** (Hos. 14:4-9).

Zephaniah speaks of that wonderful day when (17) **"The Eternal Lord your God will be in your midst ...when He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with His love and He will rejoice over you with singing. (18) I will gather those that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, even those who are of you to whom the reproach was a burden"** (Zeph. 3:17-18). Imagine a day when the Eternal Lord will sing over His wayward people after He has brought them back to Himself! What a time that will be! The Eternal through Zephaniah says to Israel, (19) **"See, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you. I will save the lame ones and will gather those who have been driven out. I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they had been put to shame. (20) At that time I will bring you back, even at the time that I will gather you because I will give you fame and praise among all of the peoples of the earth when I return your captives before your eyes'** says the Eternal Lord" (Zeph. 3:19-20).

3. ISRAEL'S WORSHIP CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE PAGANS (4:5)

For centuries the exiles of the people of Israel rightly have scorned the vagrant worshippers who were dedicated to the worship of trees, animals and idols of plaster, even though at times they also became involved in this desperate degradation from true worship of the Creator. In Isaiah 48:1-5 the Eternal had mocked those who were satisfied to worship the things that they had made. (1) **"Hear this, oh house of Jacob, the ones who are called by the name `Israel,' who have come forth out of the fountain of Judah, who swear by the name of the Eternal Lord but not in truth and not in righteousness. (2) For they name themselves as from the holy city and they stay themselves upon the God of Israel. The Eternal Lord of Armies is His name. Those things that came before, I have declared from [i.e, even before] then.**

(3) **Yes, from My mouth they went forth because I proceeded to cause them to be heard. Abruptly I did [these things] and they came to pass. (4) [I did this] because I knew that you were obstinate and that your neck was a sinew of iron and your forehead was brass. (5) Therefore I proceeded to declare [this] to you from old times. Before it came to be I caused you to hear it lest you should come to say: `My idol has done them and my graven image and my melted [and cast] image has commanded them [to be]'"** (Isa. 48:1-5).

Yet a king like Manasseh and others who followed Manasseh turned to this very thing. (3) **"Manasseh ...rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed. He built up altars for Baal and he made a wooden image.... He made his son to pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and he consulted with the spiritists and the mediums.... (7) He even set up a carved image of Asherah which he had made in the house about which the Eternal Lord had said to David and to Solomon, his son: 'In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all of the tribes of Israel, I will place My name forever'"** (2 Kings 21: 3, 7).

The prophet Jeremiah was the prophet whom the Eternal Lord choose to record the New Covenant. In it He promises the chosen people of Israel these things. (31) **"See, 'the Eternal Lord says, 'the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. (32) It will not be after the manner of the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. That covenant of Mine they broke even though I was as an husband to them' says the Eternal Lord. (33) But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. 'After those days' says the Eternal Lord, I will place My law in their inward parts and I will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they will be My people. (34) And they will teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the Eternal Lord!"** The reason is that they all will know Me from the least ones of them to the greatest ones of them,' says the Eternal Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember no more their sin" (Jer. 31:31-34).

Micah contrasts the way that the heathen continually have turned to idols and other abominations with the way that transformed Israel will worship the Lord in the future. **"For all peoples do walk, each one of them, in the name of his god, but we [Israel] will walk in the name of the Eternal Lord our God forever and ever"** (Mic. 4:5).

E. MESSIAH REGATHERS ISRAEL (4:6-7)

Already we have noted the great Aliyah, the regathering and return of Hagalut, the exiled peoples of the nation of Israel under their Lord. Micah describes that which will happen in the latter days. **"The Eternal Lord says: 'In that day I will assemble the lame ones. I will gather the outcasts and those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and I will make the outcasts a strong nation. In this way the Eternal Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and even forever'"** (Mic. 4:7).

This is the glorious day which Isaiah has described, directly linking it with the return of the Eternal Lord to the land of Israel in Isaiah 35:5-6. (5) **"Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. (6) Then the lame man will leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb man will sing because waters will burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert"** (Isa. 35:5-6).

The New Testament scholar that reads this passage should remember that which is recorded in Luke 7 about this very passage. (19) **"...John, when he had called two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus saying: 'Are You the One Who is to come or do we look for someone else?' (20) When the men had come to Him [Jesus], they said: 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying: `Are you the Coming One, or should we look for someone else?' (21) And in that very hour He healed many who had infirmities, afflictions and evil spirits, and He gave sight to many blind people. (22) Then Jesus answered and said to them: 'You go and tell to John those things which you have seen and heard, that the blind people see, the lame ones walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf people hear, the dead are raised, the poor people have the**

gospel preached to them. (23) And he who is not offended because of Me will be blessed'" (Luke 7:19-23).

It is obvious that the Lord Jesus was telling John the Baptizer that the many healings that He had performed plainly indicated that He fulfilled the promises of the Tenach about the One Who was promised to come to them.

Jeremiah gloriously reports in chapter 31 that which the Eternal Lord declares to the Gentiles about this future day of the return of Israel.(10) **"Hear the word of the Eternal Lord, O you nations, and announce it among the coastlands that are far off, and say this: 'He Who has scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him in the way that a shepherd keeps his flock. (11) For the Eternal Lord will redeem Jacob and will ransom him from the hand of one who is stronger than he is. (12) Therefore they will come and will sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the Eternal Lord . . . "** (Jer. 31:10-12a).

F. THE KINGDOM RESTORED TO JERUSALEM (4:8)

The Eternal Lord promises Israel and the old citadel of Zion through the prophet Micah. **"And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, it [the kingdom] will come to you, even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem"** (Mic. 4:8). The final element of Micah's great description of the events that would come in the latter days is the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom from the citadel that David had captured from the Jebusites. It is that of which Isaiah prophecies of the day when to Israel (6) **"... a Child will be born,"** when **"...unto us a Son will be given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. For His name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, The Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace.'** (7) **There will be no end of the increase of His government and peace upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from that time forward even forever"** (Isa. 9:6-7).

It is of that day of which the Psalmist David reports in Psalm 2:6-8). **"Yet will I [in spite of the rejection of the Messiah in verses 1-3] establish My King on My holy hill of Zion"** (Psalm 2:6). Hebrews 1 in the New Testament makes it clear that it is the Messiah Who quotes that which the Eternal Lord had said to Him in the eternal decree. (7) **"I am determined to relate the details of the decree: 'The Eternal Lord said to Me: 'You are My Son. At this time I do become Your Father. (8) Ask of Me for I am determined to give You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. (9) You will smash them with a rod of iron. You will dash them into pieces like a potter's vessel"** (Psa. 2:7-9).

This quotation from Psalm 2 contains several crucial pieces of information.

1. It is the Son of God who is quoting that which the Eternal Father says to Him in the eternal decree. The quotation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:4-5 leaves no doubt but that these words in the decree are spoken to the Messiah in eternity past. As the book of Hebrews shows the infinite superiority of the Messiah to the angels, it says of the Messiah, (4) **"...Being made so much better than the angels, as He by inheritance has**

obtained a more excellent name than they have. (5) For unto which of the angels did He ever say at any time, `You are My Son. I this day do become Your Father.'"

2. It also is obvious that Messiah does not become the Son of God within the bounds of time. These words clearly are a part of the decree, for they are introduced by the One with Whom this relationship as Son with reference to the Father is established. This is a relationship between two members of the Godhead that was established in eternity past. And concerning this relationship the One Who now is called "Son" by the Father announces that He is relating that which was established in the eternal decree and not by some event within time as we humans know it. The One Who now will be called Son since that decree introduces this quotation from the decree very emphatically by a cohortative in this way: **"I am determined to relate the details of the decree..."** (Psa. 2:7).

3. A relation of dependence is being established within the Godhead by the establishing of this relationship in eternity past. As Son, the member of the Godhead being addressed now assumes a subordinate relationship with the Father. The implication of this subordination is seen in Psalm 2:8. The Father now says to the One who has assumed this relationship, **"Ask of Me, for I am determined to give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as Your possession."** It is obvious that the Son now will request things of the Father, thus indicating this newly assumed relationship.

4. It is obvious that the decree that was established between the members of the Godhead in eternity past is the basis for the absolute assurance of the Father concerning Messiah's future ministry as king. It is the basis for His declaration which so often has been obscured by the translators in Psalm 2:6. **"Yet will I establish My King on Zion, mount of My holiness."** The rejection of the Messiah by Israel and the nations in no way will thwart the intent of the Father to fulfil His promises to the nation of Israel concerning the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. According to Psalm 2:9 the day is coming when Messiah will not be being rejected and overthrown as king as interpreted in Acts 4:25-28. Instead, the day is coming when, in taking possession of all of the earth as His inheritance, Messiah will smash those who attempt to withstand the future establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Psalm 2:9 says this. **"You [the Messiah] will break them with a scepter of iron. Like a vessel of a potter You will utterly smash them into pieces."**

All of the wonderful things concerning Messiah's future kingdom that Micah has described will take place in the latter days of the people of Israel.

SUPPLEMENT

THE PROMISE OF THE RAPTURE

Bernard E. Northrup Th.D.

Introduction

Why this supplement is attached to the study of Micah's prophecy

In Micah we have seen at least fifteen important events that inescapably must come to pass before the nation of Israel will enjoy full reinstatement to the land of the Eternal Lord that was given to them many centuries ago. There is another very important event that also must take place before Israel's Kingdom under her Messiah finally is established. It is an event that is not mentioned anywhere in the Tenach, Israel's Bible. The reason for this is explained by the Apostle Paul, to whom this event was revealed. That event is the rapture, or the catching up to heaven of all living believers and the resurrection of all of those believers in this age who have died in Christ. Precisely why this event could not be revealed in the Old Testament will be explained later. I strongly feel that this event cannot help but play an important role in the preparation of the Lord's estranged people of Israel for the day that, as Zechariah says, "**They will look upon Him Whom they pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son**" (Zech. 12:10). For that reason I have included this short paper on the up-gathering-together of all true believers of this age, hoping that it will help some to understand what has happened when the event takes place. You will be able to see that the New Testament clearly teaches that this last earthly event relating to the Church will take place before Israel's Day of the Eternal Lord. And that is an event mentioned many times, both in the Old and in the New Testament. It clearly begins with the signing of a peace pact that for a brief time brings about the cessation of strife between the Arabs and the Jews over the land given to Israel so long ago by the Lord. That is to say, The Day of the Lord, which is preceded by the departure of the Church, begins before the seven years of trials that are predicted in Israel's future, years climaxed by the last three and one half years that is called "the great tribulation. "

The need to understand Christ's teaching about the Church and its Departure

For centuries since the Lord Jesus departed from His disciples, the Church largely has focused upon that which He accomplished in His death on the cross for those who believe. Only occasionally do we find in the writings of the Church fathers in those early centuries an emphasis upon His promise that one day He would return. Yet He in the upper room clearly had promised to those disciples and to those who have believed in Him in the centuries that have

followed as a result of their ministry that one day He would return. **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If this were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I do go and do prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself in order that where I am, there you also may be. And where I go you already know and you even know the way"** (Jn. 14:1-4).

During the years of His teaching, after His rejection as the Son of David while He was preparing His disciples for His ministry as the Son of Abraham, Christ had taught them that He was going away and one day would return. Careful scrutiny of the parables that He taught after His rejection in Matthew 10-12 will reveal that some of these parables focus upon the departure of the King to another land. Others focus upon the long stay. Still others focus upon the sudden return to those who would believe and on the judgment of the rebels that would follow.

Christ's teaching about His return is plainly seen in His explanation of the parable of the tares of the field (Matt. 13:36). But it also will be seen that there is no reference to that which will happen to church age believers in His teaching for that truth had not yet been unfolded for believers to understand. ". . . **The One Who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, in the same way that tares are gathered and are burned in the fire, even so it will be in the end of this age. Then the Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom everything that offends and those who practice iniquity and they will throw them into a fiery furnace. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous ones will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear"** (Matt. 13:37-43).

In the little parable about the pearl of great price Christ pictures His work on the cross, His departure from this world and His present ministry of saving to the uttermost those whom He would purchase in that death on the cross. **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant Who is seeking fine pearls. He, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold everything that He had and bought it"** (Matt. 13:45-46). He does not speak of His return in that parable but immediately summarizes that which would happen at that time in the parable of the dragnet. **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that is thrown into the sea, that gathers of every kind [of fish]. When the net is full, they draw it to shore. Then they sit down and gather out the good unto containers but they throw the bad [fish] away. This is the way that it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and they will separate the wicked ones out from among the righteous ones. Then they will throw them into the furnace of fire and there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus said to them, 'have you understood all of these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord'"** (Matt. 13:47-50).

Now the researcher should recognize that in none of these parables which Christ taught to His disciples is there anything which fully explains that which will happen to believers of the church age that separates them from the wicked before those receive their judgment. There is good reason for that. Paul will explain later in His epistles that the details concerning that

which would happen to church age believers at the end of the church age were hidden from all Old Testament believers. It will be seen that this is a crucial part of the meaning of the term, "mystery." One thing that must be recognized is the fact that, before the cross and resurrection, His disciples still were Old Testament believers. Later I will explain His statements about those things that believers today can know which Old Testament believers were not allowed to understand.

This veil which closed the minds of Old Testament believers begins to be lifted slightly at the time of Christ's ascension. Forty days after His resurrection, Christ had taken His disciples that Sabbath's day journey out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. There He had ascended out of their sight. While they stood staring upwards in total amazement, they suddenly became aware of two messengers from the Lord who were standing near them. These said to them, **"You men of Galilee, why are you standing gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, Who is taken up from you into heaven, will return in the same way that you have seen Him go into heaven"** (Acts 1:10-11).

Now a new truth has been revealed to the disciples that deliberately had been obscured in Christ's parables about the departure of the householder and king. It is a truth for which their hearts were not ready before the resurrection. The details of all that would happen when Christ would come back for the Church would not be unveiled by the Holy Spirit to believers until after the Lord Jesus had returned to heaven and the Church had been established through the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Indeed, that veil that obscured the glories of the return of the Savior to catch up His Church would not be fully lifted until the Holy Spirit directed the human author, the apostle Paul, to write of them in so many of the epistles written to the churches of New Testament times.

I. THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE

REVEALED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57

A. A Biblical mystery defined by Paul

There are five major places in Paul's epistles where he explains this fact that there were truths which Old Testament writers and readers were not allowed to understand. These passages are Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 3:4-6, 3:9-11, 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4 and 15:51-57. The researcher will see when we examine these passages that Paul refers to this fact of the concealment of these truths to the Old Testament believer and then the revealing of these truths to the New Testament believer in the New Testament by the term, **"a mystery."**

1. Paul's first definition of "a mystery"

In Rom. 16:25-26 Apostle Paul defines the word "mystery" which also he has used in 1 Corinthians 2. His definition is found in the benediction which closes that great book. **"Now to Him who has power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching about Jesus**

Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made clear, even through the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for obedience to the faith . . . (Rom. 16:25-26).

Now Paul has declared very plainly here that there are two crucial elements to a Biblical mystery.

1. A Biblical mystery contains truth which actually was revealed by God through the Old Testament prophets but which carefully was kept from their understanding by the Holy Spirit Who is the member of the Godhead.

2. The Biblical mystery now opens the believer's mind today to understand that which formerly had revealed and yet had been concealed from believers long ago. Thus the two essential parts of a Biblical mystery focus first of all upon the concealment of things which were utterly unknown to the Old Testament believer and yet were present in the Biblical revelation which had been given to them in the Old Testament. Then the focus of a Biblical mystery turns to the fact that these truths that had been completely unknown to the Old Testament prophet or believer now are being unveiled for understanding by the New Testament believer. Paul explains both of these characteristics of a mystery more clearly in 1 Corinthians 2. First of all he explained that, because the unsaved Corinthians could not have understood his message if it had been delivered out of the depth of what he had come to know or in the manner of the Greek philosophers who gloried in their wisdom. **"And I, brethren, did not come with excellency of speech or [human] wisdom when I came to you declaring to you the testimony of God. This is because I determined not to know any thing among you except for Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was in your presence in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in words of man's wisdom which entice, but [they were] in the demonstration of the [Holy] Spirit and of power. This was in order that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men but rather in the power of God.** He explains why crucial truths about the Savior were not understood prior to the cross.

Then Paul explains that, among mature believers, he had a far more extensive message than he had used when seeking to lead these same people to Christ. And there, as he develops the subject, he explains that even now this Old Testament revelation only can be understood by a believer who is in a proper relationship to the Holy Spirit. The New Testament believer who continues, after the manner of the unsaved man, to walk according to the rule of his or her sin nature rather than under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit will not be able to understand the Biblical mysteries. He or she will continue to fail to understand that which the Holy Spirit will reveal to the spiritual believer.

2. Peter's contribution to our understanding of a "mystery"

This is the truth to which the Apostle Peter refers in 1 Peter 1. He has been introducing the glories of the product of the faith that we New Testament believers will enjoy when Christ returns. **"Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who, according to His**

abundant mercy, has caused us to be born again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, which does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time. You greatly rejoice in this, even though now for a time, if it is necessary, you are in heaviness through multiplied trials, in order that the trial of your faith, which is much more precious than the trial of gold which perishes even though it is tried with fire, might be found to be unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, Whom, having not seen, you love, in whom, even though you do not see Him now, yet believing, you rejoice with joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the [Old Testament] prophets have inquired and have searched diligently, who prophesied of this grace [that comes to New Testament believers], searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, who by means of them did indicate, when He testified beforehand about the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. It was revealed to them that it was not unto themselves that they ministered these things which now are reported to you by those who have preached the gospel to you with the Holy Spirit Who has been sent down from heaven, which things [even] the angels long to examine. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober and hope to the end for the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:3-14).

The truth is plainly stated here by Peter that there were things revealed through the Old Testament prophets by the Lord which they themselves did not understand, even though these things are found in their writings. While Peter does not mention the word "mystery," it is inescapable that he was speaking of that when one considers Paul's definition of a Biblical mystery. And it also will be seen that the term covers more than one area of revelation. Here in First Peter, two truths are mentioned that were imbedded in the Old Testament prophet's writings, yet were not understood by them.

1. Peter refers to the sufferings of Christ as one of these areas which was not grasped even though there are passages like Isaiah 52:13-53:12 which directly speak of Messiah's sufferings.
2. Peter also speaks of the glory that would follow the sufferings of Christ as an area of prophecy which was closed to the understanding of the Old Testament writers.

3. The use of the term "mystery" in 1 Corinthians 2:6- 3:4

1 Corinthians 2 also speaks of the fact that those who were involved in the crucifixion of the Messiah did not grasp the fact that their actions were fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. "However, we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet it is not the wisdom of this age not that of the princes of this age that comes to nothing, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, that which is hidden, even the hidden [wisdom] which God ordained before the ages unto our glory, which [wisdom] none of the princes of this age knew, for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But [it was] just as it is written (in Isaiah 64:4), "Eye has not seen, nor has an ear hear, neither

has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him . . ." (1 Cor. 2:6-9).

In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul has begun to speak of the fact that things which had been kept a mystery to those under the Old Testament economy. This period of Biblical history extends into the New Testament. It does not end until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit began the formation of the Church, the body of Christ. These things that were a mystery to those in the Old Testament economy were not understood by those who crucified Christ. Paul describes the Old Testament truth that those people who crucified Christ did not understand in this way. It was **". . . the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God had ordained before the ages unto our glory, which none of the princes of this age understood. The reason is that, if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"** (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

Paul announces that those things that formerly had been hidden in God's earlier revelation, the Old Testament, were now part of the message which he brought in his preaching and teaching to the mature believer of this age. After he finished reporting the inaccessibility of these things to those who killed their Messiah, he turns to explain that those hidden things now are made understandable by the Holy Spirit to believers today. **"But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, because the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God** (1 Cor. 2:10).

The believer today has privileges much greater than the Old Testament believer. Paul uses a human illustration to enable us to understand that only the Holy Spirit could enable a believer to understand these things which no Old Testament believer knew. **"For what man knows the things of a man except for the spirit of the man which is in him? In the same way no man knows the things of God but only the Spirit of God, which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches but in words which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual words"** (1 Cor. 2:11-12).

But the sad thing is that there are many believers, who have the Divine Author, the Holy Spirit, residing in them, who do not begin to understand the Biblical mysteries. In this larger passage in 1 Corinthians 2-3 Paul explains a major reason why many believers today do not understand his teachings about the mystery which we call "the rapture." This term, which actually is derived from a Latin word, long has been applied by those who understood Paul's teaching about Christ's coming in the air. It is the believer's home going when Christ returns at the end of this dispensation to take believers out of this world before the beginning of the day of the Lord. Paul's teaching on the matter will be explained later.

But here in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 Paul explains a major hindrance that faces New Testament believers and hinders them from grasping teaching that was **"a mystery."** Now Paul is not delving into the hidden secrets of gnosticism here. This is that teaching which corrupted the early church and still plagues the church today. Gnosticism exalted human wisdom after the manner of the Greek philosophers. It continually placed the Word of God under critical scrutiny and subjected it to the reinterpretation and the contradiction of the philosopher. Like the gnosticism of today, it rejected the obvious meaning of the Word of God and intruded an

overriding interpretation which flew in the face of the obvious intent of the Revelator in His Word.

An example of modern gnosticism may be found in those who trust the pronouncements of the evolutionary faith rather than the clear statement of the Word of God concerning the event series in God's creation and following. These believers reject the obvious meaning of Genesis one. They extrapolate the solar days of Genesis into millions of years wherein God used the supposedly natural processes of evolution to create all things. They do this in order that they may straddle the fence between a truly Biblical faith and the evolutionary faith of origins that they have been taught in their scientific "disciplines." Another example of modern gnosticism may be seen in amillennialism. Those who refuse to believe the Old Testament prophecies concerning the future glories of the descendants of Abraham in the millennial kingdom exalt their presuppositions above the direct revelation of God on the matter. They reinterpret prophetic Scripture in order to make its words fit their firmly established doctrine that there will be no earthly kingdom of Christ on earth.

In 1 Corinthians 2 and 3 Paul gives two possible explanations for those religious people who cannot or will not accept the New Testament revelation of things which previously had been a mystery.

1. First of all he shows that people may fail to understand a Biblical truth which formerly had been concealed because they actually are not believers. Even though they may be religious, they still are in their unsaved state and actually are secret unbelievers. He describes the individual who is in this category in this way. **"But the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, [which things He now reveals to the receptive believer], because these things are foolishness to him, neither is he able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Cor. 2:14).

Paul is saying that this man simply can not understand those previously hidden things that the Holy Spirit now is revealing to mature believers. He is explaining that this is because these things are understood only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, whom the natural man has not received since he has not yet even become a true believer. Now it always has been understood that this verse speaks of the unsaved man's inability to understand spiritual truth. But something has been lost when that spiritual truth is not considered in the context in which Paul wrote this verse. He has been speaking of those in the Old Testament economy who were not able to understand the formerly hidden things prophesied concerning the sufferings of Christ. Notice that in 1 Peter 1:10-14, when Peter has explained the inability of the Old Testament prophets to grasp fully the things of the Messiah, he has associated ". . . **the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow**" (1 Pet. :11). The Old Testament prophets did not fail to understand because they were not saved. Far from that! But in the case of the unsaved man in New Testament times, he never can fully understand the purpose of, the nature of, the benefits of nor the application of the sufferings and the death of Christ. Neither can he understand the glory that will follow. But this indeed is because he has not been saved and does not have the Holy Spirit, the Divine Teacher, indwelling him.

2. That which is true of the unsaved man is true also to a lesser extent for the believer in Christ Jesus who has persisted in the ways of the old man, who has refused to ". . . **walk by means of the [Holy] Spirit**" (Rom. 8:1, 3 as preserved in the Majority Greek text).

Of course there are many believers who do not intentionally persist in walking according to the dictates of his or her flesh. They have been left walking ". . . by means of the flesh" (Rom. 8:1, 3) because the one who led them to Christ never completed the task of disciplining them. The one who won them to Christ simply dropped the foundling on the church steps. He then walked away as if unconcerned whether the new babe in Christ ever grew up spiritually or not. The larger half of the Epistle to the Romans, chapters 6-15, is devoted to Paul's five crucial steps of disciplining the new believer after he has set forth the five crucial steps of soulwinning in chapters 1:16-6:10. Paul speaks of his continuing ministry of disciplining spiritually undeveloped believers in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. **"But I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual [believers] but as unto carnal [fleshly believers], even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with solid food because you still were not able to understand that, neither are you yet able. The reason is that you still are carnal, for in as much as there is among you envy and strife and divisions, aren't you still carnal and planning your life according to man? For whenever someone on the one hand says, 'I am on the side of Paul.' But another on the other hand says: 'I am on the side of Apollos.' Aren't you being carnal?"**

I am utterly aghast that there are those, even one of my former students, who teach from the pulpit and from the Sunday School podium that there is no such thing as a carnal believer. They ignore Paul's explanation in Romans 5:12 through 8:3 that every believer does have a sin nature because of his participation in Adam's act in Adam and that this nature which has served as the king of his or her life since birth still is present in the one who has become a believer. For this reason he exhorts the one who has been placed **"in Christ Jesus"** through the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of the new birth in this way. I translate Romans 6:11-13 in this way fully to transmit the implications of the original Greek text. **"For this reason you also must reckon yourselves on the one hand to be dead to the sin nature but, on the other hand, living to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore stop allowing the sin nature to reign as king in your mortal body [the one which is still subject to death] in order to obey it in its lusts. Neither should you continue to present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to the sin nature, but on the contrary, present yourselves once for all to God as one living out from among the dead ones [i.e., as one who has been resurrected from the dead in Christ Jesus] and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"**

Much of the confusion which believers face when they are attempting to understand Paul's explanation of the Biblical mysteries is caused by the failure of the translators of our English Bibles to recognize that the Apostle speaks 30 times of the sin nature between Romans 5:12 and 8:3. These references are readily distinguishable from his references to sin as an act by his use of the Greek article **hee**, (our "the") before the Greek word **hamartia** "sin" in these 30 locations. All; of these references must be linked back with Paul's twice repeated reference to the sin nature in Romans 5:12 where he explains its origin in the act of rebellion by the fountain head of the race. We have that sin nature and the consequences in our lives today because, as the seed of Adam, we were **"in Adam"** when he first disobeyed God in the garden.

In Romans 7 Paul explains his own perplexity as a new believer. The Mosaic law, which he as a Pharisee had memorized, kept telling the one who now had been freed from the law through his death **"in Christ Jesus"** that he still was committing acts of sin. This helped Paul to realize

that which every believer who eventually can lead a life pleasing to God must realize. He still had a very active sin nature within himself. Nine times in Romans 7 Paul refers to that nature by using the article "the" in front of the word for "sin." Indeed, there are three places in the chapter where he specifically refers to "**the sin nature that indwells me**" or "**the sin nature that is in my members**" (Rom. 7:17, 20 and 23). Failure of a believer to acknowledge that he has a sin nature which forces him to be utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit for victory in overcoming its lusts erases from his mind the absolute necessity of finding, like the Apostle did, the victory over the sin nature which is only obtained through a right relationship to the Holy Spirit [the theme of chapter 8 of Romans]. And failure to enter such a relationship with the Holy Spirit leaves the believer as a carnal believer motivated by the intense desires of his flesh instead of being led by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, that believer will be greatly handicapped in the understanding of the great passages in the New Testament which unfold those Biblical mysteries which had been hidden from the Old Testament believer and which, as a result, still are obscure to the carnal believer.

Paul plainly is explaining in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 that spiritual immaturity is a major reason why many believers do not understand, either partially or fully, those Biblical mysteries which are unveiled by the New Testament writers and particularly by Paul. Believers who have not learned to avail themselves of the teaching and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit, who do not walk by means of the Holy Spirit, in a sense are like the secret unbelievers in the church who cannot understand or will not accept the great Biblical mysteries which now are unfolded to spiritually mature believers by means of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit through mature teachers of God's Word.

4. Paul's explanation of "a mystery" in Ephesians 3:1-6

The book of Ephesians is another place where Paul gives us further information about those things which were hidden from the Old Testament believer even though they were written in the Tenach, the Old Testament. Already he was in a Roman prison when he wrote this great epistle and further explained the nature of a Biblical mystery. He says this in Ephesians 3:1-6. "**Because of this grace I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles---if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you---that according to revelation He made known to me the mystery, just as I previously wrote briefly, with reference to which, when you read, you will be able to understand my grasp of the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not revealed to the sons of men as it now has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by means of the Spirit, that is, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, even sharing together in His promise in Christ through the gospel**" (Eph. 3:1-6).

Once again Paul has stressed the fact that a Biblical mystery relates to revelatory which was not explained by the Holy Spirit to mankind before the days of the apostles. He also has made it clear that this revelatory information now is available because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But Paul now has added some elements to his definition. The very fact that this revelation has been made known through the work of the Holy Spirit already has been developed

in 1 Corinthians 2. But the fact that the channel through which the Holy Spirit has unfolded these previously concealed things by means of the apostles and prophets is new. Furthermore he now shows us that in this passage he is dealing with a different mystery than the one which we found in 1 Corinthians 2. There the mystery focused upon the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. Here the focus is upon the fact that the door of salvation now has been opened for Gentiles so that they might enter the blessings of God through the gospel. Indeed, he now shows that this mystery contains a truth which could not even have been conceived by the Old Testament believer that, through the work of Christ as promised in the gospel, the Gentiles now could be joined together in one body, the body of Christ. But even more astounding is the revelation that the Gentiles now become fellow heirs. That can only mean that the Gentiles enter into some of the great blessings that had been promised to God's chosen people, Israel. Therefore, on the basis of Paul's explanation here in Ephesians 3:1-6, it is obvious that one of the mysteries which had been hidden from Old Testament believers was the new relationship that Gentiles would have to the Lord and to the physical descendants of Abraham. He now elaborates on the fact that he uniquely had been chosen to unfold these Biblical mysteries to the Church.

5. Paul's explanation of "a mystery" in Ephesians 3:7- 11

Paul explains how he became a servant of the Lord in presenting the grace of God. He marvels that he who had persecuted believers before he had become a believer himself should have been chosen to reveal to the Gentiles all that God had in store for them. He speaks of the gospel. ". . . of which I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me by the effectual working of His power, unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, in order that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies by means of the Church, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

The fact that Paul was given this ministry which was to be preached among the Gentiles further confirms the fact that the Biblical mysteries uniquely are revealed to the Church in this age. That which had been hidden from the beginning of time but now is being revealed is unfolded by means of the Church. Amazingly, Paul says that this revelation of the fellowship of the mystery is a means of displaying the manifold wisdom of God. That which is even more amazing in Paul's words is the fact that the revelation of this mystery by means of the Church provides revelation to angelic beings. The reference to "**the principalities and powers in the heavenlies**" can only be understood as speaking of the angels. Whether this refers only to the holy angels or includes the fallen angels as well is a problem. Ephesians 6:12 clearly speaks of four ranks of the fallen angels as having access to "**the heavenlies.**" There Paul warns believers about the fact that, in order for believers to withstand Satan's attacks, we must be aware of the fact that ". . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the evil spiritual forces in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12).

In Romans 8:38-39 these fallen angels are seen attacking believers, but only with the Lord's permission and overriding purpose of developing the believer into the likeness of Christ. Paul explains that their attacks are part of the "all things" which the Holy Spirit may pray into the lives of believers to help them overcome their weaknesses and unChristlikenesses. A crucial part of his explanation of the role of the "all things" of Romans 8:28 follows immediately in verse 29. These are designed by the Holy Spirit and sent by the Father to conform us to the image of Christ. Together the two verses reveal this truth. "Now we know that all things work together for good to those who are loving God, even to those who are being called according to His purpose. The reason is this: whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

It is to be regretted that many students of the Bible cannot see the word "predestined" without immediately turning in their minds to think of the Lord's plan and work of bringing those who come to believe to salvation. In this context it must be recognized that this predestination looks forward and not backward. It looks to that glorious day when the children of God ultimately will be conformed to Christ's image when we stand before the Father in glory. In Ephesians 1:4-5 the same truth is taught but even more clearly once the interpreter turns his mind from the day of salvation to the day of glorification. A problem which has obscured that which Paul is saying in this passage is the translation of *huiothesian* by "adoption" rather than by "adult-son-placing." The word has nothing whatsoever to do with legal adoption of a child into another family. Indeed, we are not adopted into God's family. We are born into His family in the new birth at regeneration. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who are born, not of blood, neither because of the will of the flesh, nor because of the will of man, but who are born of God" (Jn. 1:12). My wife and I perfectly understand the process of legal adoption for both of our children were legally adopted into our family after being born to others. In the first place the believer is not adopted into God's family but is born into His family through the new birth. This is precisely that which the Apostle John teaches. "But as many as received Him, He gave to them the right to become the children [not "sons" as KJV] of God, to those believing in His name, who were born, not out of blood, neither out of the will of the flesh, neither out of the will of man but [were born] out of God" (Jn. 1:12-13).

Instead, the Greek word *huiothesian* speaks of the act that a father performs for his son who has become mature. It is a word that describes the culmination of the long process of the training of a landowner's child. From babyhood in the Greek and Roman cultures the child was placed under the tutelage and discipline of the master's slaves. These were fully responsible for the education and development of the master's child. Finally, when the master had determined that his child had reached a stage of maturity where he could be acknowledged as and announce to be a mature son, he would call all of his slaves together at the front porch of his villa. He would robe his now mature son with a beautiful toga and announce to those slaves, who for years had supervised the child's development and education, "This is my *huios*, my adult son. From now on you take orders from him!" Does not Hebrews 1:14 speak of the angels in such

a way as to indicate that they minister unto the ones who are about to inherit salvation? **"Are not they all ministering spirits being sent out to minister for the sake of the ones who are about to inherit salvation?"** Along with the Holy Spirit the guardian angels continually are ministering to believers as they look forward to the day when these children of God will enter complete maturity in the very presence of the Lord of all. They serve the Eternal in preparing His believing children in the same way that the slaves of the landholder served as they prepared his male children for the day of the declaration of their maturity.

This training with a goal of the child's ultimate adulthood is precisely the import of the word **huiiothesian** in Romans 8 and in Ephesians 1. In the case of the New Testament believer, the Holy Spirit who undertakes the responsibility of training and developing the child of God, seeks to prepare the one who has been born into the family of God as a child so that he will become a mature Son of God. In Romans 8 and Ephesians 1 it can be seen that the term actually has two meanings. There is a sense in which a believer even today can become an adult son of God. Paul refers to this in Romans 8:14. **"For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are adult sons of God."** However, ultimate adult sonship which does not come until we actually stand in the presence of our Lord is the most obvious in these contexts. It is to this that Paul is referring in Romans 8:23. **"And not only so, but we ourselves, having the firstfruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting adult son placing, that is the redemption of our bodies."**

Thus it can be seen that Ephesians 1:4-5 can be properly translated only in a way that recognizes that predestination there, as in Romans 8:29, is looking forward to the day in glory when God's children become adult sons of God. ". . . **Even as He chose us for Himself in Him [in Christ Jesus] before the laying down of the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and blameless before him in love, having predestinated us unto adult son placing through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."**

Surely it is not difficult to see why there were things hidden from the comprehension of the Old Testament believer! There were many facets of truth about believers in the age that would come to us that were utterly incomprehensible to the Old Testament believer. That is not to say that there were no hints of the fact that there would be another people created by the Lord at a future time who would be able to understand these things. Indeed, the prophet who wrote Psalm 102 was used to convey this truth and the fact that the Psalm and the conversations between the Father and the Son which the Psalm contains as the latter faced death would only be understood by yet another people. The Father says to the Son about the Psalm's revelation concerning the Son's coming death and resurrection that a people which would be created would understand its revelation about the Messiah's going to the cross before His receiving of His crown. He says: **"This is written of the generation to come; and the people who will be created will praise the Eternal Lord. The reason is that He [the Father] has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Eternal Lord look upon the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoner [the Old Testament believer confined in sheol until the provision of a sacrifice that could take away sin (Jn. 1:29)], to loose those who are appointed to death [those who would die after the cross], to give an full exposition of the meaning of the name of YHWH, the Eternal Lord, in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem**

when the peoples are gathered together and the kingdoms to serve the Eternal Lord" (Psa. 102:18-22).

But the interpreter should recognize that these three reasons for the delay of the crowning of the King by the Cross of the Savior obviously was not unveiled either to the writer of the Psalm or to those who read it before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. ". . . **The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. . .**" (1 Pet. 1:11) simply were not given meaning to these in the old economy. It should not be surprising then to find that there are those even today who cannot understand some of the great mysteries which are only revealed to mature believers (1 Cor. 2:5-3:4 which see). Some have been taught false doctrine that conceals the truth. Others are yet immature, unable to understand anything that goes beyond the preaching of the cross. It will be seen during the examination of the rapture, one of these great mysteries revealed in the New Testament, that confusion concerning the meaning of the Word, concerning the timing of its prophesied events, and concerning the actual nature of the event great hinder those who are unable to grasp the Biblical teaching concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus in the air for those saints, dead or alive, who are in Christ Jesus.

B. The Revelation of the mystery of the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-57)

1. We will not all sleep but will be changed

Another Biblical mystery of great significance to the believer today was revealed by the Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. This time that which is revealed is new light on that which will happen to believers when the Church age closes before the time of Jacob's troubles begins. This is an area of Biblical truth where many if not most believers are confused. For some the confusion grows out of total failure to recognize Paul's teaching about this crucial transition when all Church age believers since the beginning of the Church at Pentecost will enter into the presence of the Eternal Lord in their glorified bodies. Paul first presents this mystery in a great chapter that corrects the errant thinking of some of the Corinthian believers concerning the subject of resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 begins as Paul reemphasizes the essential truths of the gospel that he had preached to the Corinthians when he had come to Corinth from Athens. In verses 1-11 Paul makes it clear that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential part of that which a person must believe in order to be saved.

Paul actually presents a remarkable amount of information about the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15. Later it will be seen in 1 Thesalonians 4 that the resurrection of the bodies of departed believers is an essential part of the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul utterly has contradicted those at Corinth who were holding the doctrine of the Saducees that there was no resurrection from the dead for believers. He scorns those who acknowledged that Christ had been resurrected from the dead but deny that there is resurrection from the dead. (12) **"Now since it is preached that Christ rose from the dead, how is it that some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?.** (13) **But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen,** (14) **and if Christ has not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith also is empty.** (15) **Yes, and we are found to be false witnesses of God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ, but He did not raise Him up if it**

were so that the dead do not rise. (16) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ has not been raised, (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is without result and you still are in your sins. (18) Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If it is only in this life that we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of all men. (20) But now Christ has arisen from the dead, and He has become the first fruit of those who have gone to sleep [i.e., believers who have died]. (21) The reason is that since by man came death, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For even as in Adam [the one man through whom death came to the human race] all die, even so in Christ [the One Whose resurrection made resurrection possible] all [both saved and unsaved, in their own order] will be made alive, (23) but every man in his own order." [i.e., the resurrection of Church age believers will come in the rapture and others will have their resurrection at their own time].

Israel will have their own resurrection which is described in Daniel 12 as coming 1335 days after the middle of the great tribulation, or 75 days after its end. In that chapter it is revealed to Daniel that, after the actions of the tribulation world leader that have been foreshadowed by those of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11), three major events would befall the people of the nation of Israel. **"And at that time Michael, the great (angelic) prince who stands for the children of your people [Israel], will stand up. Then there will be:**

1. a time of trouble such as never has been since there was a nation even to that same time. [The timing of this is developed in verses 6-8].

2. And at that time your people (Israel) will be delivered, that is everyone that will be found written in the book. (The judgment of living Israel is developed in verses 9-11. It is obvious from Daniel 12:11 that the judgment of living Israel, in preparation for the full return of its exiles to the land promised to them long ago, will take place 30 days after the last half of the seven years of the time of Jacob's troubles. Jeremiah 32:37-44 describes the work of the Eternal that brings about the transformation of those who are allowed to enter their promised land. Ezekiel 31:33-34 is the plainest statement concerning the transformation of the people of the Eternal Lord that will take place at that time. Ezekiel 20:33-44 is one of several passages in the Tannach that describes this final return of Israel from their exile. Matthew 25:31-46 develops it very clearly in the New Testament). In my work in India checking translation work in the Tannach and in the New Testament for tribal peoples living in East India, I had a fascinating experience. I was checking the accuracy of translation work in the Old Testament book of Leviticus that had been done by three leaders of the Manipuri, Tedim Chin and Paite tribes. Mani Singh of the Manipuri tribe was translating the work that he had done on Leviticus 23:6 back into English, the trade language of India, so that I could compare that with the original Hebrew text. When he finished translating this verse that describes the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread in the week following the observance of the passover, he paused and looked very strange. And then, before I could comment on his work he said: "Uncle, we do exactly the same thing in the Manipuri tribe every spring!" And again, before I could comment, Pu Jam of the Paite tribe broke in and said: "And we do too, Uncle!" Immediately Thang of the Tedim Chin tribe of western Myanmar also said almost exactly the same thing.

3. "Then many of them that sleep in the dust will awake, some to everlasting life..." (the timing of which is explained in verses 11-13. According to verse 11). The unsaved dead will not be

raised either with church age believers in the rapture or with Old Testament believers as Paul immediately explains]: **Christ the firstfruits** [See v. 20]; **afterward those who are Christ's at His coming**. [This includes both Church age believers and Old Testament believers, even though these resurrections will be separated by more than seven years. Christ's coming in the air and His coming to the earth are spoken of as if they were one coming]. (24) **Then the end [resurrection] comes when He will have put down all rule and all authority and power,** (25) **for he must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet**. [This resurrection is the one that takes place at the end of Christ's 1,000 year earthly kingdom rule. Further information about this resurrection of the unsaved dead is given Revelation 20:5a and 12-15]. (26) **The last enemy to be destroyed will be death**" (1 Cor. 15:12-26).

Paul has spoken of the believers who now are asleep in 1 Corinthians 15:18 and 20. Many interpreters have made the mistake of concluding that both the body and soul of the believer is asleep today and only will awaken at the resurrection of believers. Paul absolutely denies that idea in 2 Corinthians 5:6 and 8. (6) **"For this reason we are always confident, because we know that as long as we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.** (8) **We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**" It is inescapable that Paul is announcing that the believer who dies goes immediately into the presence of the Lord in his soul and spirit. In the Epistle of First Thessalonians 4:13-14 Paul specifically announces that believers who have departed to be with the Lord when their bodies fell asleep in the sleep of death would be returning from heaven with Christ when He would return to raise their bodies from the dead to return to glory. I believe that Paul is speaking of that return in to glory into the presence of the Father in 1 Thessalonians 3:13. **"...To the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all of His saints."** But as Paul speaks of Christ's coming in the air to catch up the bodies of departed Church saints and to transform those believers who still are alive at that time, it is there that he makes it clear that only the bodies of the departed Church age saints lie asleep while they await Christ's return from glory for them. Their souls and spirits already are with Him precisely as Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. He says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, (13) **"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, in order that you will not sorrow in the same way that others [sorrow] who do not have any hope.** (14) **For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus...."**

No, the entire body, soul and spirit of the believer who has died in Christ Jesus does not lie in soul sleep. Only the body lies in sleep, waiting to be awakened by the shout of the Savior and the blast of the trumpet that will initiate the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

2. The time of our transformation

a. At the twinkling of an eye

Paul has revealed that the transformation of the believer from the life that he has lived in this old body to that glorious, eternal state which we will enjoy will take no longer than the flash of light that glances off of an eyeball. It will not take the Lord an agonizing long time to

search out the oceans for the scattered atoms of a believer's body who has died in the sea. There will be no painfully long wait for the believer whose body has decayed in the earth to be reassembled and raised up to be joined with his or her soul and spirit. It is the Eternal, all powerful Creator Who at a single breath transformed a lump of clay into the wonderful, brilliant first man. Paul describes the time in which the transformation of the decayed and dispersed body will take place in this way. **"Behold, I show to you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we all will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [for the Church] for the trumpet will sound and the dead [in Christ] will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality"** (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

In a moment! At the twinkling of an eye! In effect, the assembling and raising of those being resurrected, as well as the time it will take for the transformation of all Church age believers who still will be living at that moment, fully will be accomplished. In a moment! In the twinkling of an eye! Glory!

b. At the last trump (for the Church)

It must be noticed that the text above also tells us that the timing of the rapture will be initiated at the blast of the last trump. Now many have confused the timing of the rapture by confusing this trumpet blast with the sounding of the seventh trumpet by the seventh angel in Revelation 11:15. But the sounding of the trumpet at the end of the tribulation as described in Revelation 11:15-19 is a trumpet which sounds with reference to the people of the nation of Israel and the judgment of the nations that have been persecuting Israel during the time when the beast has become the world ruler and has set up his rule from the city of Jerusalem. All seven of the angelic trumpet blasts follow the opening of the seven seals. They do not overlap them. After the opening of the seventh seal there is a silence in heaven for about one half of an hour before the seven angels with the seven trumpets arise to introduce another series of seven terrible events which lead up to the close of the tribulation and the beginning of the rule of Christ over all of the world. It is an event series which brings about the judgment of the nations. But it also is an event series which ultimately brings the wayward people of Israel to their knees, beseeching the only One Who can cleanse them from their sins to come down from heaven and save them. Isaiah 63 describes the process that will lead to their repentance. Those of Israel will have recognized that it is He who will have come from Edom where He will have destroyed their enemies as the year of vengeance finally has come. They will have recognized the waywardness of Israel in the past and that will lead them to begin calling for Him to begin once again attending to His wayward people. **"Look down from heaven and see from the habitation of Your holiness and of your Glory. Where is your zeal and your strength, the sounding of Your bowels and of Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained"** (Isa. 63:15). The agony of that prayer will deepen. Eventually Israel will cry out: **"Oh that You would rend the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains would flow at Your presence even as the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, in order to make Your name known to Your adversaries, in order that the nations may come to tremble at Your presence"** (Isa. 64:1 Engl.).

The dreadful trials which Isaiah describes as befalling the nation of Israel in the days before the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth in response to their prayer above are those described in the book of Revelation. They have nothing whatsoever to do with the Church. There are only a few chapters of the book of Revelation which relate to the Church. Those having to do with the Church on earth are chapters 1-3. This section ends as our forerunner, John, is caught up in vision to see that which would follow here on earth as Israel faces her great trials that bring that people into right relationship to their Messiah. **"After this I looked, and see, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard was as if a trumpet was talking to me which said: 'Come up here and I will show you the things which must be after these things'"** (Rev. 4:1). I am convinced that precisely that which John heard will be spoken to the Church before the tribulation begins. The last trump that sounds at the rapture of the Church is the last trump for the Church, not for Israel. The rapture takes place before the tribulation.

Those verses in Revelation that speak of the Church in heaven after the rapture are found in chapter 19. The primary attention of the book of Revelation turns from the terrible judgments which will be taking place on the earth during the seven years of the time of Jacob's trouble to the glories surrounding the church in heaven during that time. It is a chapter that contains the joy and rejoicing of the Church as they honor the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. It describes the preparation of the Church, the Bride for her return to earth with the King, the Lord Jesus. And then the chapter moves on to describe the dreadful scene when the King does arrive on earth with all of His armies as He judges the nations and prepares earth for His one thousand year reign here on earth. No, the rapture of the Church does not take place either at the middle of the tribulation or at the end of the tribulation. The Church will be in heaven during all of that time.

c. After the resurrection of Church age believers whose bodies sleep while awaiting the return of their spirits with Christ

Paul also makes it clear that those believers who are alive and who remain until the coming of the Lord in the air will only be transformed and translated into their eternal state after the resurrection of the bodies of those believers whose souls and spirits join their resurrected bodies. This Paul clearly says in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. (15) **"For we say this to you be the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of th Lord will not precede those who are asleep. (16) The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and who remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words."**

3. The nature of our change (1 Cor. 15:53-57)

Paul devotes considerable space to his description of all that will take place in our bodies at the time of the rapture. He has said in 1 Corinthians 15:51, **"...We shall all be changed."**

Earlier in the chapter he has given more detailed information about the transformation of the believer at the rapture. In describing the resurrection from a believer's body from the dead he says in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44: **"It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption. (43) It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. (44) It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body."** Paul further describes that which happens in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54. (52) **"...The dead will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. As a result, when this corruptible will have put on incorruption and this mortal will have put on immortality, then the saying that is written will be brought to pass, 'Death is swallowed up in victory."**

II. THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

Now it is necessary to review the event series in which the rapture of the Church will take place. It is crucial that this series of events be brought into perspective and that their order of occurrences be recognized. Otherwise it is easy for one to fall prey to one of the misunderstandings concerning the timing of the rapture in the eschatological event series.

A. When the Lord descends from heaven (1 Thes. 4:16)

It is clear from Romans 9-11 that Paul considered the teaching of things to come to be a vital part of the discipling through which a new believer should be taken. In my book "True Evangelism" (or "Biblical Evangelism")--as practiced by Paul in Romans 1:15-6:10," I show that Paul practiced five very careful steps in his evangelism. This book already has been published on CD by LOGOS in Oak Harbor, Washington. In my second book on Romans (in the publisher's hands) I show that in Romans 6:10-15:31 Paul then took five very careful steps in the discipling of the one who has come to Christ. The third step which he took is found in Romans 9-11. In this section he focuses upon the teaching of the believer of things to come. It is clear that he knew that the understanding of the great things that our God is going to do in the future serves as a powerful incentive for the believer to live a spiritual life as he or she looks forward to these great events in the future.

In Paul's ministry it is apparent that he practiced the principles, both of evangelism and of discipleship which he teaches in the book of Romans. Acts 17 describes his work of founding the church at Thessalonica. We are told that he came there and that for **"...three Sabbath days [he] reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it was necessary for Messiah to have suffered, and to have risen from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you is the Messiah. And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and a great multitude of the devout Jews also and of the chief women not a few"** (Acts 17:2-4). But the following context shows that the unbelieving Jews raised a tumult that greatly troubled the city. As a result Paul and Silas left Thessalonica by night and traveled on to Berea.

In that short time of three weeks it is obvious from statements made in First and Second Thessalonians that Paul had taught the believers things to come. But it is also clear from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 that he was concerned about the fact that they had not fully grasped all that he had been able to teach those believers in the fragments of time that he was able to be with them. It is clear that Paul, in his first epistle to the Thessalonian church, was writing to help them to understand more about the rapture. He sought to help them to understand that believers that had died now were with the Lord and would be returning to earth with Him to receive their resurrected bodies at the rapture. And as he developed that theme in 1 Thessalonians 4 he also clarified the fact that, when the Lord descended from heaven with believers that already had died, immediately afterward living believers would be transformed into their eternal bodies and caught up to be with the Lord.

B. At the great shout of the Lord (1 Thes. 4:16)

As Paul developed those truths about the resurrection of departed New Testament believers who were in Christ Jesus, he adds details concerning the immediate event series. Suddenly believers on earth would hear the voice of the Lord from heaven as He descended to catch up believers, both those resurrected and those transformed to be with Him. I have suggested earlier that the call that took John, the elder statesman of the book of Revelation, into heaven in Spirit to hear of the great things which yet were to come. And I have suggested that John probably is somewhat of a forerunner of the church in this regard, and that the shout of the Lord is that which will take us from our earthly residence to our promised heavenly residence. Christ had said in the upper room in John 14:1-3: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If this were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself in order that where I am, you also may be."** I think that it is altogether possible that the voice of God that we will hear will be the voice of our Savior speaking the very words to us that He spoke to John the Apostle long ago. **"...Come up here, and I will show you things which must be after this"** (Rev. 4:2).

C. At the sounding of the voice of the archangel (1 Thes. 4:16)

At about the same time believers would hear the ringing shout of the archangel. The book of Jude in verse 9 leaves no doubt about the name of this great angel who is the highest of the angels. His name is Michael. And what is it about which he will be shouting? I suspect that this great archangel, who will lead the good angels of heaven in the war against those angels who have rebelled with Satan during the tribulation (Rev. 12:7-9) may be shouting a warning to the hordes of the angels who today are obedient servants of Satan. If I am right, it is a warning for these fallen angels to stand back and not interfere with the events of the rapture of the church age saints.

D. At the blast of the trumpet of God (1 Thes. 4:16)

At approximately the same time our atmosphere will be rent by the great sound of the blast of God's trumpet. This sound will ring out, either as a part of the warning given to the fallen angels or as a call to the saints of this age as they are called forth from earth into the Lord's heavenly presence. On the other hand, this great trumpet blast may possibly be heard by all who have rejected Christ and may serve to indicate that the door of salvation in the Church now is closed. But we must never make the mistake of saying that no one could be saved after the Church is caught up to heaven. Indeed, the book of Revelation makes it clear that there will be multitudes who believe during the tribulation. However, these will not be part of the Bride of Christ, the Church. The destiny of multitudes of these who believe in the tribulation is to die at the hands of the world ruler of the tribulation (Rev. 7:9-12). And their heavenly destiny is different also. Those who are saved during the tribulation serve God in a different way than the Church, the Consort of Christ, will serve Him. (14) **"...These are those who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (15) Therefore they will be before the throne of God, and they will serve Him day and night in His temple, and He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. (16) They will not hunger any more, neither will they thirst any more, neither will the sun light upon them nor any heat, (17) for the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and He will lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes"** (Rev. 7:14-17).

E. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51- 52)

We have seen in First Corinthians 15:51-52 that the Rapture will be a remarkably sudden event. After the resurrection of those in Jesus whose bodies sleep in death, **"...We will all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed."** There will be no time for those who have delayed responding to the gospel invitation to join the glad group of believers who suddenly are launched on their journey to the mansions which the Savior has prepared for us. The entire event including the resurrection of departed believers and the transformation of living believers will take place in the time that it takes a beam of light to glance off of the eyeball.

F. At Christ's return with the dead in Christ (1 Thes. 4:13- 18)

It was concern on the part of the Thessalonians, apparently conveyed to Paul, either by a letter or by a personal messenger, that led the Divine Author to direct Paul to give that church further information about believers who had died. Paul carefully explained in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 that, while the bodies of these believers were asleep, they actually were with the Lord. This is the truth that he had conveyed to the Corinthian church in his second epistle to them. Earlier in the chapter he has made it plain that the believer who dies should expect immediately to be clothed upon with a body in heaven. He has contrasted the believer's life in his mortal

body with the fact that, at death, the believer immediately would be with the Lord. **"We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we labor in order that, whether present [in one's body] or absent [from one's body in death], we may be accepted by Him"** (2 Cor. 5:8-9). And in 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul has made it clear that the home going of all believers will take place in that moment when Christ and the great host of believers whose spirits already are with the Lord will return from heaven so that they may take part in the rapture. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 that the return of Christ and of the departed spirits of believers begins that great event. **"But I would not have you to remain ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep so that you do not sorrow, even as others [the unsaved] who do not have any hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus."**

G. After the resurrection of the dead in Christ (1 Thes. 4:16c)

Thus is clear that the rapture awaits the return of believers whose bodies sleep in Jesus. The rapture cannot begin until they are returned to earth from heaven to receive their resurrected bodies. Indeed, their resurrection will be the first stage of the rapture. And Paul immediately deals with this factor in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. (15) **"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and who remain until the coming of the Lord [in the air before the tribulation] will not precede [i.e., go before, not prevent them. Actually the old Latin word *prevenir* actually did mean "to go before." The problem is that the English word "prevent," found in the KJV, which is derived from that has changed its meaning so completely that it is inadequate any more for conveying the information it once gave]. those who are asleep [i.e., who have died]. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first...."** It is only then that believers who still are alive will be caught up. (17) **"Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so we will be forever with the Lord."**

H. At the moment of our up-gathering-together (2 Thes. 2:1)

In Second Thessalonians 2:1 the Apostle introduces a new term to describe the assembling of the saints of the Church age and their abrupt departure for their heavenly home. In his first chapter Paul has been comforting the believers at Thessalonica concerning the dreadful trials through which they were passing. There were some believers who had concluded that already they were in the great tribulation. The first chapter of Second Thessalonians is written to quiet the hearts of these believers. It is written to remove their confusion concerning their fear that their persecutions and tribulations indicated that they already were in the great tribulation. He has made it plain that believers will not be involved in the righteous judgment of God when He would punish those that did not know Him. He describes the escape of believers from that tribulation in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). (6) **"...It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; (7) and to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, (8)**

in flaming fire aking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, (9) who will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He will come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe...."

It is then that Paul introduces the new way of describing the means by which believers will escape the sufferings of the great tribulation. He continues in chapter two showing the difference between the judgment of the unbelievers at His coming from the departure of those who will be believers here on earth at the time that Christ delivers believers before that time of trouble. He says in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, (1) **"Now we beseech you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [to earth, which clearly has been described in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 above] and by our *up-gathering-together* unto Him, (2) that you should not be shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit or by word neither by letter as if it had come from us, as [thinking] that the day of the Lord is at hand."**

As we have seen, this glorious moment when we are caught up to be forever with the Lord is described by a new word in 2 Thessalonians 2:1. There the Greek word *episunagooge* is used and that carefully has been distinguished by Paul from the day in which Christ will suddenly appear on earth at the end of the tribulation in fiery judgment upon unbelievers. I prefer to translate this single Greek word as **"up-gathering-together"** and recognize that it refers to the rapture. I do not accept the application of Granville Sharp's rule to this first verse. That would indicate that **"the [previously mentioned] coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..."** His coming in fiery judgment, and the rapture are the same thing or at least occur at the same time. The view that insists on this interpretation of the timing of the rapture is called "the post-tribulation rapture." Instead, the following context shows that this was the very problem which the Thessalonians were facing. Chapter one clearly shows that they thought that the trials that they were facing indicated that they were entering that terrible time of trouble. Paul plainly tells that church that, instead of being troubled of heart and thinking that the day of the Lord was upon them, in reality they would be resting beyond the reach of the tribulation with which the day of the Lord is introduced. That is precisely why he says to that church, **"Now we beseech you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [to earth, in the early stages of the day of the Lord which clearly has been described in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 above] and by ou- *up-gathering-together* [the rapture] unto Him, (2) that you should not be shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit or by word neither by letter as if it had come from us, as [thinking] that the day of the Lord is at hand"** (2 Thes. 2:1-2).

I. Before the beginning of the day of the Lord

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 can only mean that Paul was comforting these believers. He was making it clear that, because the rapture came first and was a totally separate eschatological event, they need not be upset and worried. They should not think that they had entered that terrible time of trouble in which Christ would come to earth to destroy His enemies and establish His kingdom on earth. The up gathering together of the saints of the Church age

destined them to seven years of rest while the earth, in great tribulation, still faced the coming of the King to establish His millennial kingdom.

Christ had been promised that reign on earth in eternity past in the decree. In Palm 2 we have the record of His reporting that promise of the Father which was made in the eternal decree. He Who was fully God and coequal with the Father was to undertake His subordinate role as the Son of God. This He would do in order to accomplish all that was to be accomplished in time between the eternities. Psalm 2 records Christ's words as He quoted that which had been planned in the decree in eternity past. It includes the establishment of the Father/Son relationship in which these members of the Godhead would operate during time. But it also contains the promise of the Father to the One Who would serve in the subordinate position as the Son of God between the eternities that He would have an inheritance as His reward for that which He would accomplish. Because of all that He would do as the Son of God, He was promised in the decree that He would receive an earthly kingdom in which He would rule to the ends of the earth.

In the light of the interpretation of Psalm 2:7 by Hebrews 1:5, Christ is the member of the Godhead Who is speaking in verses 7-9 of the Psalm. He says: "**I am determined** [a determinative form in Hebrew which expresses that which He has chosen to do] **to relate the details of the decree: The Eternal Lord has said to Me, You are My Son. This day** [i.e., at this time] **I become Your Father.**" In this verse the One Who would become the Messiah relates how His entry into the economic relationship with the First Person of the Godhead. That means that the ontological, or existence relationship which had existed from eternity, in which all three members of the Godhead always had been coequal in a perfectly balanced relationship, now was changing in order to accomplish all that the Godhead had planned to take place between the eternities. The economic relationship is being established. This is the working relationship in which both the Son and the Holy Spirit assume a subordinate relationship with the Father in order to accomplish the work that must be done by them between the eternities. This does not mean that either the Son or the Holy Spirit is any less God even though this temporary change in relationship has been established. Now the Son will take orders from the Father. The Holy Spirit will be involved in all that the Son will do on earth. And yet the Holy Spirit in some sense also is subordinate to the Son and Father. In the upper room Christ said to His disciples, "**But when the Comforter has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth Who will come forth from [the presence of] the Father, He will testify of Me...**" (Jn. 15:26).

In Psalm 2:8-9 the Son continues to quote from that which the Father had said to Him in the decree. "**Ask of Me, for I am determined to give** [This is the second untranslated, determinative form in the Psalm. It is easy to see why the amillennial translators of King James' court chose not fully to translate this verb form!] **to You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron. You will dash them into pieces like a potter's vessel.**" Here then is the promise of the Father that lies behind the Father's utter scorn of those who thought they could break the bands and the cords of the Eternal Lord and His Messiah. Because it was in the eternal decree that the Son would rule here on earth, the rejection and death of the Messiah which is

anticipated in Psalm 2:10-3 absolutely will not thwart the plans of the Eternal. Here is the reason for the derisive laugh of the Lord sitting in the heavens. When the Jews and Gentiles crucified Christ they did not in the least thwart the eternal plan of the Godhead. Indeed, they only fulfilled that decree! **'Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and He will vex them in His sore displeasure. 'Yet will I establish My King [Christ, the Messiah] upon My holy hill of Zion''** (Psa. 2:5-6).

Second Thessalonians chapters one and two are but a small portion of the revelation given to us in Scripture of the fact that, in great violence, Messiah one day will return to earth, will overthrow His enemies and will establish His earthly kingdom which will last for one thousand years. That will be the fulfilling of the promise made to the Messiah, the Son of God, which was made upon His return from the Mount of Olives to the Father's presence in heaven. **The Eternal Lord said to my [David's] Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool. The Eternal Lord will send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people [Israel] will be willing in the day of Your power [when You rule] in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning. You will have the dew of Your youth''** (Psa. 110:1-3).

But the revelation of that great mystery, the rapture, is that the Church will not be here on earth at the time "...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all of those who believe..." (2 Thes. 1:7-10). Our episunagooge, our up gathering together is an event that takes away the trouble of heart and concern about passing through the tribulation stage of the day of the Lord.

Thus the great Apostle assures the troubled church of Thessalonica and all even to this age who read of that day and are troubled. **"Now we beseech you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [to earth, in the early stages of the day of the Lord which clearly has been described in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 above] and by our up gathering together [the rapture] unto Him, (2) that you should not be shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit or by word neither by letter as if it had come from us, as [thinking] that the day of the Lord is at hand."** Paul follows this instruction with a warning for the Church to beware of any that teach any other doctrine, a warning of crucial importance to the Church of Jesus Christ even today. **"Let no man deceive you by any means..."** (2 Thes. 2:3a).

It is regrettable that the amillennial translators of the King James Version followed a single very late Greek manuscript and its reading of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, which, as a result, incorrectly says "...that the day of Christ is at hand." The terminology, "the day of Christ" clearly is defined in Philippians 1:6-7, 10; 2:10-11 and 16. That term most certainly does not refer to the climax of the tribulation period here on earth. Instead, it specifically refers to that day in which we are in heaven in the presence of Christ. The following of that very late reading, "the day of Christ," desperately obscures that which is being revealed about the rapture in this context. Paul clearly is contrasting the "up-gathering-together" of Church believers in the rapture with the Day of the Lord. The correct reading, found in all ancient manuscripts of 2 Thessalonians, is "the day of the Lord." I conclude that this great

eschatological period begins with the signing of the covenant to bring peace in the land of Israel by the one who will become the world ruler for the last three and one half years of the tribulation.

I have stated this in my doctoral dissertation, "Joel's Concept of the Day of the Lord," at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1961. I insist that the day of the Lord is that period which lies between the signing of that covenant as described in Daniel 9:26b-27 and the great white throne judgment of unbelievers by Christ in preparation for the Day of God. In spite of the misunderstanding of many, these verses absolutely are revealing that there is no possibility whatsoever that the rapture will occur somewhere in the early days of the eschatological period which is called "**the day of the Lord.**" There is to be no confusion at that point.

1. The times and the seasons of our departure (1 Thes. 5:1-11)

The word that connects 1 Thessalonians 4 to the 5th chapter introduces the review of the truth that Paul already had taught the Thessalonians. Once the reader of this section recognizes how carefully Paul distinguishes those who will be involved with Christ's coming at the rapture from those who will suffer judgment at the time of Christ's return to earth, it will become involved that believers will not be involved in the suffering of the day of the Lord. The pronouns "**you, we**" and "**us**," contrasted with "**they**" and "**them**," inescapably draw that distinction. "**But about the times and the seasons, brothers, you do not have any need for me to write to you.** (2) **The reason is that you yourselves perfectly well know that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** (3) **For when they say: 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction comes upon them like travail comes upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.** (4) **But you, brothers, are not in darkness, with the result that that day [the day of the Lord] should overtake you like a thief.** (5) **You all are the sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness.** (6) **Therefore let us not sleep [here the sleep of indolence] as do others, but let us watch and be sober,** (7) **for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they who are drunken are drunken in the night.** (8) **But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and the assurance of salvation for an helmet.** (9) **For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord, Jesus Christ,** (10) **Who died for us, so that, whether we are awake [i.e., alive] or sleep [i.e., dead], we should live together with Him.** (11) **Wherefore you comfort yourselves together, and build one another up, even as you also do" (1 Thes. 5:1-11).**

It is clear from Paul's careful distinction that the day of the Lord will not come upon believers. The judgment aspect of the early part of the day of the Lord is destined to fall upon those who are unbelievers and not upon those whom Paul was addressing or even upon us. It is obvious that the day of the Lord is not to be a matter of fear to the believer for it is upon those who will have ignored the gracious invitation of the Lord Jesus to receive His salvation. Yet one more section of Paul's instruction about the rapture, so long misunderstood and distorted from its original intent, tells us that believers will not be involved in the day of the Lord as recipients of the trials and tribulation which will fall upon unbelievers in that great day.

2. During hee apostosia, actually time of our departure (2 Thes. 2:1-3)

One of the most painful pieces of Bible translation that the one who is interested in eschatology can find is the way that practically all translators have treated 2 Thessalonians 2:3. It is in their translating hee apostosia as "a [religious] falling away." In the first place the Greek definite article, hee, "the" has been utterly ignored or at least mistranslated by the indefinite article "a" in English by most translators. That might seem to be an insignificant change at first. However, the definite article repeatedly is used as an article of previous reference. That is, it tells us that the noun that follows the article refers to a previous mention of the same subject. In other words, the reader is told by the definite article to look for the same subject earlier discussed by hee apostosia in the immediately preceding context. The significance of the mistake of ignoring the definite article will become obvious in the following discussion.

The second problem in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is the fact that the translators have assumed that the noun apostosia is being used in an extended meaning, and not in its basic meaning, "departure." It has been translated "a falling away" in the King James Bible. The New American Standard Bible transliterates the noun into English letters, "apostasy," thus suggesting that the word refers the departure of a believer from the truth. This improves the reading only in that the definite article is acknowledged and is correctly translated by the English article, "the." But to what previous reference to "the departure from the truth" is there in the previous context of this book? There is none. And that raises serious question concerning the accuracy of the translation of the noun and article, hee apostosia by "the apostasy." The New International Version provides a translation that has somewhat better possibility of being accurate. It renders the noun "the rebellion." I say that it has somewhat better possibility since there are obvious signs of rebellion in chapter one. However the question must be asked, "Is "the rebellion" really a valid translation of hee apostosia ? Is this a word that properly is applied to the rebellion of the unsaved against the Lord Jesus Christ? Would it not be more appropriately used of the departure of those involved in the faith from their Biblical foundations? But is that the meaning?

Now there are several verses in the New Testament that clearly do announce that in the latter days there will be much religious apostasy. Indeed, that is precisely the case in the much of the Church today. But, by assuming that the Greek noun was referring to religious apostasy, the going away from the faith, the translators have ignored the possibility that the noun is being used in its basic meaning instead of its extended meaning. The noun actually is used in its basic meaning in four other passages in the New Testament. It is amazing to see modern day translators misunderstanding the meaning of the noun when both Tyndale and Cloverdale long ago properly translated the phrase simply as "the departure." And here is the basic and common meaning of the noun in Greek usage.

Is there a departure mentioned in the preceding context to which the article of previous reference could be pointing? Indeed, there is, and it is only two verses before. For this reason I reject the translation of hee apostosia in ways that imply that the noun as used here refers to religious apostasy. After all, the antecedent "going away" or "departure" in 2 Thessalonians 2:1

specifically refers to the going away of the Church in "**the up-gathering-together**" of the saints of the Church. For this reason I insist that 2 Thessalonians 2:3 must be referring to the rapture and that the verse should be translated in this way. **"Let no man deceive you by any means [including the mistranslating of *he apostosia*], for that day will not come [i.e., the day of the Lord] except the previously mentioned going away comes first and the man of lawlessness comes to be revealed, the son of perdition."** Properly understood the verse perfectly harmonizes with Paul's comforting assurance in the first verse of the chapter that the believers at Thessalonica were not already in the day of the Lord. Indeed, verse three gives the basis for that assurance. Paul clearly is saying that the day of the Lord and the manifestation of the man of sin in the day of the Lord cannot possibly arrive before the going away of the Church in the "**up gathering together,**" the rapture of the Church. What a pity that this great truth has been lost for so many in the Church as a result of the amillennial translators who refused the accurate work of Tyndale and Cloverdale because they did not even believe in the rapture, with the result that they rendered *he apostosia* as "**a falling away.**"

J. Before the bema or judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

In Second Corinthians 5:10 the Apostle Paul looks forward to that day in heaven when believers receive their rewards for the way that they have served the Lord while they were here on earth. **"Wherefore we labor in order that, whether we are present [here on earth before death] or absent, we may be accepted by Him. For all of us [believers] must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that every one may receive the things done in his body, according that which he has done, whether it is good or worthless."** It is clear that the departure of the Church for heaven in the rapture must come before that day when our Judge, the Lord Jesus, determines our rewards.

K. Shortly before our coming before God the Father (1 Thes. 3:13)

I conclude that Paul, in First Thessalonians 3:13, refers to an event which follows the judgment seat of Christ. He longs for the Thessalonian believers to **"...Increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all, even as we do toward you, to the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all of His saints."** To me that suggests that we believers should be occupied with living our Christian lives in utter devotion to the Lord, allowing Him to transform our lives into the glorious pattern of holiness which Christ would like to see here on earth. And yet the phrase, **"...unblameable in holiness before God"** actually will not be fully exhibited in us only at the time of our coming before God. For us to reach that glorious time when nothing of our shortcomings here on earth can only come when Christ at the Bema seat has taken care of all of our failures. Only then will we be fully conformed to the likeness of Christ as described by Paul in Romans 8:29. **"For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brethren."** It appears that Paul in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 actually is looking forward to that time after the judgment seat of Christ when our Savior presents up to the Father, fully conformed to the

likeness of Jesus Christ. Surely it is of that glorious day of which the Apostle John is speaking in 1 John 3:2. "Beloved, we now are the born ones of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we do know that when He will appear, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is."

REMEMBER WHEN I TAUGHT YOU THESE THINGS? (2 Thes. 2:5)

No sooner has Paul re-taught these things to the Thessalonian church than he reminds them that they had heard these truths before from his own lips. "Don't you remember that even while I still was with you, I used to tell you these things?" (2 Thes. 2:5). The impact of Paul's rebuke stings even more when one realizes that he carefully had taught these things again to that church in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. How sad it is that the Church today, often like the church at Thessalonica, needs to be reminded and rebuked for their careless treatment of this great eschatological truth. It clearly promises the departure and deliverance of the Church of Jesus Christ from the terrors of the seven years and from all of the tribulation which faces the world, tribulation which will be climaxed by the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ with all of His saints to earth.

CONCLUSION

One of the great tragedies of Bible translation is the mistake made by the English Catholic translators when they translated hee apostosia by "apostasy." That error has been followed by scores of other translators in the centuries that have followed. That has resulted in the obscuring of Paul's very precise explanation of the time when the rapture would take place has resulted in tragic confusion among those who, contrary to Paul's explicit statement, want to expect the rapture at mid-tribulation or at the end of the tribulation. Of course that in turn has resulted in a continually growing host of confused believers who no longer live their lives in the constant expectation of Christ's return in the air at any moment for the Church. Indeed, the translation of hee apostosia in such a way that it refers only to rising religious apostasy has left multitudes of believers open to that confusion which denies the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church. While several texts of Scripture do teach that the Church will degenerate in its faith and practice in the latter days, Second Thessalonians 2:3 is in a context which has nothing to do with religious apostasy. The article that accompanies apostosia in that text, ignored in many translations, is the key. This article of previous reference directly links "the departure" in that verse with the previous mention of the departure of the Church in "our up-gathering-together." It leaves no doubt whatsoever that the departure of the Church must precede the events which start the Day of the Lord, an extended period which will begin with the tribulation, the time of Jacob's troubles.

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

Bernard E. Northrup

I. THE PROMISE OF THE RETURN

(Jn.13:33)

Supper was ended; now Judas had gone. The disciples were troubled with gloom.
Night now had fallen; the Christ spoke of home while crushed silence of woe filled the room.
Crystalline clear was the import to each. He had said He was going away!

Jn 13:36-37

"Lord, where do you go?" Peter then said. And He answered: "Though I go, you stay."
"Simon, while Satan had asked to sift all, I have prayed for your faith in that sieve.
Trial and heartbreak, denial will come, but when strengthened, help these here to live."

"Smitten the Shepherd---offended the sheep and the Shepherd be cursed with your breath!"
"Lord!" Peter cried, "I will follow you there--whether prison or even to death!"
"Troubled disciples, believe in me now. Let your hearts find rest here in words true.

Jn.14:1-3

Many abodes are prepared where I go; but I go to prepare one for you.
And if I go to prepare you a place, then for you I will come once again.
I will receive you then to myself; My disciples believe not in vain.

I now return to the glory I shared with my Father who sent me to you.
Trouble awaits you, all scattered, alone, but the Comforter comes to you too.
Be of good cheer for my peace I will give through the One who will dwell in your heart.
He will attend you until that glad day when I come and no longer depart.

2. THE WAIT FOR HIS RETURN

Lk.24:4, 5, 11

The trauma now had passed, the capture, trial and crushing cross,
The streams of salty tears that coursed their chapped and sunburned cheeks
While nails had rent the flesh of Him that each one loved so much.

How black the shroud of night that fell to hide the frightful scene!
How troubled, yes, afraid had been their hearts on Calvary.
Their hopes had turned to dust as He had suffered, bled and died!

Lk.24:25-27

But He arose! Alive! And they had seen Him forty days!
For forty days He taught; He filled their souls with prophets' words,
Revealed how they spoke of Him. How oft their hungry hearts had burned.

Repeatedly they heard Him speak and they had handled Him!
Now proofs infallible were theirs. He was the living Christ!
Where once before He walked upon the sea before their eyes,

Jn.21:9,12

He walked no more but built a morning fire upon the shore.
No water walking there for some might always err and think
A spirit came to them. He waited long upon the shore.

He broke the bread he baked and fish, and they together dined.
Then, still beside the sea, He counseled them about their work
Which they must do for Him while He was gone away from them.

Jn. 21:22-23

He hinted at the truth (which we who wait have come to love),
That some would be alive when He should come to them again.
Some erred who heard. They thought He meant before the death of John.

This plainly John denied. But some will tarry till He comes!
Now centuries have passed. This promised hope for us has grown.
When they had seen Him last on Olivet they heard these words:

Acts 1:10-11

"You ragged men of Galilee, why stand you gazing at the sky?
The One whom you have seen Him go shall come again the Way He left!"
Then do you wonder why we wait and look for Him to come?

The church that Christ has built has grown and spread throughout the world.
His faithful very oft have turned their hopeful eyes toward the clouds.
Now each who reads His Word with care awaits in hope of Him today.
Each waits the day He will return and longs to live to see the day!

3. THE JOY OF HIS RETURN

1 Cor. 15:51-53

The church awaits the mystery, the promised hope which we will see
When He shall come, when we will hear that ringing shout so loud, so clear--
When Christ descends from God above to gather those who say in love:
"Oh come! Christ, quickly come!"

I Thes.4:13-17

Our hearts will leap to hear His cry, to see descending from on High
Our Lord and His who lie asleep in mouldering dust or in the deep--
Will come with Jesus in that day their trump will sound and He will say:
"Come forth, you Sons of God!"

The church awaits the mystery, the transformation we will see
When from the heavenly trumpeter that ringing call will reach us clear
And in a moment's twinkling eye we rise, transformed like Him on high!
"Oh Christ, Oh quickly come!"

Psa.110:1

For He is seated up above beside His Father, who in love
Had sent Him to the manger mound, to dreadful cross before His crown.
He serves His church in work of prayer that we might join His presence there.
"Oh come! Christ, quickly come!"

Rev.6:8-9 NKJV

Our elders from their heavenly throne will fall upon their faces prone
To worship and give thanks to One Who was and is and is to come--
To cast our crowns before His face Who made us victors through His grace.
"Oh Christ! Oh quickly come!"

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RAPTURE

OF THE

PROMISE

THE

Bernard E. Northrup Th.D.

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THE LONG, SAD DAYS
BEFORE
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LATTER DAYS

Bernard E. Northrup Th.D.

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Text, Translation and Poetry by the author