

that the God of the Old Testament is the same loving God as that of the New Testament?

25. What is the purpose of the punishment promised by Micah?
26. The warning of Micah to Judah is _____.
27. List the cities of the Philistine plains mentioned by Micah. Locate them on a map.
28. Micah's home town was _____.
29. Why did Sargon carry off the social, political and cultural leaders of Israel?
30. Self-inflicted baldness by the worshippers of Baal was a symbol of _____.

CHAPTER VII

SECOND CYCLE

WOE TO THE ARROGANT MISLEADERS . . . Micah 2:1-3

RV . . . Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time.

LXX . . . They meditated troubles, and wrought wickedness on their beds, and they put it in execution with the daylight; for they have not lifted up their hands to God. And they desired fields, and plundered orphans, and oppressed families, and spoiled a man and his house, even a man and his inheritance. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I devise evils against this family out of which ye shall not lift up your necks, neither shall ye walk upright speedily: for the time is evil.

COMMENTS

Micah now turns from the generalities of judgement impending against the northern and southern kingdoms, their capitals and their cities, to the personal denouncement of those who sit in high places in them. The punishment of Jerusalem and Samaria are the result of sin. Sin is an individual thing. If a society or a city is sinful, it is because it is inhabited by sinful people. If the individual is subject to

undue pressure and temptation in such surroundings, it is because he must associate with sinful people. In the case of the kingdoms denounced by Micah, the people were pressed toward sin and idolatry by sinful social leaders. It was these leaders who were disbursed from Israel by the Assyrians. It was the leaders of Judah who were led captive to Babylon.

(Verse 1) The evil of those in power was well thought out. They lay awake nights scheming, and the next day they eagerly put their plans into action. Micah accuses them of doing these evil things simply because the power to do so was in their hands. Power is the determining factor in both their intentions and their practices. There is not even a pretense at justice. An old adage says, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It was true in Israel and Judah.

Plutarch wrote, "It is an observation no less just than common, that there is no stronger test of a man's character than power and authority, exciting as they are to every passion, and discovering every latent vice." Those in authority among God's people at the time of the minor prophets simply failed to pass the rest. Rather than using their power and riches to the common good, they used them as an occasion of avarice and greed and debauchery.

(Verse 2) Pascal is quoted as saying, "power without justice is tyranny." Those in power in Israel and Judah were tyrants in the worse sense of the word. In the words of Wendell Phillips, "Power is ever stealing from the many to the few." The iniquity devised upon the beds of the powerful in Jerusalem and Samaria was designed to rob more and more of the possessions of the poor.

The prophet accuses them of coveting fields and seizing houses, of oppressing men and their families or heritage. The verse has a familiar ring to anyone who is aware of the cases common in American civil courts. In Israel and Judah there was no recourse to the courts.

(Verse 3) Therefore . . . because the powerful spend their time devising evil schemes against this people . . . I devise an evil from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither walk haughtily.

It has been said often that sin carries in its nature the seeds of its own punishment. One of the basic tenets of American jurisprudence is that the punishment shall fit the crime. The Law of Moses taught the principle "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." The evil which Jehovah devised against the avarice and greed of the powerful must be counted just by any standard.

Jehovah devised an "evil time" as the just punishment of these oppressors. Amos used the same terminology to describe the same impending judgement. (*Amos 5:13*)

Those against whom this particular "evil time" was devised as punishment would find no escape from it. They would not be able to "remove their necks," or to walk proudly. As they had taken lands and houses and possessions from the poor to add to their own pleasures, so, in the day of their captivity, were their houses and lands to be taken from them. Just as their power left no legal recourse for those who were oppressed by them, so their captors would have no mercy upon them.

We have previously noted that, both at the destruction of Israel and the later captivity of Judah, it was the rulers, the social elite and the influential rich who were actually led away, first by Assyria and then by Babylon. The full weight of God's punishment thus fell upon exactly those people who were directly responsible for the evil which brought it about.

A TAUNT AGAINST THE WICKED . . . Micah 2:4-5

RV . . . In that day shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We are utterly ruined: he changeth the portion of my people: how doth he remove it from me! to the rebellious he divideth our fields. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast the line by lot in the assembly of Jehovah.

LXX . . . In that day shall a parable be taken up against you, and a plaintive lamentation shall be uttered, saying, We are thoroughly miserable: the portion of my people has been measured out with a line, and there was none to hinder him so as to turn him back; your fields have been divided. Therefore thou shalt have no one to cast a line for the lot.

COMMENTS

Napoleon once wrote, "Even in war, moral power is to physical as three parts to one." It was so in the case of those against whom Micah spoke the message of God. The power by which they enforced their social abuses was related directly to the moral power of a false religion. It is the exercise of power that most clearly reveals what is at the base of the true character of a man. In their case, the foundation of their abusive character was Baalism.

Having compromised God's truth with the falsehood of Baalism, the character of these rulers and social leaders was not forged of any real metal. Having first given way to the temptation to flirt with a false god, they found no real standard of ethics by which to govern their own lives. The inevitable result was the extreme cruelty against their fellows to which their greed had driven them. When the wrath of God is released against them, they will feel the sting of their own sins, as their enemies taunt them.

The taunt (or parable) which will be spoken against them by those who see the judgement of God brought upon them is written in advance, by the prophet in *Micah 2:4-5*. ". . . a parable against you, and lament with . . . lamentation," might be more literally rendered, "lament with a lamentation of lamentations." In the Hebrew text it reads "*naha, nehi, niyah*," and is reminiscent of the sing-song "yaya, yaya, yaya" with which young children taunt one another in every language. This monotonous insulting derision will be leveled against them repeatedly as their enemies make jest of their hardship, just as they now make sport of those whom they oppress.

Their friends, on the other hand, will cry in their behalf, ". . . we are utterly ruined." Those who now sit "high and mighty" at the expense of the down-trodden will find themselves in total despair. They will exclaim, ". . . He changed the portion of my people, how doth he remove it from me! To the rebellious he divideth our fields."

The irony and justice of God's judgements are magnificent. The powerful have changed the inheritance of the common people by cunning theft. They have removed the lands from them without recourse. In their downfall they will complain against God for doing exactly the same to them. In their straying from Jehovah to Baalism they have rebelled against God, and their rebellion has resulted in their misuse of power and wealth and their trodding down of His people. In that day they will wonder why God has taken the same possessions from them and given them to the "rebellious" Gentiles who will over-run their lands.

In verse five, Micah warns them that, just as they have left no legal recourse to those from whom they have stolen property, so in that day they will have "none that shall cast the line by lot." There will be no legal division of land, because there will be no land left to divide. It will be occupied by the enemies. There will be no courts to establish titles, because the government will be in the hands of the invader. Their misery over the loss of their unjust claims and titles will bring to them a measure of the misery they are now heaping upon

others. They have forgotten that the land . . . this land especially, belongs to God. He led their fathers to it for *His* purposes. Now that they have deserted Him for Baal and are grabbing the land for their own greed, He will remove it completely from them.

History records that this warning was fulfilled in the northern kingdom at the dispersion of the ten tribes, and in the southern kingdom at the Babylonian captivity. Although God Himself restored the southern kingdom seventy years later, as a homeland for a remnant through which to fulfill the promise of the covenant, it is extremely difficult to justify any modern claim to the northern territories by the present state of Israel on any Scriptural basis. God removed the land from them in punishment for their despicable idolatry and maltreatment of His people, and because they refused to hear and heed the warnings of the prophets.

THE PROPHET ACCUSED AS AN ENEMY . . . Micah 2:6-7(a)

RV . . . Prophecy ye not, thus they prophesy. They shall not prophesy to these; reproaches shall not depart. Shall it be said, O house of Jacob, Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? are these his doings?

LXX . . . Weep not with tears in the assembly of the Lord, neither let any weep for these things; for he shall not remove the reproaches, who says, the house of Jacob has provoked the Spirit of the Lord; are not these his practices?

COMMENTS

V. 6 . . . PROPHECY NOT . . . THEY PROPHECY

These are the words of the false prophets and their followers in response to the warning pronounced by the prophets of Jehovah. Others than Micah had been rebuked in this same way. (eg. *Amos 7:16*)

The warnings of God's spokesmen grate on the ears of those who will not hear. They specifically charge Micah to desist from saying, "reproaches shall not depart from Israel." (Don't talk like that, preacher, it's not nice and it's not tolerant, and we won't listen!")

V. 7 . . . SHALL IT BE SAID, O HOUSE OF JACOB? . . .

Those whom the prophet has warned now turn on him as though he, and not they, were the enemies of God. In effect their challenge is, "we are God's people . . . we wear His name. Are we not the

chosen Israel? Are we not the sons of the patriarchs? How can you say that God will act so toward His favorite people?"

Here is a glimpse of the national pride and racial arrogance that was ultimately to prevent the Jews from accepting Christ and which caused them to persecute Stephen and Paul for preaching a Gospel of universal concern. They have had increasing difficulty, throughout the remainder of their history as a nation, and still today as a race, in grasping the fundamental concept of a covenant people. Somehow the idea that God's Israel is composed of those who are related to Him by *obedient faith and not merely by racial ancestry or national origin* seems beyond their comprehension as a people. Modern Zionism is a case in point.

There are some "evangelical" Christians today whose understanding of the prophets is warped by the same erroneous idea. Most of the "far out" schemes and devices dealing with eschatology have at their heart the notion that God is somehow bound to the physical Hebrew race and the citizens of a national Jewish commonwealth. Nothing could be farther from the prophets' understanding of the nature of God's Israel. The insistence of Micah in this particular context is that the race . . . the nation, will suffer non-deferable calamity because they have failed to really *be* Israel. They have failed, by going off after strange gods and by breaking the Law of God, to keep the covenant upon which their peculiar relationship to God depended. (Cf. *Exodus 19:5-6*)

The logic of Micah's accusers is reflected in their retort, "Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? are these His doings?" In effect, "is Jehovah's Spirit so constricted and narrow that He would allow the destruction of His chosen people?" One hears much the same reasoning today on the part of those who insist on identifying Israel with a race or a political commonwealth.

The error of such thinking lies in this: it is precisely because the Spirit of God is *not* straitened that He will take such drastic measures to preserve the covenant faith. If God were only the tribal or national God of the Hebrews, He would be bound, or straitened, to defend them as "my people, right or wrong."

But such is not the case. Israel was called into being in the beginning because it was God's purpose through them to bless *all* nations. To do this there must be a once-for-all demonstration that His relationship to His people does not depend upon their racial origin and national identity, but upon their obedient faith. In the captivity there will be no nation, no holy city, no sacred temple. The people will have *only*

their faith to cling to. Micah will shortly say that out of this experience will come a faithful remnant through whom God's redemption will come.

The tendency manifest here to blame God or His spokesman for the social calamities of a nation are not confined to the dusty ancient archives of Biblical history . . . it is a tendency very much alive and with us today. The person who says, "if there is a God why does He allow poverty and suffering and war and inequality to go unremedied," "if there is a God how can He allow such things to exist in a 'Christian' civilization?" is voicing the same false concept of God as that held by Israel and Judah in the days of the minor prophets.

The failure of such logic lies in its major premise. It assumes that a nation which gives lip service to God and prints "in God we trust" on its coins is a Christian nation. Or, in its modern version, it assumes that all men are the children of God by some inalienable right. Such simply is not, and never has been the case. God's people are those who are faithful to His covenant, who obey His commandments. Ultimately a child of God is one who receives His redemption through the promised Seed of Abraham. (Cf. *John 1:11-12*)

The time had come in Micah's day to place the blame for what was about to happen squarely where it belonged, to "tell it like it is." The suffering and destruction and famine that lay ahead for both Israel and Judah would come as a result of their unfaithfulness, their disobedience and their failure to hear and heed God's call to repentance.

We have arrived at a similar time in the history of western civilization, and especially in "Christian" America.

THE PROPHET ANSWERS HIS CRITICS . . . Micah 2:7(b)-11

RV . . . Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? But of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye strip the robe from off the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war. The women of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their young children ye take away my glory for ever. Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your resting-place; because of uncleanness that destroyeth, even with a grievous destruction. If a man walking in a spirit of falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

LXX . . . Are not the Lord's words right with him? and have they not proceeded correctly? Even beforetime my people withstood him as an enemy against his peace; they have stripped off his skin to remove hope

in the conflict of war. The leaders of my people shall be cast forth from their luxurious houses; they are rejected because of their evil practices; Iraw ye near to the everlasting mountains. Arise thou, and depart; for this is not thy rest because of uncleanness: ye have been utterly destroyed; ye have fled, no one pursuing you: thy spirit has framed falsehood, it has dropped on thee for wine and strong drink. But it shall come to pass, that out of the dropping of this people . . .

COMMENTS

V. 7(b) . . . DO NOT MY WORDS . . .

The word of God, no matter how stern, is never a threat to those who walk uprightly. Even the warning of inevitable national calamity would issue in the strengthened faith of the faithful, and the return from captivity of a generation dedicated to the re-establishment of true Jehovah worship. Centuries earlier David had written, "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; With the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward, For thou wilt save the afflicted people, But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down." *Psalms 18:26-27*)

V. 8 . . . BUT OF LATE . . .

The Hebrew here translated "of late" may also mean, literally, "from of old," "since yesterday," or "long ago." The thought seems to be "from of old," or from the beginning my people have risen up as an enemy. There is no more vivid description of the history of Israel. The cycle of rebellion is seen throughout the Old Testament record. God blesses . . . enjoying the blessings, the people forget their source; forgetting, they turn from God to idolatry and disobedience; as a result they are brought low; in their low estate they cry out for deliverance; in answer to their cry, God sends a deliverer; in their blindness they reject the deliverer; and in the rejection their sufferings are multiplied the more. This pattern is clearly seen in Stephen's resume (*Acts, chapter seven*) of God's historic dealing with them.

God's answer, to their plea that Jehovah cannot so treat the people who wear His name, is to remind them of their consummate mistreatment of those in their midst who are truly His.

V. 8 . . . YE STRIP THE ROBE, ETC. . . .

The *eber* or robe is the garment worn next the body. The *salmah*, or garment is the large flowing coverlet worn as an outer garment in the day time and used as a blanket at night. The haughty followers

of the false prophets treat the humble passers-by as enemies . . . stripping them of all their garments.

This stripping of the garments of a defenseless enemy was not an uncommon practice in Bible times. Jesus was careful to instruct His followers as to the proper response when their Roman overlords did this to them. "If any man," He said, ". . . take away your outer garment, give him your inner garment also." (*Matthew 5:40*)

The idea that must not be overlooked just here is that *the proof of enmity with God is the mistreatment of His people*. He has accused them of forever rising up like enemies against Him, and now offers as proof that they are treating His people not only as enemies, but as conquered enemies. For such people to claim immunity from God's chastisement on the grounds that they are the descendants of the patriarchs is an affront not only to God's mercy but to His intelligence!

V. 9 . . . THE WOMEN OF MY PEOPLE . . .

Not only are the passers-by stripped of their garments by these enemies of God, the women are driven from their sheltering homes and the glory of God is kept from their children.

Perhaps the prophet has in mind here the widows and orphans of those men mentioned in verse two of this chapter as having been done out of their fields and houses and having their families oppressed.

V. 9 . . . YE TAKE AWAY MY GLORY FOREVER . . .

From the point of view of God's purpose in Israel, the denial of His glory to their children is absolutely intolerable. The idea of taking away Jehovah's glory from the children obviously refers to the plight of the children in a household denied of shelter, proper clothing, and in many cases the presence of a father. The denial of these physical necessities is deplorable, but worse is the denial of the proper upbringing of the children to assure their faithfulness to the covenant and obedience to the law.

These children were the children of the patriarchs! They were Abraham's progeny through whom the promised Seed must come. If God allows these conditions to prevail unchecked there will *be* no remnant through whom the Seed *can* come.

It has been said that the church is always but one generation from extinction. The generation of parents which allows a whole generation of children to grow up unaware of their duty to God will be the last generation of the church. If it takes national calamity to drive such parents to their knees for the sake of their children, 'so be

it. One thing was characteristic above all else of the Israelites during the Babylonian captivity; they taught their children the way of God!

V. 10 . . . ARISE AND DEPART . . .

Here is the direct command of God casting from His land those despicable people who had cast others from their homes. As those who "erred" in their hearts, and did not know God's ways in the wilderness were not allowed to enter this land (*Psalms* 95:10-11) so those who have turned from His ways will not be allowed to remain in it. Because of their sins (*Micah* 2:4-5) the sentence will not be revoked.

V. 11 . . . NOT YOUR RESTING PLACE . . .

The land had become a resting place after the wilderness wanderings, but it was not to be so now because of their abuses. The reason the land is not to be their resting place is, in the words of the American Standard Version, "because of uncleanness that destroyeth." Rotherham has, "Because it is defiled it shall make desolate." Some translators prefer "it shall destroy you." The sense of the statement seems to be that, because they have defiled the land which the Lord gave their fathers for the accomplishment of His covenant purpose, the land is now spewing them out. The law demanded that the land be not defiled, and stated the punishment for such delinquency as ". . . the land vomiteth out her inhabitants." (*Leviticus* 18:25). The idea that these people, by virtue of their race, are permanently bound to this land is refuted.

The phrase, "not your resting place," is reminiscent of *Hebrews* 13:14.

V. 12 . . . IF A MAN WALKETH . . . DO LIE . . . HE SHALL BE THE PROPHET OF THIS PEOPLE . . .

Micah now describes the kind of prophet who is always in demand among a depraved people. "He walks in a spirit of falsehood." His whole life is a lie! He presents himself as a prophet of God, knowing that the prophet's primary business is to tell the truth of God to God's people, while he has no such intention. Rather he says to the people, "I will prophecy unto thee of wine and strong drink."

The Hebrew *ruach* here translated "spirit" (of falsehood) also means wind as does the Greek *pneuma*, which in the New Testament is variously translated both wind and spirit. In *Micah* 2:11 the Revised Standard Version, has "If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, etc."

Why wine and strong drink? It is possible that these refer to the intoxicants and narcotic potions given to the candidate for initiation into Baal worship to induce the emotional experience by which he became identified with the death-resurrection myth of that god. Since the Jews, at this juncture, had so polluted Jehovah worship with Baalism, they would have given heed to a prophet who preached the validity of this practice.

It seems more likely, however, that the terminology here refers to the hollow words of the false prophet which were designed to tickle the itching ears of his listeners by telling them that they would continue in affluence and plenty, while the true prophets were warning against famine and want and captivity. Wine and strong drink are available in a situation of over-abundance. In the presence of famine and want, people turn their attention to the food and shelter which are necessities of life.

JUDGEMENTS TEMPERED BY PROMISES . . . Micah 2:12-13

RV . . . I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is gone up before them: they have broken forth and passed on to the gate, and are gone out thereat; and their king is passed on before them, and Jehovah at the head of them.

LXX . . . Jacob shall be completely gathered with all his people: I will surely receive the remnant of Israel; I will cause them to return together, as sheep in trouble, as a flock in the midst of their fold: they shall rush forth from among men through the breach made before them: they have broken through and passed the gate, and gone out by it: and their king has gone out before them, and the Lord shall lead them.

COMMENTS

A word must be said here regarding the textual unity of the Scriptures. The sudden shift from threats and warnings of doom to glowing promises of restoration is seen by some scholars as evidences that the book of Micah was not actually written by the prophet, or that it was not all written by the same man no matter what his identity. An example of this is seen in Professor J. E. McFayden's statement made as part of his comments on *Micah 2:12-13*. Dr. McFayden wrote, "It is

curious to find so gracious a promise following immediately upon denunciation and threat. This, however, is not an uncommon feature in prophecy. Sometimes it is open to suppose the promise was appended by a later hand: here, the scattered sheep seem to suggest the Exile, note that a century after Micah's time . . . whoever added these and similar promises was inspired by the sound conviction that threat and disaster could never exhaust the whole purpose of God."

The idea that, because the stern judgements of the prophet are interspersed with promises, the book must have been compiled by an editor, completely fails to grasp the distinction in the mind of the prophet between the unfaithful majority who are the objects of God's wrath and the faithful remnant who are the recipients of His promises.

The idea of a restored remnant presupposes the capture and destruction of the political commonwealth and the rejection of the race *per se*. If it was ever in the purpose of God to redeem a total political commonwealth or a race as an ethnic unit, that concept is abandoned with the introduction of the remnant idea. Few real students of the Bible believe such was *ever* the intent of God in the nation or race.

The remnant concept so dominated the thought of Isaiah that he named his son *Shear-Jashub*, "the Salvation of the Remnant." (Cf. *Isaiah* 7:3; 8:2,18; 9:12; 2:21; 6:9-13) It is not strange to find the same idea voiced by Isaiah's contemporaries such as Micah.

In *Romans* 11:5, Paul refers to *Isaiah* 10:22 in his exposition of the final grafting together of the faithful Gentiles and the faithful remnant of Israel into a single people of God. In referring to the rejection of the race and commonwealth *per se*, Paul insists that God has not rejected His true people.

In identifying the remnant, as distinct from the whole of the race and nation descended from Abraham, Paul refers to Elijah's "seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal," *ie.* those Israelites indeed who had refused to compromise their covenant relationship to Jehovah. So, says Paul, the present remnant (the faithful of the first century) is the people chosen by the grace of God. This choice, or "election," of grace is everywhere in the Bible related to the covenant.

Paul's argument is that God has not repudiated His true people, in allowing the Gentiles access to the ranks of the election. He has rather identified them! His true people, the real Israel of God prior to the beginning of the gospel age as well as now, are not marked off from other men by their semetic ancestry or their national citizenship. They are those within the national-racial structure of the commonwealth, as well as those Jews now citizens of other nations, who are

faithful to the covenant of God. As Barclay has it, "The prophet began to see that there never was a time, and there never would be a time, when the whole nation was true to God, but at the same time, always within the nation there was a remnant left who had not forsaken their loyalty or compromised their faith."

Amos 9:8-10 sees the separation of the remnant from the race. *Zephaniah 3:12-13* sees the gathering of the remnant people from among the dispersed Jews throughout the world. *Ezekiel 14:14,20,22* sees salvation itself not as a national matter but as an individual matter; not determined by racial origins of family heredity, but based on personal righteousness. Righteousness which is acceptable to God is always related to God through the covenant on the basis of obedient faith. All else, as Isaiah says "is as filthy rags."

As we have seen, Isaiah's entire concept of the people of God is dominated by the remnant idea.

In our present text, and later in chapter 5, verse three, Micah conceives of God gathering the remnant first from Babylon and then in specific Messianic terms.

The threats against the northern and southern kingdoms, coupled with the promises of salvation to the faithful remnant should serve a real purpose today. We need to know, for our own sakes, and to shout from the rooftops for the sake of others . . . NO nation or race is saved *per se*. God commands all men everywhere to repent. The remnant . . . the real Israel of God is the fellowship of individuals related to one another on the basis of a common covenant with God. God has not, and never will reject His people, regardless of outward appearances to the contrary. No nation or religious institution *is* his people. The remnant of the human race, as well as of the commonwealth of Israel is saved by grace through faith.

The sin of denominationalism is essentially the sin of counting oneself part of God's people on the basis of identity with a religious institution just as the Jews of Micah's day, and Jesus' day, and Paul's day, and one suspects even of our day, counted themselves as God's people because they were citizens of a kingdom whose identity was based on a religious law.

The sin of racism is the twin brother to the sin of denominationalism. The Jews could trace their ancestry back to a common origin in Abraham. God had worked with them, through the influence of faithful men, in special ways. To prevent the entrance of paganism into their thinking as a deterrent to faith, He had forbidden them to marry non-Hebrew mates. All this and many other similar factors combined

to bring them to the conclusion that *as a race* God considered the Hebrews superior to all others. During the reign of terror that was Nazi Germany this race found itself threatened with extinction by the very same kind of thinking that historically they had exercised toward other races and which they today evidence toward their middle-eastern neighbors. The conclusion of the Christian Gospel is that, among God's people there is no East or West, North or South, Jew or Greek, Black or White. God's covenant people are one in the promised Seed of Abraham.

Micah's first mention of the remnant has as its primary concern the promise that God's people would not be brought to extinction in the judgements just pronounced. Rather, a remnant would return from the captivity. The restoration, as history shows, was to be only partial. The deeper meaning of the words; "I will assemble, O Jacob, all of thee . . ." is to be realized in the Messianic fulfillment of the everlasting covenant. In chapters four and five Micah will expound this theme in some depth.

Those who did return from Babylon were Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, the components of the southern kingdom, which God had preserved for His covenant purposes. (Cf. *I Kings 12:23-24*) It is doubtful if even all of these who returned were true Israelites in the covenant sense of the word. At the beginning of the nation, all its people had been given the opportunity to be true Israel. From the captivity on, Israel's national identity was (and is) important *only* as it bears directly on the fulfillment of the everlasting covenant.

Another indication of the Messianic overtones of Micah's remnant is the "great noise by reason of the multitude of men." This would seem to indicate a much more numerous gathering than the faithful few within the small number who actually returned after the captivity. The terminology is more reminiscent of the "multitude whom no man could number," *ie.* all God's covenant people through all time, finally gathered together in His presence. (Cf. *Revelation 7:9*)

In connection with the remnant, Micah pictures Jehovah by the use of three figures; the *shepherd*, the *breaker* (or lead ram), and the *king*. He is pictured as the shepherd of the "sheep of Bozrah." "The sheep of Bozrah" was a popular saying, like the "kine of Bashan" (*Amos 4:1*), and alludes to the fine flocks which were the wealth of Bozrah, a key city of Moab. Jehovah is pictured as shepherd of the finest of flocks, and the remnant is that flock.

The "breaker," or lead ram, was the ram who went before the flock to butt or break down any and all barriers. So the Lord, leader

of the remnant flock, will break through all barriers to the ultimate accomplishment of God's purpose in the covenant people. "If God be for us, who can stand against us?"

The Messianic overtones expressed in the figure of the Lord passing as king before the remnant are obvious. It was in David particularly that the Messianic prophecies of the Lord's kingship found their personification. From David's reign on, the Messiah was expected to sit upon "the throne of His father David." There have been many and conflicting ideas as to the nature of His kingship and His kingdom, but there is a unanimity of conviction among God's people that the Lord is King over His people.

Beginning with Abraham and the Patriarchs, the covenant emphasis was nearly, if not entirely, upon the development of a people. In David is added the idea that this people are to compose a kingdom. The "king idea," which became the obsession of the first century Jew, was introduced by God only after He had made it crystal clear that all His dealings with Israel, including the establishment of a king over them, were primarily concerned with the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to bless all the people of the earth, through the people of the covenant.

David was taken from his father's pasture to become a prince over the people of God. To this end God was with him and reduced his enemies to defeat. For this reason God made the name of David ring out even above that of Moses in the assemblies of Israel. And it was for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose that the Lord promised David, "And it shall come to pass when the days are fulfilled that thou must go to thy fathers, that I will set up thy seed after thee who shall be of thy sons and I shall establish his kingdom . . . and his throne shall be established forever." (*I Chronicles 17:7-14*)

Two things are to be noted here. *First*, the throne of the son of David is to be established forever. In view of what happened just following the death of Solomon, who succeeded David on his earthly throne, and of the subsequent desolation of the commonwealth, the fulfillment of God's promise to David must be found elsewhere than in the perpetuation of an earthly dynasty. The eternal, or everlasting throne of David is to find its fulfillment in the King of Kings.

Secondly, the promise to David that his seed would sit upon the everlasting throne of His people was unconditional! The promises made to Abraham were conditioned by obedient faith. Among these was the promise of a land in which to dwell. To break the covenant was to for-

feit all claim to the land. God's determination to set the seed of David over this faithful people was absolute and unconditioned.

From David on the faithful within Israel, who were of the Davidic line became the particular branch of Abraham's progeny through which the Promised Seed would come.

It must be kept in mind that the Davidic covenant is simply the Abrahamic covenant restated. As with the conditional promise to Abraham, so the unconditional promise to David had universal purposes in the blessing of all men. That Micah was aware of this is obvious in *Micah 4:1-ff* as we shall see in a later chapter. In his presentation of the fulfillment of the Kingly promise, Matthew identifies the two covenants as one and the same. *Matthew 1:1* begins the genealogy of the Eternal King with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of *David*, the Son of *Abraham*." (Italics mine)

From the demise of Solomon and the division of the kingdom onward, God preserved the institutions of Israel "for David's sake." The southern kingdom is established to preserve the Davidic line (*I Kings 11:11-13*) Jerusalem was saved "for David's sake." (*II Kings 19:34*) Throughout the prophets, the Messianic hope is Davidic. (Cp. *Isaiab 55:1-3*, *Amos 9:11*, *Hosea 3:5*, *Zechariah 12:17-21*)

And so, for at least a thousand years before the birth of the King, God's concern is seen to be not with the race or the national political entity but with the unconditional promise to set the Seed of David upon the throne of His people. More than ever, the people existed for the sake of the Seed. When the time came that the Jews as a nation and the religious institutions of that nation rejected the Christ, God would cast them off. But the promise which was the heart of the covenant would be fulfilled through a covenant remnant ruled by the promised Seed of David.

It does violence to the awesomeness of this promise to limit it to *any earthly experience* of God and His people.

Chapter VII—Questions

Second Cycle

1. Discuss the relationships between individual and "social" sins.
2. Discuss "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" in reference to the situation denounced by Micah.
3. How do power and authority test a persons character?
4. Discuss Pascal's statement "power without justice is tyranny."

5. How is this evidenced in the circumstances addressed by Micah?
6. How can a just God devise evil? (Micah 2:3)
7. What was the power by which the social leaders of Micah's day enforced their evil designs?
8. How does God's punishment predicted by Micah "fit the crime" of those He will punish? (Micah 2:5)
9. What is the relationship between the wickedness addressed by Micah and the false prophets of the day?
10. What part did national pride and racial arrogance play in the downfall of the wicked northern and southern kingdoms?
11. How does God's purpose in Israel rule out such pride and arrogance on the part of the faithful?
12. How do you answer the tendency to blame God for social calamities?
13. Discuss mistreatment of people as evidence of enmity with God.
14. What single fact made God's punishment of social sin in Israel and Judah necessary to the accomplishment of His purpose in the covenant?
15. What single characteristic of the Israelites during the Babylonian captivity stood out above all else?
16. Describe the kind of prophet the people desired in Micah's time. (Micah 2:11)
17. Discuss the problem of textual unity of the scriptures. (cf. Micah 2:12-13)
18. The idea of a restored remnant, as presented by Micah, presupposes the destruction of _____ and the rejection of the _____ *per se*.
19. The doctrine of election, divine choice, is, in the Bible, always related to the _____.
20. What is the similarity of modern denominationalism and the attitude of racial and national priority with God on the part of the Jewish people of Bible times?
21. Discuss the figures of the "shepherd," the "breaker," and the "king" in connection with the remnant.

CHAPTER VIII

THIRD CYCLE

OUTRAGES OF CIVIL OFFICIALS . . . Micah 3:1-4

RV . . . And I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know justice? ye who hate