

**A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY**

*The Book  
of*  
**MICAH**

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# THE BOOK OF MICAH

## THERE IS NOTHING LIKE...!

Amid the pitch-dark conditions of the nation and the corruption that prevailed on all levels: political, religious, and civil leaders, together with common people; the prophet Micah reveals the exalted love of God for man, yearning to His sanctification.

If the prophet's name, meaning (There is no one like Jehovah), reveals his mission, the book as a whole speaks about:

- **There is nothing, like sin:** horrible and destructive; yet the grace of God is greater.
- **There is nothing like a nation enslaved by sin!** Yet the divine heavenly city of God is waiting for us.
- **There is no one like the evil leader,** destructive to himself, as well as to the congregation; but God is our Leader!
- **There is nothing like the Church of the New Testament,** rising up to the heavenly places.
- **There is no one like God,** the forgiver of sin, the philanthropic, and the abundantly merciful.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MICAH

## **MICAH:**

The word 'Micah' is an abbreviation of the word 'Micaiah', as it came in Jeremiah 26:28, meaning "Who is like Jehovah?".

The prophet Micah is a country preacher, who lived in 'Moresheth Gath' 20 miles south of Jerusalem, on the frontier of Palestine. According to **St. Jerome** 'Moresheth Gath', in the days of the prophet Micah, was still a little village close to 'Eliothropolis,' which is nowadays called 'Beth Gebrin'. It is located in one of the valleys that extend from the coastal plain to the Jewish heights around Jerusalem.

The prophet Micah was a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah in Jerusalem (see Micah 1:4-5; Isaiah 2:2-5), Amos and Hosea in the northern kingdom.

Having prophesied in the region of Jerusalem, most of his prophesies, that continued along 50 years, concerned Zion and Jerusalem.

## **THE PERSONALITY OF MICAH:**

There is some controversy whether the prophet Micah belonged to the class of the elders of the people of Moresheth, known as "Elders of the Land", who spoke the words of the Lord in the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:17-18); and was accordingly one of the judges who used to sit at the gate of the city and look into the problems of the people (Deuteronomy 17:5, 21:19; Ruth 4:1). Thus, he felt committed to defend the rights of the people of his little town against the oppressive rich people of Jerusalem. Others believe he was just one of the common people of the city, who go back to the early days of King David and were loyal to the royal family and doubtful toward those who infiltrated to the throne confiscating the authority for their own benefit (2 Kings 11:18-20; 14:21). It is noticed that the prophet Micah did not oppose the royal family, but rather wished for its return to the pure life and to realize its goal. But this would not be realized in Jerusalem, but rather

through the Newborn of Bethlehem (Micah 4:14-5:4)<sup>1</sup>.

## **THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND<sup>2</sup>:**

The Assyrian kings contemporary with that period were Tighathpileser III (745-727 BC), Shalmanezar (722-705 BC) and Sennacherib (705-608 BC). Sennacherib led his army into the southern and western parts of Judah and subduing the towns and villages until he reached Jerusalem that he besieged for a long time without being able to take it over. As to the prophecy concerning the captivation and destruction of Jerusalem, it refers to a later era in the days of Nebuchadnezar.

Assyria subdued the whole region of the Middle East except for Egypt and Jerusalem. Yet it did not occupy all those lands with its armies, but compelled them to pay taxes. And whenever a new king ascends the throne of Assyria, the nations under taxes tried to rebel against Assyria. That is why every new king had to enter into new battles against the rebelling nations. The fiercest of those battles happened on the frontier of Egypt which used to persuade those nations to rebel against Assyria to protect itself.

These circumstances created an atmosphere of great disturbance and unrest especially in the little towns and villages that were often exposed to invasions by the Assyrian army with the inevitable enslavement of their inhabitants, whereas the members of the royal court, the priests, and the rich people lived securely behind the walls of the capital. Those misbehaved, as they practiced cruelty and oppression over the inhabitants of towns and villages, who sometimes suffered from the bypassing armies who stole and enslaved and other times from the leaders and rich people.

Judah reached the climax of its power during the reign of king Uzia (Azariah) in the years 783-742 BC, who, after being infected by leprosy, was succeeded by his son Jotham, whose reign was characterized by prosperity, construction, and military conquests. Jotham was succeeded by his son Ahaz, who ascended the throne at a time when Assyria enjoyed its greatest power and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Colledgeville Bible Commentary, Minnesota, 1989, p. 510-511.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Chicago, 1966, p. 851-852.*  
*The Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, 1970, p.283.*

fame in the world. Tighathpileser defeated Syria in the year 732 BC; and 10 years later, he took over Samaria; something that caused Judah to lose its feeling of security, especially that king Ahaz has been weak and a puppet of Assyria. After Ahaz, came his son Hezekiah, who was a reformer. He broke his relationship with Assyria, and put it in his heart to rid Judah of idolatry and its abominations, and to purify and repair the temple. As it came in Jeremiah 26:18, these reformations were motivated by the preaching of prophet Micah.

### **THE SPIRITUAL CIRCUMSTANCES:**

Micah lived in an extremely difficult time. God opened his eyes to see the transgressions of Jacob and the sins of Israel (Micah 3:8). By the spirit of prophecy he realized what would befall the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, where oppression dwelt within their walls and enemies were approaching from without.

Micah was aware of the wickedness in both kingdoms - Israel and Judah, of how the rich people abused the poor, whose screams rose to heaven, and of how corruption prevailed on all levels: on members of the royal court; on the priests, and on the common people. Both the leaders and the people have sinned before God as they practiced the formalities of worship yet without true repentance, which made their worship of no value (Micah 6:7-8).

In his days Israel was taken into captivity; whereas Judah, after a chance of about a century and a half, was destroyed by its sins. *“Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34).

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS BOOK:**

This book, quoted by all the four gospels, occupied a special position by the fathers of the Church; where **St. Jerome's** interpretations of this book are considered the most important.

- ❖ The view adopted by the fathers of the Church in the East and the West was that this book is **rich in symbols**; as for example, looking at the Mount of Zion as a symbol of the Church or the New Jerusalem (Revelation 20-21), that realized the hope of

Israel.

- ❖ The fathers of the Church see in this book a **symbol of Baptism**, which grants the believer the enjoyment of the fellowship in the New Testament occupying the place of circumcision.
- ❖ The book, although it included special prophecies concerning the demolition of Samaria and Jerusalem, yet it **prophesied about the future glorification of Jerusalem** (chastisement followed by messianic glory).
- ❖ **God's care for the little faithful remnant** and for every single one even if the whole nation was corrupt! The prophet Micah often repeated the term "**remnant**" (2:12; 4:7; 5:3, 7, 8; 7:18). In all generations and in the darkest of circumstances, God keeps the little faithful remnant as His own, dear to Him.
- ❖ Micah was the only prophet, who **accurately designated the place of birth of the anticipated Messiah**, who rules eternally (Micah 5:2); a prophecy also acknowledged by the Jews (Matthew 2:1-6).
- ❖ This book reveals **God's hate of the sin, yet His strong love of the sinners**. As a holy One, He does not accept evil; as a Father, He loves mankind as His own children. He never makes truce with the sin as light cannot associate with darkness. With His limitless justice full of love, the incarnated divine Word delivered Himself for the sake of the salvation of man, of his perpetual renewal, and of his glorification on a heavenly level.
- ❖ With complete frankness, the prophet exposes the sins in which both Israel and Judah fell and proclaims their destructive consequences. With strong love, he opens the doors for repentance so that the repentant can enjoy the divine mercies through humility before God (6:8).
- ❖ If the false prophets, for the sake of their own benefit, do not care for the oppression and abuse practiced by the higher ranks of people against the poor with no one to confront them, yet God would never keep silent.

- ❖ This book reveals God's compassion, as His prophet Micah is seen wailing and mourning like someone who lost a beloved son or daughter. And as he sees, by the spirit of prophecy, his own people led into captivity, he partakes of their bitterness by walking with them naked and barefoot. As these are feelings of the men of God in both the Old and the New Testaments we do not marvel to read in the epistles of the apostle Paul: "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also*" (Hebrew 13:3).

### **ITS GOAL:**

1- **Repentance is the way to salvation** from the catastrophes expected to dwell because of sin.

2- **The prophet encourages the believers to look forward to the work of God** among humanity; that he would definitely save it from the oppression that prevails on the society.

3- **He reprimands the rich oppressors**, and encourages the poor to look forward to God, who is capable of saving them from oppression. Some call him "the prophet of the poor". He was not preoccupied with politics and probably had no knowledge of it. He was only preoccupied with lifting up the oppression from the poor and with defending them. The prophet Micah was a man of practical faith: "*He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God*" (6:8). No one can seek the divine truth nor love mercy toward his brethren, unless he humbles himself before God in order to gain an exalted divine grace. Although the prophet Micah, as called by several of those who studied him, 'the man of social justice, and of practical righteousness', yet he always confirms that this can not be realized without divine help. He is a man of practical faith.

4- He draws the hearts of his listeners away from the oppression that prevailed and the destruction to be expected to **the anticipated dwelling of the glorified kingdom of the Messiah**.

5- The prophet Micah referred to the Babylonian captivity and mentioned Babylon by name (Micah 4:10) a century and a half

before that event. He also called the people returning from captivity to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Micah 7:11).

### **THE STYLE<sup>1</sup> AND FEATURES OF THIS BOOK:**

1- The book of Micah is characterized by the swift movement from one style to another. He uses the style of question and answer (1:5; 2:7); and that of lamentation (1:8-16). He refers to God's goals of the worship rituals included in the five books of Moses (6:6-8), to a personal confession by faith: "*But we ...*" (4:1-4), to divine trials (1:2), to exposing sins as reasons for the divine verdict of perdition, to defending the poor, and to an anticipation of the coming of Savior Messiah.

2- The village life of Moresheth reflects on the style of the prophet Micah, who does not present the impression of the wilderness like the prophet Amos, nor of that of the country like the prophet Hosea, nor any reference to the royal palace in the capital like the prophet Isaiah. The prophet Micah refers to the fields owned by the country people (2:2), and to the sheaves on the threshing floor (4:12). He was also impacted by the rich people of Jerusalem, who used to come to Moresheth to practice oppression on its poor (6:11), to take what they covet by violence (2:1-2; 6:9-11), to seize the fields of those who could not pay their debts (2:2-4), and to pull the robe with the garment off their backs, although the Law commit the debtors to give them back by sunset (2:8).

3- The prophet Micah did not present any proofs to confirm his prophecies like divine visions or a testimony by the high priest to his divine call the way the prophet Amos did (Amos 7:10-17).

4- Together with simplicity as a preacher, he demonstrates unique spiritual depths. Referring to the abundant sacrifices offered by the rich people for worship, he, looking at their oppression of the poor, counts them as being hopelessly sick (Micah 3; 6:6-13).

5- The book of Micah is rich in contradictory issues. While he talks about Jerusalem expected to fall under captivity and to be destroyed, he also lifts us up to the New Jerusalem, which draws the gentiles to the Lord and from which the word of God goes to all

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<sup>1</sup> *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, Minnesota, 1989, p. 509-510.*



mankind. Concerning the gentiles, he sometimes refers to them falling under divine wrath, and other times coming to faith with divine blessings.

### **A LIST OF THE SINS OF THE NATION<sup>1</sup>:**

The prophet Micah states two main sins, namely mixing between the worship of the living God and idolatry with all its abominations, and practicing oppression and abusing the poor.

1. Idol worship (1:7; 6:16).
2. Devising and planning evil (2:1).
3. Deceit, lust, and violence (2:2).
4. Greed (2:2).
5. Oppression (2:2).
6. Violence (2:2; 3:10; 6:12; 7:2).
7. Throwing the widows out of their houses (2:9).
8. Encouraging the false prophets (2:6, 11).
9. Corruption of the rulers: hate of good and love of evil (3:1-3).
10. Corruption of the prophets: Disregarding justice, and misinterpreting truth (3:5-7).
11. Corruption of the priests (3:11).
12. Bribes (3:9, 11; 7:3).
13. Dishonesty (6:10-11).

### **QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH:**

1. By the elders of Judah (Jeremiah 26:18 after Micah 3:12).
2. By the wise men from the east, who came to Jerusalem (Matthew 2:5-6 after Micah 5:2).
3. By Jesus the Lord of glory, as He sent the twelve disciples to preach (Matthew 10:35-36 after Micah 7:6).

### **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

- Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of the Savior Messiah (4; 1-2).
- A catholic ecumenical kingdom (4:2).
- Its Law: the Messianic peace (4:3).
- Its possibilities: Prosperity (4:4).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Henerietta Mears: What the Bible is All About, chapter 23.*

- Its feature: Righteousness (4:5; 4:2).

### **THE PROPHETS MICAH AND ISAIAH<sup>1</sup>:**

Micah started his prophecy 17 or 18 years after Isaiah.

- Whereas Isaiah was preoccupied with the capital Jerusalem (Isaiah 1; 2:1-5; 4:2-6; 8; 5-10), Micah, on the other hand was more attached to Bethlehem. He was ‘The prophet of the people.’
- Whereas Isaiah was an aristocrat strongly attached to the capital and its temple, experienced in the politics of his nation and a prominent poet, Micah was a country man, less refined than Isaiah; his style tends to be rough, like his surroundings; and abruptly moving from one place to another and from one person to another. Although he often wrote aggressively and boldly, yet, bearing a heart full of bitterness and grief, he sometimes wrote with a language of compassion and love.
- Micah was a poor man, who suffered together with his poor brethren from the oppression of the rich. Behind his words was a personal bitter experience.
- Whereas to Isaiah sin is defiling the temple of God (Isaiah 4:4), to Micah it is pulling the robe with the garment off the back of the poor and throwing the women of the people of God out of their pleasant homes (Micah 2:8-9). Whereas Isaiah was a preacher of faith that requires the observance of what is fitting to the secret holiness of Jehovah, Micah was the prophet of the divine justice to keep the rights of the poor.

### **THE PROPHETS MICAH AND AMOS<sup>2</sup>:**

The prophet Micah, not only lived in a neighborhood close to that of the prophet Amos (Tekoa), but he was like him in several ways. He was so influenced by the spirit of Amos that he was called "Amos redivivus". Both of them were country men who attacked the social and economic corruption (social injustice) in their days, when the rich abused the poor. Their mission did not

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<sup>1</sup> *The Colleville Bible Commentary, Minnesota, 1989, p. 511.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, 1970, p.283.*

stop at confronting oppression, but they also attacked the bitter religious practices that prevailed in their days when bribes prevailed among the priests, the false prophets, and the judges, and when worship was no more than formalities, offering animal sacrifices and offerings without leading a holy life, nor observing the divine commandment.

### **THE UNITY OF THE BOOK OF MICAH:**

Although the majority of scholars consider the book as authored by the prophet Micah (inspired by the Holy Spirit), the scholar Ewald and some others believed that chapters 6 and 7 were written by another unknown prophet in the days of king Manasseh claiming that the nature of these two chapters is different from the first five chapters of the book.

Wellhausen and Stade also believed that the contents of Micah 7:7-20 was written after the captivity, basing their view on the similarity between this text and what is mentioned in Isaiah 40-66.

Some refuse to consider the two chapters 4 and 5 as written by the prophet Micah finding it difficult to believe that the author of the first three chapters, who wrote violent warnings and rebukes is the same one who recorded the vision of the glorious mountain of the Lord's house in the end of days (Chapter 4) and the exalted divine promises (Chapter 5). By so saying, they present Micah as a social reformer rather than a man of God, who opens the gates of hope before the fallen souls after clearly exposing the seriousness of their corruption.

John Howard Raven (and others) defended the unity of this book based on the following<sup>1</sup>:

1- The term "*Hear*" (1:2; 3:1; 6:1) binds the book together as written by one author. Some believe that the book is divided into three parts each of which beginning with this word. The critics depend mainly on quotations from the book and not on the book as a whole, depending on what the prophet presents in a concise way about his prophecies that covered a period of about 50 years.

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<sup>1</sup> J.H. Raven: *Old Testament Introduction*, 1910, p. 229 ff.

2- Raven believes that the similarity between Micah 6-7 and Isaiah 40-66 confirms that Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, who wrote the chapters 40-66, authored those two chapters.

3- The difference in style probably refers to the long service of the prophet Micah for a period of about 50 years during which historical, cultural, and spiritual changes must have caused those differences.

4- What came in chapters 4-7 reveal similarities to writings in the days of Micah, of which are:

Compare Micah 3:1-3 with Isaiah 2:2-4.  
Micah 4:3 with Joel 3:10.  
Micah 4:7 with Isaiah 24:24.  
Micah 4:9 with Isaiah 13:8; 21:3.  
Micah 4:13 with Isaiah 41:15-16; 23:18.  
Micah 5:5 with Isaiah 9:6.  
Micah 5:13 with Isaiah 2:8.  
Micah 6:2 with Hosea 4:1; 12:2.  
Micah 6:4 with Amos 2:10.  
Micah 6:7 with Isaiah 1:11.  
Micah 6:8 with Isaiah 1:17; Hosea 6:6.  
Micah 6:11 with Hosea 12:7.  
Micah 6:14 with Hosea 4:10.  
Micah 7:1 with Isaiah 24:13; Hosea 9:10.  
Micah 7:2 with Isaiah 57:1.  
Micah 7:3 with Isaiah 1:23; Hosea 4:18.  
Micah 7:10 with Joel 2:17.  
Micah 7:11 with Amos 9:11.

### **DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF MICAH:**

**The first division: Chastisement prophecies** (Micah 1-3), where he concentrated on the divine verdict soon to be issued along with a strong admonition against the Jewish leadership.

- With the fall of Israel (its capital Samaria) and its destruction on the sixth year of the reign of king Hezekiah as by Assyria, the most dangerous of its enemies at that time, as well as with the fall of Judah (its capital Jerusalem) into evil, the Lord did not intend to chasten them before holding the nations witness

against them. Together with the chastisement, God reveals the cause of the ailment in order to seek the cure. God would not issue commands, without giving man the chance to debate with Him, to understand each other.

- When God chastens, He is as though “*coming out of His place*” (1:3).
- For the sake of chastisement, God allowed for the victory of Shalmaneser over Samaria (1:5-7; 2 kings 6, 17:4), Sennacherib over Judah (1:9-16; 2 kings 18:3), stopped the spirit of prophecy (3:6), and allowed for the devastation of Jerusalem.

**The second division: Glorious Messianic prophecies** (Micah 4-5), where the divine grace works and the positive side concerning the reform of Zion is revealed.

If Israel and Judah were corrupted, there is the need for the Savior Messiah to reform them. He reveals the ailments that dwelt upon them:

1. The Messiah is the holy Mountain (4:1) on whom the holy city is set (5:14), namely the Church, being the foundation of our faith.
2. He opens the gate before the nations (4:1, 2).
3. He grants the inner peace (4:3-5; 5:10-11).
4. He cares for the lame, the outcast and the weak.
5. He eternally reigns over Zion (the heart) (4:8).
6. He calls on the Church to come out, as though with Christ, to the wilderness to overcome the devil and to set forth to Babylon not as a captive, but as delivered and redeemed (4:10).
7. The believer, by the Newborn of Bethlehem Ephrathah (5:1-2), will become “*like a lion among the beasts of the forest*” (5:8) carrying the spirit of conquest, yet not by human weapons: “*I will cut off your horses from your midst, and destroy your chariots*” (5:10).

**The third division: A divine legal case** (Micah 6-7) against Israel due to their breaking the divine covenant. Yet, He would be ready to debate with them.

- He confirms to them that He would not be pleased with the literality of worship nor with the sacrifices in themselves, but He seeks the heart: “*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of*

*rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? ... What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:7, 8).*

- He also states that our wickedness is the cause of chastisement (6:9-11).
- As a pay back for His love, He seeks from us the hidden worship (7:5, 6), the hope for arising from our fall (7:7-10), and to give Him praise (7:18-20).

He started the book by a chastened nation, divided into two kingdoms, on which corruption prevailed; and ended by a glorified one people namely, the Church of Christ, the Savior of the whole world.

The book ends with a prayer for the sake of their reform and the proclamation of God's mercies:

*"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"* (Micah 7:18-19)

## **AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH**

### **AN AMAZING GRACE! AN AMAZING LEADER! AND AN AMAZING CITY**

- ❖ My Soul is terrified inside me,  
when Micah your prophet reveals the horror and bitterness of sin.  
I feel ashamed and disgraced.  
Sin bares me of the garment of righteousness, to become naked!  
It deprives me of the sweetness of life; and embitters my soul.  
It deprives me of my inner freedom; and turns me into a captive.  
It takes my strength away from me; and makes me completely feeble.  
It deprives me of everything; and makes me lose the taste of life.
- ❖ But Your grace is rich, capable, and splendid.  
It scatters the darkness of my sins; and makes me shine by it.  
It grants me the spirit of strength and conquest; and fills me with joy.  
It gives me freedom to set forth and settle down in your arms.  
You cover me with your righteousness to let me show up before the heavenly Father.  
You clothe me with the heavenly glory to let me praise together with the heavenly hosts.
- ❖ Sin destroys in me the spirit of leadership.  
It destroys my mind, my heart, my will, and all my talents.  
But You came down to Bethlehem to become my Leader!  
How amazing You are; the heavenly Leader!  
You, the Leader, grants me the active spirit of leadership.  
By You, I live strong; never to know the spirit of failure.  
By You, I walk like a living leader; and go victoriously through battles.
- ❖ Your prophet Micah mourns Samaria and Jerusalem!  
In bitterness he walks naked and barefoot; screaming

incessantly.

With his love, I see him partake of the misery of his people, on their way to captivity.

He moans together with them all.

But You revealed to him a new city high on the top of the mountains.

You brought him up into the High Jerusalem.

You carried him up to the new world.

- ❖ How an amazing divine grace, it is indeed!  
And how a strong and victorious leadership it is!  
And how a heavenly new city!

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **A PUBLIC JUDGMENT**

#### **THERE IS NOTHING AS HORRIBLE AS SIN**

This book begins with a bitter portrait of sin and how God does not stand it, being unfitting for His people, whom He desires to be a living icon of Him, the Holy God. It reveals as well the



activity of sin in the life of His people as being utterly destructive by nature. Yet, as much as it reveals this dark portrait, it also demonstrates the role of God, who forgives the sins, scatters the darkness, and shines with His divine light upon His people to transform them into a divine, glorious and joyful Church.

The prophet Micah, like the prophet Obadiah before him, begins his book by demonstrating the coming judgment to chasten the people. He turns the whole earth into a stage for this judgment and asks the people to listen to the charges directed against them.

The book begins with God entering into judgment against His people -both Israel and Judah- before all nations of the earth, who were called to be present at the house of justice. On one aspect, to reveal His position as a Creator of all mankind and as a Savior of all, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4), by which He opens the door before the nations to realize that He is God of all anticipating their acceptance of faith to enjoy the exalted riches of His grace. On another aspect, to reveal the horror of sin committed by those on whom the name of God is called, as it is a stumbling block to the nations and because of it His name is being blasphemed.

We do not marvel to see how he presented his divine message to **the people first** (Micah 1-2), then to the **leaders and judges** (Micah 3-5) and finally **to the holy remnants**; namely, to the people who accept the living practical faith (Micah 6-7). He starts with the people, **because it is for their sake that he sets leaders and judges**, and not the other way round. He probably wishes to confirm to the people that, if their religious, civil, or political leadership are faulty, that would not justify the fall and diversion of the people. It is positive that the leaderships would be doubly judged, as they represent a stumble to their people, yet it is not fitting for the people to justify their own transgression.

He starts with the falling people and ends with the people made holy by the Savior Christ to confirm that He came for the sake of the sinners to sanctify them as the chosen people of God.

- 1. The Lord coming out of His place for judgment 1-4.**
- 2. The charges 5-7.**

3. A bitter mourning over Jerusalem

8-9.

4. The bitterness of sin

10-11.

## 1. THE LORD IS COMING OUT OF HIS PLACE FOR JUDGMENT:

*“The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem” (Micah 1:1)*

*“The word of the Lord”* or *“The word of Jehovah”*: The prophet confirms that the words he utters and writes are not his own, but are the message of Jehovah, that bears a divine authority. Jehovah entrusted His prophet Micah with this message to proclaim it to the people and to the leaders.

The name of this prophet came like those of other prophets, Hosea, Joel and Obadiah to reveal his message. The word "Micah", means *"There is no one like Jehovah"*; although **St. Ambrose** believes that it means "One with God". It is as though this prophet challenges the false prophets, the wicked ones and the opponents, that there is **no one like Jehovah; He could not be opposed.**

**St. Jerome** believes that the word "**Moresheth**" in Hebrew means "My Possessions"; thus, seeing Micah as one, who possesses Christ or is an heir with Him. Although the book of Micah starts with a public judgment by God Himself, yet when He chastens, He does not avenge; rather He wishes to qualify us for the eternal inheritance and the heavenly glory.

**Micah**: means "one with God" or, as it came somewhere else "one is the son of 'Moresheth'; namely, **the son of the Heir**; and who is this heir, but the Son of God, who says: *“All things have been delivered to me by My Father”* (Matthew 11:27). He, who is the heir, wishes for us to be partners in His inheritance.

It is good to ask: ‘Who is Micah?’ He is not one of the commons; he is chosen to receive the grace of God and through him the Holy Spirit speaks. He started his prophecy in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; an order that has its significance, **starting with wicked kings and ending with a good**

one<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

Saying: “*which he saw*,” does not imply a physical vision, but a spiritual revelation by the mind. The Spirit of the Lord opens Micah’s eyes to realize the message that he is committed to testify and proclaim to the people.

Micah prophesied in the days of Ahaz, who is considered to be one of the wicked kings of Judah; and prophesied as well in the days of Hezekiah, the pious man of reform. In the days of Ahaz he did not fear to proclaim the Lord’s chastisement against Judah, but he opened the doors of comfort before the holy souls that would return to the Lord. And in the days of the pious king Hezekiah, he talked about the necessity of the inner spiritual reform. With the changes of situations and times, the word of God abides steadfast, does not flatter the wicked, yet it does not close the door of hope before them. It does not find pleasure in superficial reforms without going into depths.

***“Hear, all you people! Listen, O earth, an all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a Witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple” (Micah 1:2)***

As many of the people of God closed their ears, so as not to listen to the voice of the Lord, he calls on the earth to open its ears to listen to Him; as said by the Lord Christ: “*Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 8:11).

God, who loves His heavenly and earthly creation, often calls on them to listen to His word (Isaiah 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:1), to incline their ears to Him. Even when He judges His people, He wishes to reveal the secrets of His dealings with His creation to all. God has no partiality; when His people transgress, He calls the nations to attend their judgment with the hope that it becomes a practical lesson to receive faith.

He is the Master and Lord of all creation, talking from His **holy temple**; namely, from heaven, dedicated to Him as the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, 45.

One. From there He talks yearning for all creation to be sanctified, and to become a living icon of the Holy One. When He chastens or shows compassion, His goal is always the holiness of His creation.

❖ *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification”* (1 Thessalonians 4:3) ... The same enthusiasm of the apostle Paul to confirm this, is shown in another location in which he says: *“Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no none will see the Lord”* (Hebrew 12:14). Why should we marvel to see him write to his disciples about this subject in every occasion? In his letter to Timothy he says: *“Keep yourself pure”* (1 Timothy 5:22), and in his second epistle to the Corinthians he says: *“... in much patience ... in fasting ... and by purity”* (2 Corinthians 6:5-6)<sup>1</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

As the rational people got corrupted and behaved irrationally against their Creator, He intended to rebuke them through the irrational nature. He often –through the words of His prophets- called the earth and the heaven with all its stars to witness His judgment of His people; thus, there is no wonder if the earth moved and trembled and the sun abstained from sending its rays, when the hands of the created stretched to crucify the incarnated divine Word to rebuke the denying crucifiers and to let the darkness testify against them<sup>2</sup>.

The creation made by God to serve man turned into witnesses against him and rebuked him for his rebellion and corruption.

***“For, behold, the Lord is coming out of His place, and He will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth”***  
**(Micah 1:3)**

God used to come out to His people to bring them on to Him; He used to come out to them with His love to bring them up into His arms. But now, having persisted with stubbornness on their corruption, He is coming out to judge and to chasten them.

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<sup>1</sup> *In Thess., hom 5.*

<sup>2</sup> *Cf. Theodoret of Cyrus Commentary on Isaiah 1:2.*

The prophet portrays God coming down from heaven, treading on mountains, to destroy Samaria for its persistence on idolatry and for practicing abominations. As corruption infiltrated into Judah, its judgment was likewise close.

The coming down of the Lord and His treading on the high places of the earth refer to two things: The first is, as though the Word of God, the Creator and the Savior, comes out of His place; having said of His incarnation: *“For I proceeded forth and came from God”* (John 8:42). The second is, that the Lord who sits on the throne of His mercy to firmly chastens and to destroy the pride and haughtiness of man, He seems as though He comes out of His place according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: ***“Behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth”*** (Isaiah 26:26). As a heavenly Father, He yearns not to punish and if he does, he is as though coming out of His place; namely, out of His mercy that is full of compassion. It is our iniquity and transgression that make Him as though coming out of His place to chasten... And even in His coming out, He seeks to embrace us to bring us back to the throne of His mercy.

Some believe that it refers here to the Lord coming out as though on the clouds to judge the haughty wicked people and to glorify His humble believers.

❖ Lord Jesus says: *“I proceeded forth and came from God”* (John 8:42). It seems appropriate for me here to put beside these words by Jesus the following words by the prophet Micah: *“Hear, all you people! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place, and He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, Like waters poured down a steep place”* (Micah 1:2-4). Now, meditate whether the first phrase in the gospel of St. John is equivalent to the second statement by the prophet Micah; as far as the Son is in the Father, being in the form of the Father, before *“He emptied Himself, and took the form of a slave, being born in human likeness”* (Philippians 2:6-

7); as it seems as though a contradiction, that the Son comes out from the Father; and at the same time remains in Him<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ It is said that God comes down, when He cares for the human weakness. As our Lord and Savior is concerned, who “*being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming out in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:6-7); “*No one has ascended to heaven, but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man who is in heaven*” John 3:13). He came down, not only to care for us, but also to carry what is ours: “*having taken the form of a servant*”. Although He is unseen by nature; being equal to the Father; yet He took up a seen form: “*having come out in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:7)<sup>2</sup>.

### Origen

***“The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before fire, like waters poured down a steep place” (Micah 1:4)***

When the Lord comes out to judge His people, the mountains and heights used in idolatry representing strong holds to protect the idolaters against outer invasion, cannot stand before the Lord, but they melt as He treads upon them and turn into dust. The valleys likewise cannot support the idolaters, but would melt before the Lord like wax before fire. Neither the great people, who count themselves as haughty mountains, nor the lowly people in the valleys, can stand before the Lord to defend the wicked people.

In a Coptic biography of **St. Pachumius** it came, that while his disciple Tadros was reading in the books of the twelve prophets, he came to read the book of the prophet Micah, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him and asked him what he thinks of the meaning of the verse: “*like waters poured down a steep place*”. When he saw him confused, he said that it means: the water of the river pouring down from paradise; and having said that, he

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<sup>1</sup> In John, homily 20: 152-156.

<sup>2</sup> In Genesis, homily 4: 5.

disappeared<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Like wax before the fire, and like waters pouring down a steep place, the wicked will melt and disappear when the Lord comes<sup>2</sup>.

St. Jerome

## 2. THE CHARGES:

***“For the transgression of Jacob is all this, 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?” (Micah 1:5)***

He began by Samaria, the capital of Israel, being the center of the worship of the Baal; and from it idolatry infiltrated into the high places of Judah. The he spoke of the high places of Judah, where the idolatry spread. Samaria was punished first on the hands of Assyria, and then Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, was punished on the hands of Babylon.

The high places here refer to the idolatry practiced there, which was banned by the Law (Deuteronomy 13).

Unfortunately the focus of sin in the both kingdoms was their capitals: Samaria and Jerusalem.

***“Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, places for planting vineyard; I will pour down her stones into the valley, And I will uncover her foundations” (Micah 1:6)***

Here he presents a horrible judgment as a natural lead to the transgression of Samaria, which turned into ruins due to continuous wars (Isaiah 21:1-3). God allows for Samaria to be destroyed and her stones to be poured into the valley exposing its foundations completely. Up to this day Samaria remains as a heap of ruins, not only on the hills, but also in the fields below. There, the foundations of the palaces of it kings, Omery and Achab were excavated.

Samaria, which was famous at that time for its riches and dense population, having originally been vineyards before

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Pachomius (Coptic-Bohairic) 1: 155.*

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on Micah 1: 1: 4.*

developing into a great royal capital, it goes back now to its past status or even worse, turning into heaps of ruins and mere stones.

***“And all the carved images shall be beaten to pieces; and all her hires as a harlot shall be burned with the fire. All her idols I will lay desolate, for it gathered it from the hire of a harlot, And they shall return to be the hire of a harlot” (Micah 1:7)***

The prophet considers that all what Samaria has reached of greatness to be through idolatry and the hire of harlots, so it is proper for these carved images to be beaten to pieces. Many harlots used to offer a part of their pay to participate in the expenses and decoration of the idol temples. As those temples are destroyed with their abominations, it is as though they return what they have got of the pay of harlots.

### **3. A BITTER MOURNING OVER JERUSALEM:**

Jerusalem was facing an invasion by the Assyrian armies that swept through the coastal plains in the direction of Egypt crossing from a city to another, going through the location where the prophet Micah lived, to reach the walls of Jerusalem. That same situation described by Micah, who was about 20 miles far from Jerusalem, was described by the prophet Isaiah, who was residing inside that city (Isaiah 10:28; 34).

***“Therefore I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals, and mourning like the owls” (Micah 1:8)***

As the prophet mourns Israel, he does not cease to wail and howl till his voice become like the wailing of the jackals. His soul was so embittered by grief that he walked like the captives, being dragged naked and barefooted.

The prophet Isaiah was previously commanded by the Lord to walk naked and barefooted for the duration of three years for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia and as a prophecy about their captivity on the hands of Assyria (Isaiah 20:2-4).

❖ Isaiah was not ashamed to walk naked as a symbol of that coming captivation. Jeremiah was sent from Jerusalem to the Euphrates, leaving his place be ruined in the camp of the



Chaldeans, among the Assyrians, the opponents of his people (Jeremiah 13:6-7) ... Both cases were provocations for mankind to repentance<sup>1</sup>.

#### St. Jerome

- ❖ We should count the captivation of our brethren as though it is happening to us; we should count the grieves of those in danger as our grieves. You should know that there is one single body for our unity, and that it is not just our love, but also our religion, that should motivate and encourage us to help the members of our family<sup>2</sup>.

#### St. Cyprian

Whoever encounters the prophet Micah, weeping and mourning, walking naked of his over-garment, and barefooted, may despise him as a miserable peasant, but heaven would see in his tears, cries, nakedness, and bare feet a magnificent portrait of love, seeing his people lead to captivity after about 150 years, commiserating with them and partaking of their misery and bitterness of souls. As St. Paul says: *“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also”* (Hebrew 13:3); and also says: *“Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?”* (2 Corinthians 11:29)

***“For her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; It has come to the gate of my people, Even to Jerusalem”***  
(Micah 1:9)

The corruption of Samaria and its idolatry have spread to Israel and infiltrated into Judah, reaching even to the gates of Jerusalem that partakes its evil. The wounds became incurable on the spiritual, social, and political levels.

In the east, the gate of the city refers to the statesmen and counselors working with the king, who used to assemble at the city gate. Even in the days of the Turks, the Sultan, together with his entourage, was called "The Sublime Porte".

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Marcella, 40:1.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 62 : 1.

#### 4. THE BITTERNESS OF SIN:

The prophet Micah refers to ten cities, five of which were north of Jerusalem, and the other five southwest or south of it. The destruction would not befall Jerusalem alone, but would spread over the cities around it. Destruction would prevail on them all, as long as they persisted on their evil idolatry.

Some scholars believe that some of those cities carried symbolic names, which reveal the role and horror of sin in the life of the congregation, as well as in that of man who persist on his evil.

**1. A stumble:** The prophet asks the inhabitants of Jerusalem, when captivation would dwell on them after a duration of a century and a half, not to tell the idol-worshipping cities, like Gath and Beth Aphrah, about what has befallen them (10), and not to weep before their people, to whom they have become an offense. The word Aphrah is derived from a Hebrew word, meaning "to weep".

**2. A return to dust:** Instead of heaven set for believers, he, who persists on his evil, would roll himself in the dust hearing the divine voice saying: *"You are from dust; and to dust you will return"*.

❖ Nothing would weigh on the soul, press on it and bring it down like the feeling of sin; and nothing would give it wings and bring it up high like reaching righteousness and virtue<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

**3. Deprivation of the garment of righteousness:** If the word "Shaphir" means beauty, sin would deprive man of the garment of righteousness to turn his Shaphir, the beauty of his inner soul, into naked shame (11).

**4. A sudden tribulation:** The word "Saanan" means city of the herd. Before the sudden catastrophe, as a fruit of their sin, the congregation, like a herd of sheep, would be too horrified to get out of the city, but would go around themselves knocking down one another.

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Matthew, homily 38:2.*

**5. A public calamity:** The word "Beth Ezel" means a place not far away. Everyone would stay in his place and would not go to seek help from his neighbor as the calamity would dwell on them all.

**6. Bitterness of the soul:** The word "Maroth" means bitter. The wicked assumes that, by practicing evil and sin, he would enjoy goods and pleasure; but he would soon lose his good fortune, and his life would turn into unbearable bitterness.

**7. Demolition of strongholds and deprivation of security:** "Lachish", one of the strongest fortified cities of Judah, thought to be immune against enemies' attacks, but the prophet Micah, by the eye of prophecy, sees "Sennacherib" putting it under siege (Isaiah 36:1-2). Its men, trying to escape from it with their chariots and horse, had nowhere to go and were led to captivity.

- ❖ Like those, brought up from their underground dungeons to the place of judgment, shackled in chains, so would all the souls be shackled in the chains of their various sins and led to the horrible chair of judgment<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ When you see a rich man preoccupied with his uncountable wealth, do not count him as rich, for he is miserably chained with the evil love of money at the mercy of a fierce jailer, who does not allow him to set forth out of his prison, but keeps him hopelessly shackled, heavily guarded, and behind locked gates<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

**8. There is no salvation by mere human wisdom:** Even the prophet's own city Moresheth Gath, gave presents to the Philistines to draw them to help her, but with no use.

**9. Lies and deceit:** The word "Achzib" means a lie or deceit. The people were deceived by the false prophets to think that they were safe and secure, only to discover their deceit when it was too late. Mareshah, together with Achzib, both became an inheritance to the enemy after discovering its failure to help.

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Matthew, homily 14:6.*

<sup>2</sup> *Homilies on Matthew, homily 14:6.*

**10. Loss of glory:** The great and the noble fled to "Adullam" to hide in its famous caves; there the glory of Judah got imprisoned.

**11. An incessant mourning:** One of the ancient customs was for the girls and women to cut off their hair, when someone dear to them dies or when they are led into captivity. Baldness here refers to loss of comfort.

***“Declare it not in Gath, weep not at all in Beth Aphrah, Roll yourself in the dust” (Micah 1:10)***

Here, rolling in the dust refers to deep grief.

"Aphrah" is a Hebrew name meaning dust, its location on a slope of the mountains of Judah is not exactly known. G. Simons believes it to be "Wadi El-Aphr" between "Doweima" and "Tal-el-Dowar", while others believe it to be "El-Teba" between "El-Khalil" and "Gebrin".

***“Pass by, you inhabitant of Shaphir, in naked shame. The inhabitant of Zanaan came not forth in the mourning of Beth Ezel; It shall receive of you its standing” (Micah 1:11)***

**Shaphir or Saphir** is a Hebrew name meaning beauty or beautiful, a city in Judah, believed by some to be nowadays "Tel-El-Sawaphir", three and a half miles south east of "Ashdod"; whereas others believe it to be "Kherbet El-Kom" west of "Hebron", located in Safar valley.

He correlates those cities to a woman, who has lost every possibility of cover, thus walks naked and ashamed among men and is led captive in great disgrace with nobody to save her from her fierce enemy.

❖ I wish we can get rid of the filth of sin to reveal the past beauty of virtue, expressed by the words of the prophet David: *“With Your beauty, O Lord, You made my beauty more prominent”*. Let us purify ourselves to reveal God’s image in us; and that is what the Lord seeks from us: to be undefiled, without blemish or defect<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> تأملات في مديح للقديس غريغوريوس النريزي.

### **Abbot Dorotheos**

**Zanaan:** some believe that the prophet plays here with the word to give a symbolic meaning. The woman inhabitant of Zanaan hides in her house in terror waiting for her bitter destiny, when the invaders come to take her into captivity.

**Beth Ezel:** a Hebrew name meaning a place nearby or the house of separation. It is said to be "Asl" or "Deir El-Asl", south-west of Hebron, about two miles east of Beth Miriam. Its inhabitants, although living in a fortified city resisting invaders, mourn what befell their brethren in other cities and become weary with grief.

*For the inhabitants of Maroth pined for good. But disaster came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem” (Micah 1:12)*

**Maroth:** is located in western Judah, probably derived from the word "Marah", thus giving the meaning of bitterness; nowadays it is "Beth Ummar".

- ❖ Things of grace are accompanied by joy, peace, love, and truth, whereas those of sin are accompanied by confusion, with neither love nor joy in the Lord<sup>1</sup>.

### **St. Macarius the Great**

- ❖ Even if man is rich and noble, when he falls captive to a certain sin, he would become more corrupt than any corruption. Even a king, if captivated by barbarians, he would become the most miserable among men. It is the same case with sin, being a barbarian, it would take the role of a tyrant towards the soul that falls captive in its hand, and so the soul becomes a captive not knowing how to get rid of it<sup>2</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

*“O inhabitant of Lachish, harness the chariot to the swift steeds; she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for the transgression of Israel were found in you” (Micah 1:13)*

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<sup>1</sup> عظة ٧ : ٣.

<sup>2</sup> In 1 Corinth., hom. 9:8.

**Lachish:** a fortified city located in the plains of Judah (Joshua 15:33, 39), previously known as "Tel el-Hassa", 16 miles north-east of Gaza and 11 miles south-west of Beth Gebrin. It is requested from the inhabitant of Lachish, having been the first to drag Zion into sin, to escape from the coming invasion.

***“Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel” (Micah 1:14)***

**Beth Achzib:** means the house of lies. Having deceived the kings of Israel, it was also called "Chezib" (Genesis 38:5) and "Cozeba" (1 Chronicles 4:22). It probably took its name after a spring that used to flow in winter and dries up in summer. Some believe that it is "Ein Cozeba" located in the plains of "Elah" north of "Adullam"; whereas others believe it to be "Tel el-Beida" south-west of "Adullam".

Instead of being effective against the invaders, this city would become helpless and would even turn into a deceptive traitor to their account.

***“I will yet bring an heir to you, O inhabitant of Mareshah; The glory of Israel shall come to Adullam” (Micah 1:15)***

**Adullam:** a Hebrew name meaning a refuge. Canaanite in origin, it was mentioned between Jermoth and Sokoh. It was inhabited by the Canaanites since the days of Jacob (Genesis 38:1-2), was struck by Joshua, fortified by Jeroboam (2 Chronicles 11:7), then was inhabited by the Jews after their return from captivity (Nehemiah 11:30). Located at "Tel Sheikh Madkour", it was surrounded by rough terrain and was famous for its caves, where people used to take refuge in the times of war. In it was the cave where David hid and made his head quarters (1 Samuel 33:1; 2 Samuel 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15). It is said to be the cave of "Wadi Kedron", also known as the caves of "Ein el Maa", about 13 miles southwest of Bethlehem between Lachish and Jerusalem.

**Mareshah** will lose its glory, which will come to Adullam. Because the prophet Micah warned them against the attack of the enemy, the nobility of Judah had to escape and hide in those caves

as though the glory of Israel was buried there.

***“Make yourself bald and cut off your hair for your precious children; Enlarge your baldness like an eagle, for they shall go from you into captivity” (Micah 1:16)***

The prophet portrays the horrible grief that would dwell over the fathers and mothers, when they see their sons and daughters taken into captivity. This happened several times to both Israel and Judah reaching its maximum horror in the final invasion of Israel by the Assyrians in the year 722 BC, which was witnessed by the prophet Micah, and in the final invasion of Judah in the year 586 BC.

Israel, like a mother, mourns its cities, as though they were her daughters who died and lost their lives. It proclaims its grief over them, and over its children, who were born in glory and are now led into captivity. Here the prophet Micah speaks about what was going to happen in the future, as though he was seeing it with his own eyes.

- ❖ *“Enlarge your baldness like an eagle” (Micah 1:16)*. Man gets bald only on his head, whereas the eagle, when it gets old, would get bald on its whole body, including the feathers of its wings. Judah would lose its "feathers", namely its men by whom it used to fall upon its prey<sup>1</sup>.

**Pope Gregory (the Great)**

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Ezekiel, homily 18 (2: 6)*.

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 1

### MAKE SIN BITTER IN MY MOUTH

- ❖ I confess to You, O my Lord:  
I drink sin like water.  
I think of amusement as life and happiness.  
Reveal to me the bitterness of sin.  
Let Your fiery Spirit expose my depths.  
Let me attach to You, the Forgiver of sin.
- ❖ You wish to judge me not to avenge me  
But to chasten me with Your mercy and to qualify me for Your  
eternal inheritance.  
Your fatherhood, even with its firmness, is full of compassion.  
With Your exalted care, You carry me on Your shoulders.
- ❖ Come out to me and destroy every haughty mountain in my  
depths.  
Melt every despair in my heart;  
Scatter my sin, like water pouring down a steep place.  
Destroy my sins  
And remove every corruption within me.
- ❖ As You come out to me with love; grant me to come out to  
my brethren;  
To mourn over a lost soul,  
And to wail over every lost person.  
How could my heart not flare for the sake of every one who  
stumble?  
How could I not weaken together with every weak man?  
How could I not count myself a captive together with every  
captive by sin?
- ❖ My soul moans over my sins and those of my brethren;  
I confess to you that we have caused a stumble to many.  
Let Your grace work in us; to glorify Your divine work in us.
- ❖ Our sin turned us into dust;



- Your grace lifts us up to heaven;
- ❖ Our sin deprived us of the garment of Your righteousness;  
But Your fiery Spirit will give us back Your righteousness.
  - ❖ Our sin deprived us of our inner peace.  
Yet Your presence in us will grant us Your exalted peace.
  - ❖ Our sin embittered our souls;  
Yet our fellowship is the sweetness itself.
  - ❖ Our sin destroyed our spiritual walls;  
Yet Your dwelling in us is the fiery wall of our souls.
  - ❖ Our sins deceived us by lies and vain promises;  
Yet Your coming down to us has lifted us up to Your eternal glories.
  - ❖ Our sin led us into captivity;  
Yet Your grace grants us the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

## CHAPTER 2

### GREEDY LAND-OWNERS

The prophet Micah admonishes the greedy land-owners, who spend the whole night planning how to take away by force the fields of the poor farmers by any means; and by the morning light, they would put their plans into effect and turn the field-owners into labor workers, beggars or slaves.

- ❖ Our third battle would be against **greed**, the love of money; a sort of battle that is foreign to us, and against our nature. As far as any monk is concerned, this kind of love only develops from a corrupt mind, and a basically lukewarm love of God.

All the other seductive ways of sins are planted in the

human nature and appear as though have their beginnings since our birth; and their roots are deep inside our body, controlling our abilities to discern between the right and the wrong. And although they attack man very early in his life, yet it takes him a long strife to overcome them.

But **greed**, this particular sort of ailment that attacks man from outside. Because it comes to him at a very advanced stage of his life, it is relatively easy to confront and to deal with. Yet, if he slothfully allowed it to enter into his heart, it becomes very difficult to take away and would turn into “*a root of all of evil*” (1 Timothy 6:10), thus leading to an increase of the seductive ways of all other sins<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Cassian**

<b>1. Evil Planning</b>	<b>1-3.</b>
<b>2. Punishing the greedy</b>	<b>4-5.</b>
<b>3. Rejecting the word of prophecy</b>	<b>6.</b>
<b>4. The prophet would not keep silent</b>	<b>7-9.</b>
<b>5. Moving forward by practical repentance</b>	<b>10-11.</b>
<b>6. Opening a gate of hope</b>	<b>12-13.</b>

## **1. EVIL PLANNING:**

*“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil up their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand” (Micah 2:1)*

He utters woe upon those, who work out evil on their beds, devising ways to take by violence the possession of others, and at the morning light they selfishly practice what they have devised. Being of authority, all what preoccupies their minds, is coveting what is not theirs, justifying it by one way or another: as counting themselves more capable of managing the field they overtake, or that its owner is unable to pay back his debt together with the accumulated interests; and very shrewdly, they practice what they have planned. If oppression and greed are grave sins, they become graver when man preoccupies himself with using his shrewdness, deceit, capabilities and authority to practice them with the

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<sup>1</sup> Cassian: *Institutes*, 7:1-2.

assumption that no one has the right to call him to account.

What brings sadness to the heart is that, instead of preoccupying themselves during the night with praying and contemplating in the word of God to get up early in the morning to work to the account of the kingdom of God, the oppressors dedicate the night to devise evil then get up early by the morning light to realize what they have planned. That is why the wise Solomon advises us saying: *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or deceit or knowledge or wisdom in hell where you are going”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Whatever man thinks while lying down for his body comfort, reveal what is actually going on in his heart, mind, and intentions. When the spiritual man lies down, his soul rises up dedicating itself to joyful divine things, whereas that of the wicked, becomes immersed in evil things that would captivate and enslave him. The way the night reveals to us what we are up to during the daylight, what we contemplate during the night, we shall, sooner or later, practice in the day. The holiness of our life during the day would bring to us holy thoughts and dreams, as fitting to the children of God, at night! And the holiness of our awakening dreams will motivate us more toward spiritual growth in the Lord.

***“They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his inheritance”* (Micah 2:2)**

King Ahab has been a bad example for the abuse of authority according to the bad counsel of his wicked wife Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1-15), when he took possession of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite after planning to kill him. That sort of serious corruption then flared in Judah among the noble and those of authority.

❖ O rich man! Why are you boasting such temporary honors, as your riches, the glories of your ancestors or the beauty of your body? Beware... remember that you are mortal and that *“you are dust, and to dust you will return”* (Genesis 3:19). Bow your head and have a look at the graves; can you distinguish between the bones of the poor and those of the rich? Between the bones

of the slaves and those of the masters? Wake up then and throw away the haughtiness, the meanness, and the hardness of your heart<sup>1</sup>!

- ❖ O rich man! You have become a servant of the all-merciful God and His steward before your brethren in servitude. Beware not to think that your good things are for your own belly! Consider what you have and what you enjoy in your hands as something temporary, that will soon evaporate and disappear; but on which you will have to give a detailed account<sup>2</sup>!

#### **St. Basil the Great**

They take possession of the fields of others and oppress man regardless of his family or the inheritance of his ancestors, not only by planning and deceit, but also by violence, oppression and against the Law.

***“Therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks; nor shall you walk haughtily, for this is an evil time” (Micah 2:3)***

By “*this family*” He means the whole kingdom; and by the “*disaster*” He means the captivation that would come over them. As a pay back to those oppressors for their deeds, in place of their haughtiness, chains will bind their necks as they are led to the land of captivity. Having put heavy yoke over the poor farmers, Jehovah will allow the yoke of captivity to dwell over the rich and the leaders, which they will not be able to remove from their necks; and by which He will break down their pride and haughtiness.

## **2. PUNISHING THE GREEDY:**

***“In that day one shall take up a parable against you, and lament with a bitter lamentation, and say: ‘We are utterly destroyed! He has changed the heritage of my people; how He has removed it from me! To a turncoat He has divided our fields’” (Micah 2:4)***

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<sup>1</sup> الأب الياس كويتر المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، ١٩٨٩، ص ٩٦.

<sup>2</sup> الأب الياس كويتر المخلصي: القديس باسيليوس الكبير، منشورات المكتبة البولسية، بيروت، ١٩٨٩، ص ١١٥.

Having taken possession of what belong to others, they lose even their own possessions to the enemy, who will take away their fields and crops. They will be shocked by how suddenly and violently they would lose their prosperity, and the land of their inheritance.

When the day of cruel chastisement comes over them, their joy would turn into lamentation, their laughs into screams, and they would become a example among their friends and neighbors.

- ❖ That miserably greedy soul would be devoured by the beast of greed, from whose clutches it cannot free itself; while going steady, striving to multiply the heaps of wealth, it has got through lawless and hateful ways, disasters would not rein in the greed of this soul, but would flare it more up to make it blind to everything except to race behind profit and to accumulate more wealth. It would even deprive itself of faith, for the sake of reaching that goal.

He would not hesitate to utter lies, to give false testimony, to steal, to break promises or to go through uncontrollable insulting fits disregarding any limits of decency and humility. Gold and love of ugly profit would become a god to him the same way like those, who worship their bellies. All that led the blessed apostle to consider this deadly pest not only as the origin of all evil, but to call it “...*covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Colossians 3:5).

You can see, step by step the extent of fall, to which this foolishness may lead; that made the apostle cry out calling it nothing but vain idolatry, as man, overriding God’s image and likeness (which everyone who worship God by spirit and truth, in the depths of his soul, should keep) loved and got fond of the images engraved on gold.

By such wide steps, man descends from bad to worse; and finally, he does not care to keep for himself the virtues of humility, love, obedience, or even their shadows that he becomes unsatisfied by anything. He then, having thrown away from himself, every sign of decency, he would, like a wild

horse, rage away without control<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ If you wish to realize the extent of such foolishness, its probable damage and destruction and the variety of sins to which it can lead if it is not carefully uprooted, just look at Judas Ischariot, who was one of the Lord's disciples, and meditate in how, because he did not care to crush the head of this deadly beast, he perished by its poison and in how he was even seduced by it to sell the Redeemer of the world and the Savior of mankind for thirty pieces of silver. He would not have fallen into such distasteful sin to betray his Master, if he was not struck by the **sin of greed**; he would not have been swept to such a horrible crime to deliver his Lord, if he was not used to steal from the treasury entrusted to him<sup>2</sup>.

**St. John Cassian**

***“Therefore you will have no one to determine boundaries by lot in the congregation of the Lord” (Micah 2:5)***

There would be no need for anyone to distribute the inheritance or to go through dissension because of it, for all will lose it altogether: the fields and the houses will fall into the hands of the greedy enemy. Everyone will become penniless and homeless, devoid of the blessing of the inheritance of his or her fathers and ancestors.

God proclaims to the oppressors who unjustly stole from the poor, that they will not only lose what they have unjustly taken from the poor, but will also lose what is theirs and that they will no longer have a portion of the land that God gave to His people.

### **3. REJECTING THE WORD OF PROPHECY:**

***“Do not prattle’, you say to those who prophesy, so they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame” (Micah 2:6)***

Having spoken of the sin of greed and what other sins it involves, like haughtiness, devising evil, oppression, and unjustly and violently taking the possessions of others, he speaks now of a

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<sup>1</sup> Cassian: *Institutes*, 7:7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian: *Institutes*, 7:23.

more serious sin, namely, opposing the word of the Lord seeking to shut up the mouths of prophets. Here, they are not stopping at breaking the civil Laws, but they rebelling against the authority of God. Not being able to stand the word of the Lord nor to accept the rebuke of His prophets, the wicked want the prophet to keep silent and to stop prophesying, counting the word of God as shame and disgrace and seeing in it disturbance and terror to their souls. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam, the king of Israel, to forbid the prophet Amos from prophesying (Amos 7:10, etc.). And in Isaiah, it came: "... *who say to the seers, 'Do not see'*" (Isaiah 30:10). This tendency will remain until the time of the antichrist, when the preaching of the word torments those who dwell on earth (Revelation 11:10).

We often tend to reject frankness in directing our lives and to seek smooth words and deceiving human comforts, when we actually need the firmness originating from love.

#### **4. THE PROPHET WOULD NOT KEEP SILENT:**

***"You who are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are those His doings? Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?"*** (Micah 2:7)

By saying, "*who are named the house of Jacob,*" He means that they carry the name, but they do not do what is fitting to it. As the apostle Paul says: "*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the Law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in the darkness, an instructor to the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the Law. You therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery?"*" (Romans 2:17-22)

The prophet did not abide to their request to keep silent, but he rebuked them confirming that the secret of their disgrace was not his words, but their behavior that contradicts God's ways. Their life does not conform to the work of the Spirit of God. If it does,

they would gain His blessing.

The prophet Micah rebukes them, saying: “*Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted?*” meaning: ‘Do you think yourselves capable of muting the voice of the Lord or of opposing His Spirit? If you manage, by using every authority you have, to mute the voice of the prophets, will the Spirit of God not find other ways to rebuke you for your evil ways? Will your temporal authority and your material possibilities be able to nullify the counsel of God?’

And by saying: “*Are those His doings?*”, he rebukes them, that, while they boast to be the children of Israel, the house of Jacob, from where the prophets came, their father Jacob never practiced what they are doing. They do not follow their father’s ways!

In that same way the Lord Christ rebuked the Jews, who were boasting to be the children of the free Abraham, while they were plotting to kill Him, telling them that: “*If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father ... You are of your father the devil; and the desires of your father you want to do*” (John 8:39-44).

It is as though the prophet says to his people: "You carry the name “the house of Jacob”, yet your deeds testify that you are actually ‘the house of the devil who opposes the Spirit of the Lord". If they choose to be referred to Jacob, who walked according to the Spirit of the Lord, they should behave as is fitting to his name.

**St. Hippolytus** of Rome believes that the house of Jacob aroused the anger of God, and got them connected to the passion of the Lord Christ, saying: “*He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called ‘The Word of God’*” (Revelation 19:13). The robe dipped in blood refers to the body, through which the Word of God, who is above all pain, suffered pain. That's what the prophet Micah was referring to when saying: Should this be said, O, house of Jacob? Does the Spirit of the Lord lack patience? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to those, who walk uprightly? But you dwelled against My people like an enemy;



you pulled off the robe with the garment from the man of peace<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ Whoever truly forsakes this world, carries the yoke of Christ and learns from Him, for He is “*gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matthew 11:29), will always remain undisturbed by temptations; and, as far as he is concerned, “*All things work together for good*” (Romans 8:28). According to the prophet Micah the words of God do good “*to him who walks uprightly*” (Micah 2:7)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Abbot Abraham**

***“But you rise up against My people, as an enemy; you strip the robe from the peaceful, from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war” (Micah 2:8)***

While boasting of being called the ‘house of Jacob’ (7), they take the play of an enemy, who destroys that house. They opposed, not only the Spirit of the Lord, but the nation or the people as well. By robbing the poor peasants they are destroying the house of Jacob and are counted as opponent enemies. They are an inner enemy, more dangerous than any outer one. The Psalmist says: “*For they do not speak peace; but they devise deceitful matters*” (Psalm 35:20).

How horrible their deeds are, is demonstrated by the fact that they are not only robbing the land, but they are even pulling off the robe with the garment from those who walk in peace and who defend them in war.

***“The women of My people you cast out from their pleasant houses; From their children you have taken away My glory forever” (Micah 2:9)***

They devour and take possession of the houses of widows (Matthew 23:14). They treat women inhumanly, the women of the people of God, who seek His protection. Their hands stretch to take away their children to make them slaves for themselves or probably sell them to the heathen nations, thus deprive them of enjoying the faith in God, and their glory in Him.

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<sup>1</sup> *Against Noetus, 15.*

<sup>2</sup> *St. Cassian: Conferences, 24:24.*

The prophet here probably refers to the captivity that God allowed, because of the corruption and evil of the leaders that extended to the people. In captivity, it is not only the women who are cast away from their houses, but the children are taken away to a foreign land and would lose their right to enjoy the Hebrew nationality and to partake of the worship in the temple of God.

## **5. MOVING FORWARD BY PRACTICAL REPENTANCE:**

***“Arise and depart, for this is no place to rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy you, even with utter destruction” (Micah 2:10)***

He bitterly calls on them to arise and depart to captivity. As a fruit of their defilement an utter destruction and the verdict of divine chastisement has dwelt upon them. The same way they have robbed the rights of the people by their temporal authority, their own possessions would be taken from them by force. The Promised Land would not be any more for their rest.

Upon them would come what had, in the past, dwelt upon their fathers, who often rebelled against God in the wilderness; *“For forty years I have grieved with that generation, and said: ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’”* (Psalm 95:10-11).

They would not only be expelled from the Promised Land, but, because of their defilement, they would even suffer ***“utter destruction”***, not because of the might of the enemy who takes them into captivity, but because of their own defilement. That is why the Holy Book advises us saying: *“having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2 Peter 1:4); and *“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27).

The prophet calls on them to arise from the state of sin in order to enjoy the true rest; and to spare themselves the ultimate perdition.

❖ I wish that he, who cannot fly like an eagle, flies like a sparrow; that he, who cannot fly to heaven, flies to the mountains away from those plains that will soon be destroyed by water! While Lot, Abraham's nephew, was saved by crossing over to the mountains of Zoar, his wife could not climb it and looked back to become a pillar of salt, losing her salvation (Genesis 19:12-29). The Lord says through His prophet Micah: 'Come forward to the eternal mountains; arise and depart from here; it is not your rest, because of the defilement.' And He also says, "*Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*" (Matthew 24:16). There, is Mount Zion; Jerusalem, the city of peace, built not of earthly stones, but of living stones, by ten thousands of angels, by the Church of the firstborns, by the spirits of those who reached perfection, and by the God of the righteous, who spoke with His blood better than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:24). One cried out to rebuke the sin of his brother (Genesis 14:10), while the other to forgive the sin of the world. One to proclaim the crime of his own brother; while the other to cover up the crime of the world; as it is written: "*Blessed is he whose sin is covered*" (Psalm 32:1 LXX)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Ambrose**

❖ "*I have resorted to the Lord; how could you say to me flee as a bird to your mountain*" (Psalm 11:1 LXX). The fierce enemy, who has tempted the Savior Lord in the wilderness, is now telling the believers to depart from Judea to dwell in a wilderness barren of virtues, where he can easily manage to crush them. He is giving the believer a deceiving counsel; he advises him to take, not the wings of a turtledove -a delicate, domesticated, and simple bird said to be without any malice, a bird presented in the temple for the sake of the Lord (Luke 2:24)-, but to take the wings of a sparrow, a noisy, and a wandering bird, that deserts its mate once the young are hatched from the eggs<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Flight from the World* 5: 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Hamilieson Ps. 60*.

**St. Jerome**

***“If someone were to go about uttering empty falsehoods, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,’ such a one would be a preacher for this people” (Micah 2:11)***

The prophet rebukes them for accepting the false prophets; and for the sake of material and social benefits they disregard the truth, flatter the opponents and cover up the faults. About which the apostle says: *“If I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ”* (Galatians 1:10).

If somebody comes to talk to them of wine and strong drink, they would find him worthy of being a prophet for them, because he tells them what they covet. They do not seek a true prophet, who utters the word of God, which is to them shame and disgrace.

They want wicked prophets who approve their evil ways; of whom it is said: *“When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frame deceit”* (Psalm 50:18-19).

He is probably referring to the false prophets who, instead of getting preoccupied with the love of God and with the divine commandment, they preoccupy themselves with the corrupt banquets of the rich, where they get drunk, lose their balance and get diverted from their mission.

❖ Once they plunge into the abyss of extreme, and deliver themselves to become captives to the tyrant of corrupt drinking, they liken a boat with no sails to keep its balance; of which it is said: *“Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink”* (Isaiah 5:11). They would never get satisfied or fulfilled; they would continue ***“running after drink”***<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## **6. OPENING A GATE OF HOPE:**

As the prophets used to do, after threatening chastisement

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Isaiah 28:7.*

and before it is realized, they open a gate of hope for the exalted mercy of God, who chastens only to embrace and who grants more than what is asked, and beyond it.

***“I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep of the fold, like a flock in the midst of their pasture; They shall resound by reason of the multitude of men” (Micah 2:12)***

Some scholars see in these two phrases a magnificent prophecy about two great events: the first is the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity in the near future, and the second is gathering the believers together and their enjoyment of freedom from the captivity of sin, through the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, who precedes them as the first of the risen, and the heavenly Head of the Church.

Whereas other scholars see in them a prophecy of the false prophets, that captivity would soon come to an end, and the return would promptly be realized, which did not materialize.

If, because of their evil, they were scattered, He will gather them together after their chastisement, not as two separate kingdoms, but as one people and one kingdom. He will call them all as **‘Jacob’**. He will gather the holy remnant, who were attached to the Lord during captivity and returned to Him, to become His rational sheep of the fold.

*“It will resound by reason of the multitude of men”,* because of their great number, when the Lord Christ, the good Shepherd, gathers His people from all nations; *“He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad”* (John 11:52); *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd”* (John 10:16).

***“The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their King will pass before them, with the Lord at their head” (Micah 2:13)***

Who is the one who breaks open the gate and go out of it together with His people, but the Lord Christ, who broke

(destroyed) death, brought it to death by His own death. He crossed together with His people through the gate of Hades and brought them over to His paradise, granting them the Spirit of conquest upon the last enemy; namely death.

He became the firstborn of those who have risen bringing us up together with Him! He came out of the tomb and carried its gate; the way Samson did, when he “*took hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them out*” (Judges 16:3).

Other scholars believe that the “One who breaks open” here, is St. John the Baptist, who came with the Spirit of Elijah to prepare the way before the King of kings, the Savior of the world. He opened the gate by proclaiming repentance, and calling to encounter the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world.

In the midst of the darkness, the Savior comes forward, the Light of the world, to shine with His light to scatter the darkness. Here, He is called the “Breaker open”, namely the Remover of obstacles and the Opener of the way to eternity, who opens the gate wide for every believer to find hope in Him.

❖ Whoever enters is committed not to stay in the same state in which he entered; he should “*go in and find pasture*” (John 10:9); what a perfect grace! He, who enters, would be confined within the limits of the world, whereas he, who continues walking, would be as though he surpasses the created things counting what is seen as nothing; he would find pasture above heavens and would feed on the word of God, saying: “*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1 LXX). Yet Christ would only realize this entrance, as it is said: “*With the Lord at their head*” (Micah 2:13)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah 1: 2: 13.*

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 2

### LET YOUR SPIRIT WORK IN ME SO I COULD WORK WITH THE SPIRIT OF LOVE AND COMPASSION

- ❖ Let Your fiery Spirit, the spirit of love and compassion,  
Work in me to make me carry the icon of Your practical love;  
On my bed, I get preoccupied with Your encounter.  
I see You transfigure in the needy and the suffering.  
I see You as a Father to the orphans and as a Judge for the  
widows.  
I see You encounter those cast out;  
Let me encounter You in them so to enjoy Your fellowship.
- ❖ Take away from me the heart of stone; and grant me a new heart  
filled with compassion.  
Let me not be preoccupied with wealth or honor;  
As You are my true treasure and glory.
- ❖ Take away from me the stiff neck;  
By Your love destroy my haughtiness;  
Destroy every corruption in me;  
Uproot in me every foreign field;  
Speak to me, O Lord, for Your servant hears  
Every word, even if it hurts, is meant for my edification.  
With Your sword strike to cut off all evil within me.  
Speak up, O Lord, Your words are all good.  
Grant me to walk upright.  
Let me walk along Your royal way.
- ❖ I confess my sins to You;  
I sinned together with my father's house.  
Let us return to You, so that You return to us;  
Gather us from the end of the world;  
To become a new heaven;  
Where You dwell, O the true righteousness;
- ❖ Do not allow my ears to hear the smooth things.

To enjoy the false promises of the enemy.  
To get my soul drunk with the corrupting wine of this world.  
Grant me ears to hear what the Spirit says to the Churches!

- ❖ Come, O Lord Jesus; Gather all believers as members of Your body.  
To force our way through the gates of Hades; and to us set forth to Your paradise.  
To take off the gate of death; and to come out together with You to resurrection;  
You are the Firstborn of those who all asleep;  
You are the Head of the holy Church.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE WICKED LEADERSHIP**

Having revealed the sins of the common people, he now addresses the leaderships: the king: the kings and rulers, the elite and the judges; those who were set to serve the people and to perform justice to everyone, but instead they misused their positions, robbed the people of their wealth and enjoyed an extreme luxury, leaving the people moaning of hunger and oppression.

This chapter includes three important talks, addressed to the wicked rulers: The first, that they are voracious leaders (1-4); the second, that they are deceitful (5-8); and the third, that they take bribes. It talks as well about the fruits of the wicked leaderships (9-12).

Here, the prophet Micah rebukes the leaderships for being deceived by the words of the false prophets, who proclaimed that captivity would soon come to an end, and that the return from it is very close at hand. He calls on them to discern and see the truth, and not to go after the lies.

#### **1. A call to the rulers to know justice 1.**



- 2. The evil oppressors 2-4.
- 3. The false prophets 5-7.
- 4. Micah and the power of the Spirit 8.
- 5. An open rebuke to the rulers 9-12.

## 1. A CALL TO THE RULERS TO KNOW JUSTICE:

*“Listen, O heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: Should you not know justice?” (Micah 3:1)*

It was fitting for **the elders of Israel** to live among the people, to partake of their daily life, but instead they turned to become an aristocratic ruling class, that lived in Jerusalem.

And the judges, who were supposed to teach the people the divine truth, have put the Law aside, and have become more evil than the people. They are only preoccupied with abusing their positions and authority.

- ❖ Indeed, the prophets repeat their accusation of the people, saying: *“Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom, Your princes are rebels”* (Isaiah 1:10, 23). Again Micah says, *“Should you not to know justice?”* Actually, on every possible occasion they strongly rebuke them. What then? Are we going to put the blame on God? God forbid, if we entertain such a thought! The fault is actually theirs. Is there any reasonable justification other than that you refuse to obey Him<sup>1</sup>!?

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ Addressing the rulers, who were entrusted to practice justice, yet trampled upon it, he put his words in the form of a question: Are you not the ones responsible for justice to punish the transgressors and to exonerate the innocents? How then, have you diverted to strongly support evil? How then, have you practiced greed and dispossessed the needy of everything they have? How have you stripped the skin from them, and the flesh from their bones<sup>2</sup>?

**Theodoret of Cyrus**

We should not marvel to see a simple prophet dare to judge

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on John, 52.*

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on Micah 3: 1-4 PG 81: 1756.*

the rulers and the judges. He, after all, enjoys the divine truth and bears a special awe, whereas those supposedly great men, having disregarded the truth in their life and behavior, became weak and unable to defend themselves.

Wherever the truth is, fear will have no place for itself. One, bearing the fear of the Lord, would humbly fear neither people nor events.

Who is he, who asks: “***Should you not know justice?***” Of course they know it, and know the Law and the statutes by heart, yet being strangers from them in their life and behavior, they came to be without knowledge.

## **2. THE EVIL OPPRESSORS:**

***“You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones” (Micah 3:2)***

When the love of money and greed crawl into the heart, man loses his inner insight and his discernment; he would hate the good for others and love evil. This the first feature of oppressors, to hate good and love evil; they deal with the poor as cannibals, slaying the poor for their banquets and cooking their flesh.

In the book of Ezekiel, God rebukes the evil shepherds, saying: “*Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ..... With force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered ... Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them’*” (Ezekiel 34:2, 4, 10).

***“Who also eat the flesh of My people, flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them in pieces, like meat for the pot, like flesh in the caldron” (Micah 3:3)***

It was fitting for the spiritual leaders to give themselves up to the account of the people, and not to fulfill their covetousness,

devour the people like voracious beasts, like cannibals. He presents a horrible and an extremely painful portrait for their limitless cruelty.

***“Then they will cry to the Lord, but He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, because they have been evil in their deeds” (Micah 3:4)***

God will never hear the cries of him, who eats the flesh of his brother, no matter how loud they may be; but will hide His face from him, and will let justice take its course; *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy”* (James 2:13). As he did not hear the cries of his brother when he was prosperous, he will cry during his affliction and will have no response; and as he hid his face from his poor brother, God will hide His face from him. As Adoni-Bazek said: *“Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather their food under my table; as I have done so, God has repaid me”* (Judges 1:7). And the Psalmist says: *“With the merciful, You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man, You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure, You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious, You will show Yourself shrewd. For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks”* (Psalm 18:25-27). And the wise Solomon says: *“Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry himself and not be heard”* (Proverb 21:13).

- ❖ The instant I withdraw from evil, I become worthy of You hearing my prayers<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ Lord, You accommodate the reward to the intentions of the people! You provide the saints with what their holiness deserve, the innocent and those without sin with what is fitting for them, and the elect and the perfect with what is perfect, whereas for those who divert from the right way and take the wrong one, You will guarantee what is fitting for them<sup>2</sup>.

**Theodoret of Cyrus**

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<sup>1</sup> Homily 2 on Ps.5.

<sup>2</sup> Comm. On Ps.18.

### 3. THE FALSE PROPHETS:

***“Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who make My people stray; who chant ‘Peace’ while they chew with their teeth, but who prepare war against him, who puts nothing into their mouths” (Micah 3:5)***

While the false prophets chew the flesh of their brethren with their teeth, they proclaim false peace with sweet yet false words supported in this by the rich and those with authority. But this situation will not last long, as war is definitely on its way.

Some interpret the expression “***Chew with their teeth***” as bite their lips with their teeth, in an attempt to shut their lies in and to keep any word that could reveal their deceit from slipping their lips by mistake.

They greedily eat the flesh of others, their mouth is incessantly open to devour, and if someone tries to stop them, they make war against him threatening him with serious divine judgment. This is how greed for ugly profiteering works (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7).

- ❖ The prophet Jeremiah says: “*you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied lies*” (Jeremiah 20:6). He, who uses the words of God in an evil way, utters lies<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ He does not forbid them to listen to prophets, but to hear those who prophesy lies (Jeremiah 23:16). When you listen to a prophet like Moses, you are not hearing him, but you are hearing the Lord who speaks through him. When the false prophets tell visions out of their own hearts, they fail to change the hearts of their listeners, and accordingly they work in vain<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Origen**

***“Therefore you shall have night without vision, and you shall have darkness without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them” (Micah 3:6)***

Running after the love of money, the false prophets attached themselves to the rich, walking in the spirit of hypocrisy and

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Jer., hom. 19: 14: 9.*

<sup>2</sup> *Fragments from the catena, 15 (F. of the Church, vol. 97)*

justifying oppression. Having rejected the Sun of righteousness, their minds became dark, their life turned into a night without a day, they lost every inner enlightenment, and their thoughts disturbed them.

The Lord proclaims the helplessness of the false prophets, as they will have night without vision, and darkness without divination; they will get into a state of great depression, and shame and disgrace will dwell over them.

- ❖ *"The sun will go down"* (Jeremiah 15:9) on those prophets, who lead His people astray. They will dwell in darkness *"Shall have night without vision, and shall have darkness without dawn"*. *"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places"* (Matthew 12:43). This is what would happen to those people; *"So shall it also be with this wicked generation"* (Matthew 12:45)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Ephram the Syrian**

***"So the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners abashed; indeed they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God" (Micah 3:7)***

When someone seeks a counsel from those false prophets, they can only present the darkness they have inside them, as they *"have no answer from God"*.

Covering their upper lips, namely their moustaches and beards (the Hebrew word 'sapham'), which, for Hebrew men, had a special significance referring to courage and manhood, was a sign that the prophets were in a state of grief, because God refuses to proclaim Himself to them. That is why, the leper was ordered to cover his moustache (Leviticus 13:45). This custom also came in Ezekiel 24:17, 22)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4. MICAH AND THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT:**

***"But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8)***

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron, 11: 8.*

<sup>2</sup> *James M. Freeman: Manners and Customs of the Bible, 1972, article 612.*

While one day the false prophets would be exposed and disgraced, Micah, the true prophet, on the other hand, would continue to be justified through the work of the mighty Spirit of the Lord, and his holding to the divine truth.

The secret of the power of Micah is the work of the Holy Spirit in him, who qualified him for the prophetic work and filled him with power, truth, courage, and to talk with authority. He has no fear of the oppression of people, even of those with authority; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“For the Lord God will help me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed”* (Isaiah 50:7).

Being aware of his helplessness to achieve this work on his own, yet the prophet Micah was sure that the Spirit of the Lord is the secret of his power, because *“Who is sufficient for these things”* (2 Corinthians 2:16); and according to the apostle: *“Our sufficiency is from God”* (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Contrary to the false prophets who were greatly depressed, he got filled with the power of the divine Spirit, carrying an inner power, truth, and might. He felt no weakness, lacked no knowledge of the truth, and never lost his heroic work in the Lord. He, as though to tell them that there is no comparison between him and the false prophets, said: *“What is the chaff to the wheat?”* (Jeremiah 23:28)

Having enjoyed those qualifications, the prophet Micah dared to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. The men of God were committed on certain occasions to reveal the truth of their missions, and the divine possibilities they enjoyed not for the sake of boasting, but for the sake of fulfilling their ministry and the edification of God’s kingdom in this world.

In his commentary on the second epistle to the Corinthians (11:21, etc.), **St. John Chrysostom** makes it clear that the apostle Paul did not do that to boast himself, but to mute the mouths of those who intend to destroy his mission by denying his apostleship. St. John Chrysostom presented several examples of those who defended themselves for the sake of the edification of the Church

and the success of the divine work. The prophet Samuel once said: *“Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken; or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you”* (1 Samuel 12:3). And the prophet Amos said to Amasiah: *“I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a herdsman, and a tender of sycamore fruit, Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, And the Lord said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel’”* (Amos 7:14, etc.). So the prophet Micah does here as well<sup>1</sup>.

### **5. AN OPEN REBUKE TO THE RULERS:**

*“Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity”* (Micah 3:9)

Enjoying the mighty Spirit of the Lord, the prophet Micah does not lack the possibility of bold talk against the rulers and the judges who abhor justice and pervert equity. By perverting equity, he probably means abusing the interpretation of the word of God for their own benefit, the way the heretics abused certain texts to support their heresies.

In his letter (19:8) **St. Cyril the Great** wrote about those, who corrupt the truth by abusing certain texts of the Holy Bible. He sent, enclosed to his letter, a copy of the letter addressed by St. Athanasius the Apostolic to Epictetus, which the heretics have perverted.

*“Who build up Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with iniquity”* (Micah 3:10)

Intending to build a prosperous city, the rulers preoccupied themselves with building luxurious constructions and establishments on the expense of the poor masses of the people. Under the pretension of caring for the beauty of the city, they broke the Law and oppressed the poor.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on Second Corinthians, Homily 24:3.*

❖ ***“Who build up Zion with bloodshed”*** (Micah 3:10). They did not learn how to control themselves, although they have received the commandment *“You shall not kill”*; through other different means they were urged to keep this commandment, but they did not stop this evil habit. And when they saw the Lord, they cried out, saying: *“Crucify Him.”* For what motive? And for what charge against Him, big or small? Is it because He honored them? And, although being God, He became man for their sake and performed limitless miracles for their benefit? Is it because He forgave their sins? Or is it because He called them to His kingdom? The actual reason for having Him crucified has actually been their great evil, foolishness, and absolute insanity<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

***“Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, ‘is not the Lord among us? No harm can come to us’”***  
**(Micah 3:11)**

The prophet condemns the religious leaders, who work like wage laborers seduced by bribe, and are perverted because of their love for money. He, as well, warns the rich and those with authority against using their possibilities to influence the ministers of God, which is counted as a bribe! And warns the false prophets, who turn into profiteers, tailoring their prophesies according to the amount of silver they are offered, and are not preoccupied with proclaiming the will of God, but with how to make more money according to the way of Balaam *“who loved the wages of unrighteousness”* (2 Peter 2:15).

❖ Although you are allowed, O priest, to eat from the altar, yet not to live in luxury *“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain”* (1 Corinthians 9:9). The apostle Paul labored and toiled day and night, that he might not be a burden to anyone, satisfied with the available food and cloths (2 Thess. 3:8). He also held God as witness of how devoutly, justly, and blamelessly he behaved himself among the believers (1

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<sup>1</sup> St. John Chrysostom: *the Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 68:1.*



Thessalonians 2:10). He confirmed as well, that he has not dispatched any of his disciples to collect anything from the Churches. In certain of his epistles he expressed his pleasure for the gifts sent by some, but he collected them not for himself, but for the poor saints in Jerusalem, namely the Jews, who were the first to believe in Christ and were consequently denied by their parents and relatives, lost all their possessions and were persecuted by the priests of the temple and the people. Yet, that situation was misused by some, who, under the pretension of helping the poor, got rich and ‘ate out of gold and porcelain plates’<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Jerome**

All the religious and civil leaders, rulers and priests, agreed on one issue, namely the love of money. And through their practice of formal worship, without spirit, they assumed that God is in their midst protecting them against any evil, assuming that their wicked behavior would cause them no harm, because they are the ‘people of God’. Faith that does not work with love is a dead faith with neither spirit nor life.

***“Is not the Lord among us?”*** Are we not in the city of Jerusalem, the city of God? Are not His temple, His ark of covenant, His Holy Book, His priests, and His daily sacrifices all within our hands? They abused the divine privileges that are presented to them for the sake of their sanctification, forsook the holiness, held fast to formalities, and deviated the gifts of God from their true goal assuming that God is in their midst as long as they have them, even if they persisted on their love of the world, of oppression, and of violence.

***“Therefore because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple, like the bare hills of the forest” (Micah 3:12)***

This prophecy had its active effect after more than a century, when the prophet Jeremiah (26:18), being deeply impressed by it, quoted it and its quotation saved his life, when he

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah 1: 3: 11.*

faced death in the days of king Jehoachim.

They proclaimed to care for the construction of Jerusalem (10) not knowing that, by caring for streets and luxurious buildings, they contributed to the destruction of the holy places.

Although they assumed that no perdition would ever dwell upon them as long as God is in their midst, yet because of their persistence on oppression, God allowed for the destruction of Jerusalem and for turning all its building into fields and ruins. What would dwell over Zion reveals what would dwell over the depths of those evil people because of their persistence on their wickedness, and of hiding behind the presence of Zion and the temple of the Lord as a sign of the dwelling of God among them.

❖ Here also, the prophet Micah could not stand to see Jerusalem smeared with bloodshed and oppression, while the rulers of the house of Jacob abhor justice, the priests teach for pay and the prophets divine for money. What does he say about the consequences of all that? *“Zion shall be plowed like a field; Zion shall become heaps of ruins; And the mount of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.”* Mourning the lack of uprightness, he says: *“The prince asks for gifts, and the judge seeks a bribe”* (Micah 7:1-4). His language mostly came like that strong statement of the prophet David, saying: *“Help me, O Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of me”* (Psalm 12:1) <sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Gregory the Nazianzus**

Some believe that this prophecy has been literally realized on the hand of Titus, when the Romans plowed the land on which the city was built to guarantee its utter devastation.

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<sup>1</sup> *In defense of His Flight to Pontus, 2: 58.*

## **AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 3**

### **LET ME KNOW THE TRUTH TO BECOME A LEADER**

- ❖ My soul is terrified when I hear about the wicked rulers  
Who assume that they know the truth and defended it.  
While they are far from knowing it!  
You are the divine Truth,  
Open up my eyes to know You;  
Let me walk in You, to live eternally.
- ❖ Grant me the love of goodness, and the hate of evil;  
Let me love goodness whatever it may cost;  
Let me hate evil whatever its seduction may be.
- ❖ Let me wish goodness for all men;  
To love You, the Philanthropic;  
Uproot from me every greed and selfishness.  
Uproot from me the violent nature;  
Grant me the free-giving love;  
To love and not to seek being loved;  
As I love You, even in my opponents.
- ❖ Let me be compassionate towards the others, to be worthy of  
Your compassion;  
Let me respond to the requests of others.  
To be worthy of You hearing my voice, and responding to my  
prayers.
- ❖ Uproot from me every hypocrisy  
To set forth with the truth with no adulation;  
Let me seek Your favor, and not that of others.  
Let me attach myself to You, to have Your light shine on me.  
To recognize Your will;  
And to get enlightened by the splendor of Your righteousness.  
That my whole life becomes a day with no night;  
Light with no darkness;  
And love with no hate.
- ❖ Grant me the power of Your Holy Spirit;

To be filled with power, truth, and might.  
To utter the truth, whatever it costs.  
Not to adulate the rich or those of authority.  
To utter Your words with no perversion.

- ❖ Let me worship You by Spirit and truth;  
Not to be swallowed by formalities with no spirit;  
To realize Your dwelling in me;  
To set in me the spiritual Zion;  
And to sanctify my depths to become a temple for You.

## CHAPTER 4

### WHAT CHURCH IS LIKE YOU?

After referring by impressive words to the destruction that would dwell on the nation and to the affliction through which all would go through, because of the corruption at all levels, here he presents the amazing divine promise, that “*In the latter day, all will become one free kingdom, on which the Lord will reign.*” By this he moves our mind away from the state of the Babylonian captivity to the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of its walls and temple. And he moves us as well, on the level of all humanity, from the state of captivity to the devil to the freedom and the glory of the children of God, where the Church of the New Testament is established on the top of the mountains.

The prophet Micah has demonstrated through his name and through his prophecies, that there is no other God like the Lord “*pardoning iniquity*” (Micah 7:18). He is calling us to become members in the Church of the New Testament, the unique icon of her Groom, to bear the fellowship of the features of her Groom through His exalted grace. This chapter came to present us this

bride, the amazing unique Church, to whom we can refer by the following names:

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|---|-------|
| 1. The mountain of mountains                  | 1.    |
| 2. The people of peoples, and a divine school | 2.    |
| 3. The unique tribunal                        | 3.    |
| 4. The unique paradise                        | 4-5.  |
| 5. The home for the outcasts                  | 6.    |
| 6. The royal throne                           | 7-8.  |
| 7. The congregation of the redeemed           | 9-12. |
| 8. The unconquerable army                     | 13.   |

### 1. THE MOUNTAIN OF MOUNTAINS:

The prophet Micah looks forward to the “fullness of time,” when the Word God incarnates to set out of humanity not a huge mountain like Mount Horeb, where the prophet Moses received the Law, but the Mountain of Mountains, whose top reaches the very heaven. The heavenly One came to set out of the fallen a glorified Church of exalted height, which bears the nationality of her heavenly Groom.

An American kid, proud of his nationality, once wrote a letter to God, in which he said: ‘I am American! What about You?’ He is the heavenly One, who calls every believer to unite with Him and to bear His nationality, so that all can sing together with the apostle Paul, saying: “*He let us all sit together with Him in the heavenly places.*”

***“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow to it” (Micah 4:1)***

What came in verses 1 to 3 almost conforms to what came in the book of Isaiah 2:3-4; and as the two of them were contemporaries, although Isaiah was older than Micah, some assume that the latter quoted from the former. Other scholars, however, believe that both of them quoted from a third source, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

The expression “*in the last days*” has been used by the

prophets to refer to the Messianic era (Hosea 3:5).

- ❖ The prophet Isaiah (2:2) prophesies a glorified and a more extensive appearance, which includes, beside the demolition of idols, the enjoyment by the house of the Lord of the ecumenical status fitting for it. By the mountains and hills, he means not only the wiping out of the errors that dwelt on all through the coming of our Savior when the deceit of idols was exposed, but also the proclamation of the beauty of the truth by which we see the realization of the prophecy. Moreover, by saying: “*In the last days*” he means: “The days that follow the coming of the Lord<sup>1</sup>.”

#### **Theodoret of Cyrus**

Several fathers of the Church, including **St. Cyril the Great<sup>2</sup>**, **St. John Chrysostom**, and **Eusebius of Caesarea<sup>3</sup>**, believe that that glorified generation refers to the Church of the New Testament.

The same thing is said by the apostle Paul: “*When the fullness of the time had come*” (Galatians 4:4); and by Isaiah: “*In the latter days*” or “*In the days to come*” (Isaiah 2:2), referring to the Church and its teachings, well established like a mountain... The amazing thing about the Church is not that it is victorious, but is the way it became as such; despite the fact that it is persecuted, outcast and torn apart in thousands of ways, it did not diminish, but it even became greater. By bearing its passions, it destroys those who strike her, like the diamond struck by iron that exhausts its striker. Portraying it like a mountain means its strength, exaltation, and holding fast.

“*And people shall flow to it*” Notice here how the prophet not only proclaims the call directed to the nations, but also their yearning to respond to this call. He does not say ‘they shall be made to flow,’ but “*they shall flow*”<sup>4</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

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<sup>1</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Isaiah 2:2*.

<sup>2</sup> PG 70:68D.

<sup>3</sup> PG 16:3.

<sup>4</sup> *Commentary on Isaiah 2:2*

- ❖ Is not all humanity ‘one flock’ to God? Is not God Himself the Lord and Shepherd of all nations<sup>1</sup>?

**Tertullian**

The Church rises up to the top of the mountains, namely it reaches up to the highest of heavens, where its heavenly nature unites with the heavenly Head and exalts above the hills beyond all the earthly measures and human thoughts, exalts above all human philosophies, cultures and arts, not being made by human hand, but by the hands of the mighty God Himself.

“*And people shall flow to it*” This does not apply to the Jewish temple, that was shut to the nations; whereas, as far as the Church is concerned, and since the time it has set forth, the Lord Christ told His disciples to “*go and make disciples of all the nations*” (Matthew 28:19).

Some fathers believe that “*the Mountain of the Lord’s house*” is the Lord Christ Himself, who holds fast on the top of the mountains, namely over all prophets. This Mountain is the rock, on which the Church of the New Testament is established.

- ❖ The prophet Micah presents Christ under the symbol of a great Mountain, saying: “*It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house...*” (Micah 4:2-3)<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

## **2. THE PEOPLE OF PEOPLES, AND THE DIVINE SCHOOL:**

The Jews used to assume that there is no salvation for anyone unless he becomes a Jew, and that all the other peoples had no relationship with God, as they are alone the people chosen by Him. They do not realize that God, who chose them to be a holy leaven, has chosen all the peoples to ascend by Christ, who ascends to heavens, to the Lord’s mountain, to heaven itself.

If God sets out of the heart of every believer a holy temple for Himself, it is so that the Law of the New Testament would go forth from Jerusalem, the word of the Lord that draws every tongue

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<sup>1</sup> *Tertullian: On Modesty*

<sup>2</sup> *St. Augustine: City of God 18:30.*

and nation that all would enjoy the Word, the Giver of Life and Resurrection. The Church has become “the people of peoples,” that gathers from all the nations holy and heavenly people.

It is a divine school, whose dean is the unique divine Teacher, who bears His students in Himself and dwells in their depths, so they can gain the fellowship of the divine nature.

***“Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways. And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2)***

The nations will come to the Church of the New Testament, the mountain of the Lord, the house of the God of Jacob, for all to enjoy the prophecies and the symbols that came in the Law about the Lord Christ and His salvation work.

In a message from **Pope Athanasius** to Epictetus, Bishop of Jerusalem, he quoted this phrase to speak about the coming of the incarnate Word of God from Jerusalem, proclaiming that the Word was not transformed to a body, bones and hair, and that His divine nature has not changed by His incarnation<sup>1</sup>.

❖ From here (Jerusalem) every nation in the world has experienced joy; from here came happiness, rejoice and sources of sound thoughts. Here Christ was crucified, and from here the apostles have gone forth... This joy is eternal<sup>2</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ The prophet Micah uses the symbol of the high mountain to speak about the gathering of the nations in Christ (Micah 4:1-3) ... He even told us about the location where Christ will be born (5:2)<sup>3</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

❖ The prophet Micah proclaims that the new Law will be given

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Athanasius: letter 59 to Epictetus, 2.*

<sup>2</sup> *On Ps 48*

<sup>3</sup> *City of God, 18: 30.*



according to the following way: “*Out of Zion the Law shall go forth; and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples; and rebuke many nations afar off*” (Micah 4:2, 3). The first Law, given through Moses, was not given on the Mount of Zion, but on the Mount of Horeb, whose ways ultimately lead to the Son of God, and once everything that the Law (literally) talked about was realized, it would be annulled<sup>1</sup>.

### **Lactantius<sup>2</sup>**

- ❖ When the Prophetic Spirit prophesied about the coming things, He said: “*Out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples; and rebuke many nations afar off. They shall beat their swords into plowshares; and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against other nations; neither shall they learn war any more*”. We can reveal to you that all that have actually materialized, when a group of twelve uneducated and untrained men came out of Jerusalem, yet by the power of God, they testified to Christ to teach everyone the word of God. Now, we, who used to kill one another, will wage war no more, but are ready to die for the sake of confessing Christ<sup>3</sup>.

### **St. Justine**

- ❖ Here you see how they gather together to celebrate the feasts, everyone encouraging the other; everyone became a teacher, not one nation, or two, or even three nations... He says: "Many peoples came together from different nations". That never happened with the Jews, who, if some nations came, they were few proselytes with great difficulty and were never called nations, but outsiders<sup>4</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ The great David says: “*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord*” (Psalm

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<sup>1</sup> *Sibylline Oracle*, 8: 299-300.

<sup>2</sup> *Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, 4: 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Euripides Hippolytus*. اقتبسها من ايريببوس هيپوليتيس ٦١٢

<sup>4</sup> *Commentary on Isaiah 2:2*.

95:1); Micah says: “*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*” (Micah 4:2); and the Savior Himself says: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28); or: “*Let us go, shining with splendor, brighter than snow, whiter than milk, and more shining than rubies*” (Lamentations 4:7)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Gregory the Nazianzus**

- ❖ After experiencing so much troubles, being captivated by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians, this location will be greatly transformed. Huge numbers of people from everywhere, even from the western nations, will hasten to come together to reach the mountain of the Lord, where the Lord dwells exalted overall the other mountains and hills, because of the glory covering it through the divine compassion, where they will learn how to commit themselves to live as it is fitting for them<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Theodore of Mopsuestia**

- ❖ The divine evangelistic preaching will reach the end of the earth according to the prophecy of the Lord in the holy gospels: “*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations*” (Matthew 24:14). He provoked His saintly apostles by His words: “*Go... and make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20). That evangelic Law and apostolic preaching started in Jerusalem, as though from a spring, and reached the whole world presenting fulfillment to those seeking faith<sup>3</sup>.
- ❖ “***Out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.***” Here the prophet speaks about a new Law and a new word; as the old Law was given in Sinai, whereas the Law of the New Testament was given in Zion. The first Law was presented to the Jews alone, whereas the new one was given

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<sup>1</sup> *Oration on the Holy Baptism, 25.*

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on Micah 4: 1-3.*

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on Micah 4: 13.*

to all peoples and nations, to the whole race of mankind. God gave the old Law, not in Zion, but on Mount Sinai. It is clear that he is referring to the New Testament, which He gave first to the apostles, who delivered it to all nations<sup>1</sup>.

**Theodoret of Cyrus**

### **3. THE UNIQUE TRIBUNAL:**

After speaking about the Church as being the well-established mountain of mountains and as a unique school under the divine Teacher, Jesus the Lord of glory, here he speaks to us about it as an amazing and unique tribunal, on which a Judge presides, the Savior of the world; not to destroy and avenge, but to renew by His Holy Spirit the human nature to grant heavenly peace and exalted harmony. Instead of a battle between the soul and the body and between the mind and the human emotions, His exalted peace prevails over the whole being of man to become a 'guitar' of the Spirit that produces a praise of heavenly love proclaiming the realization of a reconciliation with God as well as with men and the heavenly creatures.

***“He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:3)***

- ❖ Since the coming of the Lord, the New Testament brought back peace; and the Law, that grants life to the whole earth, has set forth according to the sayings of the prophets<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Irenaeus**

- ❖ Who would bring peace to men, who used to hate one another, but the Son, beloved to the Father, the Savior of all, Jesus Christ, who, by His love, ordained everything for our salvation? From the old days it was prophesied about the peace He will bring about; the Scripture saying: ***“They shall beat their swords***

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Isaiah 2:3.*

<sup>2</sup> *St. Irenaeus: Against Heresies, 4:34:4.*

*into plowshares”<sup>1</sup>.*

#### **Pope Athanasius, the Apostolic**

What are these swords, but the emotions, feelings and energies, with which we used to kill ourselves and those attached to us? But through the spiritual peace granted to us by the Savior, all these energies would be transformed into shares for the plows of our souls that work through our hearts to uproot the stones and thorns, and to turn our inner wilderness into a spiritual paradise, filled with the fruits of the Spirit. Man will no more practice war against his fellow man, but will enjoy peace without fear (Zechariah 3:10).

#### **4. THE UNIQUE PARADISE:**

God has planted the Garden of Eden for man and his children to live under the tree of life to eat, to be fulfilled, to sit, and to find comfort in the Lord. But man soon drove himself out of the garden to live in the valley of tears, moaning under the burden of sin, which he has chosen by his complete free will, to become a slave to it. Now, as our Christ has come, He set His Church a joyful divine paradise for His children (those of the Second Adam) to live in, where the believer sits under the vine and finds rest under the fig tree. Who is this Vine, but the Lord Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, the Source of true joy, the Wine of the New Testament? And who is this Fig Tree, but the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life, who binds the believers together like the seeds of a fig to give a sweet taste covered by the skin of unity, which embraces the seeds inside?

It is a unique paradise, in which we eat and drink the Lord's body and blood, and get fulfilled by His Holy Spirit, the living water!

***“But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid. For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken” (Micah 4:4)***

Sitting in the shade is a symbolic expression referring to peace and happiness of the nation (See 1 Kings 4:25; Zechariah

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<sup>1</sup> *The Incarnation of the Word, NPNF, Vol. 4, p. 64.*

3:10), based on the custom prevailing in the East at that time, for man to search for a joyful shade under a vine or a fig tree<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ The book of the Song of Solomon refers to the vine and the fig tree when it says: “*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, or by the roes of the field. Do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases*” (Songs 2:7 LXX). This is the field of righteousness filled with peace, about which the Lord speaks in the Psalm: “*everything that moves in the field is Mine*” (Psalm 50:11 LXX). In this field there is the vine that produces the blood that cleanses and purifies the world. In it there is the tree, under which the saints sit to rest and to be renewed by a good spiritual grace. In it there is the fruitful olive tree, which is crushed to produce the oil of the Lord’s peace. And in this field the trees of pomegranate flourish (Songs 8:2). Shades of many fruitful trees in the bosom of the one faith, which provides the warmth of love<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Ambrose**

- ❖ In many locations the vine refers to the Lord Himself (John 15:1); and the fig tree to the Holy Spirit; as the Lord “*rejoices the hearts of men,*” and the Holy Spirit heals them. King Hezekiah was instructed to have a lump of figs (namely of the fruits of the Spirit) to be laid on his boils to recover. The apostle Paul says that this healing starts by love. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23). The prophet calls these spiritual fruits “fig trees”, saying: “*Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no man shall make them afraid*” (Micah 4:4). Surely, whoever resorts to the Spirit and finds comfort under it and under the shade of the Word, will never be afraid or terrified by him, who causes troubles to the human heart<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Freeman: *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, 1972, article 613.

<sup>2</sup> *Jacob and the Happy Life*, 2: 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Banquet on the Ten Virgins* 10: 5.

## Methodius

- ❖ In the book of Genesis we read that *“God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed”* (Genesis 2:8). Who has the ability to create a paradise, but the mighty God, who *“spoke, and it was done”* (Psalm 33:9), who was in no need for what He brought into existence? He planted this paradise, of which He speaks in His wisdom: *“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted”* (Matthew 15:13). It is a good plantation, under whose vine and fig trees the angels and the saints find rest in the peace to come<sup>1</sup>.

## St. Ambrose

***“For all people walk, each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever”***  
(Micah 4:5)

Those who walk in the name of the Lord will have eternal peace.

- ❖ Those who love to ascend the mountain of the Lord and wish to learn His ways shall prepare themselves with obedience to gain the glories of life in Christ, and pledge with all their strength to be wholly, zealous in holiness. He says: "In every town and city, everyone walks the way he chooses, and worships whomever he finds good for him". But, as far as we are concerned, our only interest is in Christ, whose Law we make our upright way, and along which we walk together with Him, not only in this present world or the past one, but in what is beyond. It is a truthful saying: *“If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him”* (See 2 Timothy 2:11-12; Romans 8:17). But those, who prefer nothing to the love of Christ, would make Him their interest, would avoid the distraction of this vain world and would rather seek the righteousness adopting the virtues. An example of those was the apostle Paul, who wrote: *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is*

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<sup>1</sup> On Paradise 1: 2.

*no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20); and also: “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2)<sup>1</sup>.*

**St. Cyril, the Great**

## **5. THE HOUSE FOR THE OUTCASTS:**

The incarnate Wisdom of God was accused of being witless and thus was driven out of the camp to be crucified outside Jerusalem. There, He stretched His arms to embrace everyone crushed, wounded, broken and outcast. He is the Lord of the outcasts. He was rejected by His own people to receive in Himself those, who have no place to put their heads. He is the father of the orphans, the Judge of the widows, the support for the persecuted and the refuge of those, who have no one to care for them.

***“In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame; I will gather the outcast, and those I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and the outcast a strong nation” (Micah 4:6)***

Here he prophesies about the return from captivity, as the nation has become an outcast. After chastisement, the Lord will get the outcast back and will heal their wounds. The outcast will become a chosen remnant; the strong people of God (Isaiah 37:32; 46:3; Jeremiah 23:3; Amos 5:15).

## **6. THE ROYAL THRONE:**

The prophet Ezekiel marveled when he saw the dry bones becoming an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37:10). It is every day’s revelation, as the Lord Christ sets out of the weak, the ignorant and the outcasts a great tower that accommodates the flock and protects it against the fierce wolves; a great summit over which the serpent cannot crawl to strike with its fangs the heads of the children of God; and a royal throne, on which the King of kings sits to reign over the heavenly daughter of Jerusalem -His holy church.

❖ Now, it is clear that no one in the whole world can put the fear into us or can submit us, we who believe in Jesus. Despite being beheaded, crucified, cast to the fierce beasts, chained, burned

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah 2:4:5.*

and bear all kinds of torture, we shall never deny the creed of our faith. The more we are persecuted, the more will be those who receive the faith and who become worshippers of God in the name of Jesus. It is like when a branch of the fruitful vine is cut off, it will grow again and produce other fruitful branches. The same happens with Christians; the vine is planted by God, and Christ is the Savior of His people. But the rest of the prophecy will be realized with the second coming. The prophet Micah says: ***“I will assemble the lame; I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted.”*** This refers to the fact, that you do not have the last word when you, and all the other people who have the authority, cast away every Christian not only from his possessions, but even from the whole world; you, who do not allow any Christian to live<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Justine, the Martyr**

***“I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation. So the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion, from now on, even forever. And you, O (dark) tower of the flock; the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem”*** (Micah 4:7-8)

Regaining a greater and stronger splendor, Jerusalem will become like a high tower, from which the good Shepherd will guard His flock.

❖ *“And you, O (dark) tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come”* These words refer to the incredulous king Zedekiah, whom the prophet calls ‘a tower,’ because the people of Judah lived under his shadow. He calls him ‘a shepherd,’ because he reigned over the kingdom; and calls him ‘dark,’ because of the idolatry, to which he attached himself. The devil is called a ‘dark shepherd’ as well, as he symbolically always attacked the daughter of Zion under a dark heaven; and once he catches her, he draws her away from the light -Yes, he who walks with deceit hates the light. But finally,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho, 110.*



the exalted and legal Prince of Jerusalem has destroyed that tyrant by His coming and drove that dark shepherd away<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Ephram the Syrian**

## **7. THE CONGREGATION OF THE REDEEMED:**

If the Church is subjected to continuous persecutions and looks as though captivated, yet her Redeemer Groom will save her from her enemy the same way He brought the old people out of Egypt saving them from the servitude of the Pharaoh, and the same way He brought His people back from the captivity of Babylon by an amazing and strong hand.

As the Jews' interpretation of God's promise to King David, that his seed will reign forever and that Judah will always have a king of David's seed, the talk of the prophet Micah about a Babylonian captivity, a century and a half before it happened, came to be very terrifying; especially that the false prophets were proclaiming and confirming, in smooth words, God's protection of the city of Jerusalem, its unique temple and the endurance of the kingdom of David of the tribe of Judah.

***“Now, why do you cry out loud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor. Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city. You shall dwell in the field, and you shall go even to Babylon. There you shall be delivered; there the Lord will redeem you from the hands of your enemies” (Micah 4:9-10)***

Salvation will be realized through chastisement, as God allows for Jerusalem to become without a king, like a woman in labor who is in pain to deliver a new child. Judah was committed to be captivated to Babylon, then to be brought back to enjoy freedom and a return to the Promised Land.

❖ Moan in pain, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor: *“For now, you shall go forth from the city. You shall dwell in the field (the wilderness). And shall go even to Babylon; There you shall*

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah.*

*be delivered.*” The meaning is that you, the people of Zion will be captivated to Babylon and after several years you will return from there not by the hand of a soldier, but by that of a Leader who, by His ascension to heaven, will carry His captives to follow Him, holding hands together with their brethren and with the leaders of our army who captivate all minds to the account of Christ<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Ephram the Syrian**

***“Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, ‘let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion’” (Micah 4:11)***

Looking upon the captivated Jerusalem under chastisement the pagan nations, being ignorant of God’s plans, thoughts and counsel, mocked her and gloated for her misery anticipating her destruction.

All nations will gather together against God and His people in a decisive battle (Joel 3; Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 12; Revelation 20:8; etc.).

- ❖ Zion’s holy place will be defiled and greatly despised by many nations gathering against her under the leadership of ‘Gog’. Zion will be defiled; the holy place of Zion will severely despised by those, who are not aware that they will eventually be treaded upon by God’s justice like sheaves of hay on a threshing floor<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Ephram the Syrian**

***“But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor” (Micah 4:12)***

The prophet requests from us not to seek knowledge of future events just to satisfy our curiosity, but to recognize God’s intentions and plans concerning us.

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah.*

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on Micah.*

## **8. THE UNCONQUERABLE ARMY:**

The prophet David looked at the Groom of the Church, whose beauty surpasses that of mankind, and saw Him a Leader carrying His sword on His thigh coming out to conquer. The bride of this victorious Leader, likewise, has an iron horn and bronze hooves; it will crush the army of devils underneath her feet and will present the Lord with many souls as a true exalted wealth.

***“Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze. You shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth” (Micah 4:13)***

Now he presents us with an ultimate conquest to crush the devil, our enemy, and turn all events to the glory of the Lord.

❖ I will make your horn that was broken by the Babylonians an iron horn to crush with it many nations, to *“consecrate their gain to the Lord.”* This will happen after you possess their riches and after you give the tithes for the whole land to the Lord. As I said, God revealed the sign of that great prosperity to the Jews who returned from captivity; and kept this same thing for His Church<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Ephram the Syrian**

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah.*

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 4

### YOU MADE YOUR PEOPLE A WONDER

- ❖ Who is like You, O Lord, a Forgiver of sins and a Grantor of the kingdom?  
You made Your Church a wonder!  
And proclaimed Your might in me, as a member in Your unique Church.
- ❖ You set out of me, the weak and broken,  
A mighty mountain with its head in heaven.  
You counted me as Your mighty mountain, the object of pleasure to the heavenly creatures.  
You, the King of kings, and the Lord of Lords.  
You counted me as the mountain of mountains, extremely high.  
You counted me in Your holy church!
- ❖ As a heavenly Teacher, You have set the Church as a unique school.  
Which embraces students from every nation, people, and tongue.  
I became a member in it, learning the language of heaven from You.  
By my fellowship with You, O Love, I speak the language of heavenly love.  
My soul praises You; as no fear would come to me.  
In Your Church -the icon of heaven- I will not suffer lack of relationships.  
As everyone speaks the language of love,  
No one will suffer from an ignorance of this language or an inability to speak it.  
How amazing You are, O heavenly Teacher!  
You carried me in You; And I carry You in me.  
You are in my heart, as well as in my mouth; to utter Your name all the time.
- ❖ I would no more covet the Garden of Eden like my father Adam.  
As You set for me a divine paradise.  
In which I pluck from You the grapes of joy, O divine Vine!

I pluck sweet and fulfilling figs from Your Holy Spirit.  
You have turned my depths into Your paradise.  
I behold You together with Your Father and Your Holy Spirit,  
the Source of my joy.

- ❖ I will never moan from the oppression prevailing in the world.  
I behold You, cast out of the camp;  
I find glory in being cast out together with You, to bear Your cross.
- ❖ You stretch Your hands on the cross,  
To embrace those who have no place in the hearts of others.  
To draw the poor, O You, who became poor to make us rich.  
To draw those who suffer, O You, who was crucified to turn the  
passion of love into an exalted sweetness.  
To embrace the lost, O You, who became the Way, that will  
bring us to the divine bosom.  
To receive the outcast to grant them a fellowship in the heavenly  
glories.
- ❖ How often has my soul felt repugnance, because of the lusts of  
my body!  
How often has my depths moaned, because of vain thoughts!  
How often has my heart cried out, because of my licentious  
emotions!  
To You is the glory, O You, who sanctifies my whole being.  
You took a body, to make me proud of Your sanctifying my  
body.  
You granted me Your Holy Spirit to control my thoughts.  
You sanctified my emotions and consecrated them a throne for  
Your love.  
You set in my depths Your heavenly kingdom.  
You turned my heart into Your splendid throne.
- ❖ Why do you moan in me, O my soul? Have hope in the  
Redeemer Lord.  
The Pharaoh has no authority to enslave me.  
Nor Babylon has the ability to bring me into captivity.  
My Redeemer is the Liberator of my soul, the Grantor of

conquest to my depths.

- ❖ I behold Satan falling like lightening from heaven.  
He has no place in me, after the Redeemer has turned me into a heaven.  
I shall not preoccupy my mind with you, Satan.  
You have no place other than under my feet.  
My Savior has given me authority over you, O weak devil.
- ❖ My soul will no more mourn.  
As my heavenly Groom has set a glorified Church out of me.  
He made me, the dry bones, a very very great army.  
The glory is Yours, O Groom of the Church, her Savior, and her Leader.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **WHO IS LIKE YOU**

### **A DIVINE SHEPHERD?**

In the fourth chapter he proclaims the setting of a spiritual glorified kingdom; the Catholic Church; the spiritual unique paradise; the spiritual army of God that the forces of darkness cannot conquer. But how could this Church be set? By the Savior, who has the authority over the new spiritual Israel; the One born in Bethlehem; the divine Shepherd, who is glorified to the end of the earth.

The prophet Micah started his book by prophesying about the captivation of Samaria and Jerusalem and the extent of devastation that would dwell on the two kingdoms because of their

persistence on evil. Then he introduces a new kingdom, the Church of the New Testament, and speaks about the wickedness and the corruption of the leaders that became the cause of bitterness to the two kingdoms. And now, instead of the wicked leaders, he prophesies about a unique Leader, the King Messiah, and the Good Shepherd.

<b>1. A falling reign</b>	<b>1.</b>
<b>2. The birth of the eternal King</b>	<b>2-3.</b>
<b>3. A capable Shepherd</b>	<b>4.</b>
<b>4. An active shepherding</b>	<b>5-6.</b>
<b>5. An ecumenical extension of shepherding</b>	<b>7.</b>
<b>6. A victorious shepherding</b>	<b>8-15.</b>

### **1. A FALLING REIGN:**

*“Now, gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek” (Micah 4:5)*

The enemies of Zion, who longed to have victory over Israel and Judah, are called by a divine allowance to lay siege against all their cities to chasten His people.

The prophet Micah turns to what would dwell on Israel that would be captivated by Assyria, whereas Judah, after holding fast against the repetitive sieges of Assyria, would be captivated in stages culminated by Babylon in the days of king Zedekieh, then it would be utterly devastated on the hands of the Roman Titus in the year 70 AD.

The king, the nobles and the religious leaders were preoccupied with riches and authority assuming that they are secure within the strong walls of Jerusalem, not aware that it would be put under siege, destroyed, and its judge or king Zedekieh would be incapable of protecting it. Zedekieh was the last king of the seed of David to sit on the throne of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar took it over (2 Kings 25:1).

- ❖ He says that Samaria will be put under siege by the enemy, who will not only strike her cheek by their heads, which would be bearable, but they will crush it with rods, which is especially

cruel. This refers here to the miserable and insulting calamity of captivity. There is no doubt that striking on the cheeks is especially humiliating, but note here that they will also crush it with rods, causing severe troubles besides humiliation. Samaria was humiliated and disgraced when ruled by the tribe of Ephraim. Anyways, the striking hands would stop and our misery would come to an end, if we do our best to have God's wrath lifted; the wrath that dwelt on us because of our rebellion and our eagerness to commit sins, which is hated by God. If we honor Him by leading a good life, we would enjoy prosperity and a commendable joyful life<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Cyril, the Great**

Some believe that the prophet Micah addresses here the army of Titus, the Roman Leader, who put Jerusalem under siege and struck its Judge Jesus, the Lord of Glory, on His cheek and insulted Him, saying: 'Prophesy, who struck You!'

## **2. THE BIRTH OF THE ETERNAL KING:**

***“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2)***

As king Zedekiah could not protect Jerusalem and was helpless to save it, an amazing King would come out of a small village, thought to be little among the thousands of villages of Judah; an eternal King would enter into human history, who can save to perfection. The first king dies in shame and disgrace, whereas the second King will reign to eternity in heaven with an everlasting kingdom.

The expression: ***“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”*** applies only to the Lord Christ, being the One eternally born as the only begotten Son of the Father. That is why he says: ***“Before Abraham was, I AM”*** (John 8:58). And the Psalmist says: ***“Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God”*** (Psalm 90:2).

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah 5:1 PG 71:709-712.*



Some may probably say: ‘How could he say: “*the One to be Ruler in Israel*”, when Israel condemned Him to be crucified. He did not set Himself a King over Israel? He proclaimed: “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36); He reigned over the new Israel, the holy Church, being: “*Head over all things to the Church*” (Ephesians 1:22). He, who demonstrated His authority over nature, over death, and over sickness, could He not be able to reign over Israel? When they intended to set Him a King, He passed through them unseen.

If both Israel and Judah fall into captivity, yet the true reform would come on the hand of the One born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born in that humble location, in a village belonging to His ancestor the great King David.

Some tried to refer this prophecy to ‘Zerubbabel’, a reference rejected by **St. John Chrysostom**, who says that on the one hand the prophet does not say: ‘the one living in Bethlehem,’ but, “*Out of you shall come...*”, and on another hand Zerubbabel’s goings forth have not been “*from of old, from everlasting*” This applies only to Jesus Christ, the everlasting Word<sup>1</sup>.

In a debate between **the scholar Tertullian** and the Jews, he quoted this prophecy, which was literally realized in the Person of Jesus Christ, stating that now there is no one from the tribe of Judah, from Bethlehem, anymore for the prophecy to be realized in someone else<sup>2</sup>.

❖ Peace be on Bethlehem ‘the house of bread’, “*where the living bread which came down from heaven was born*” (John 6:51); Peace be on Ephrathah, the land of fruition and fertility, whose fruit is the Lord Himself. In the old Micah prophesied about you, saying: “*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah ...*” (see also Matthew 2:6); as from you shall come the Ruler, born before Lucifer and whose birth is from the Father before time; and in you the race of David persisted until the Virgin gave birth to her Son; and to

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<sup>1</sup> *St. John Chrysostom: the Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 7:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *Tertullian: An Answer to the Jews, 13.*

you the remnant of the people who believed in Christ returned to preach freely to the children of Israel with such words: “*It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the gentiles*” (Acts 13:46)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ The truth, as revealed and written about Jesus Christ, was that “*He, the rich, became poor.*” That is why He chose for Himself to be born in a poor place and by a poor mother<sup>2</sup>.

**Origen**

- ❖ It is not the ‘Divinity’ who came from Bethlehem, but the ‘Manhood’. It did not stop at that, but the Divinity set forth from there according to the words: “*Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*”<sup>3</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ By designating the location of Bethlehem the Jews were like those, who built the arc of Noah, providing others with a way to escape, while they themselves perished in the great flood; and like the sign which shows the way, but unable to go along it. When they were asked where the Christ was to be born they answered: “*In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet*” (Matthew 2:5), quoting what is said by Micah: “*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel*” (Matthew 2:6)<sup>4</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ In you, O Bethlehem, He, who has been before time, who has been with God since the beginning, who is God the Word, accepted to be born in flesh to make you famous and shining, although you are not of such importance among the thousands of

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<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome: Letter 108:10.

<sup>2</sup> Homilies on Leviticus Homily 8: 4:3.

<sup>3</sup> On Ps 45.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon 373:4.

Judah<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ The blessed apostle Paul, as well as the evangelist Matthew, reminds us of how Judah reached perfection, saying: *“It is evident that our Lord arose from the tribe of Judah”* (Hebrew 7:14). The first prophesied, while the second connected the prophecy to His episode. It is amazing how the enemies of truth clearly told Herod that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, as according to Scripture: *“You, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler, Who will shepherd My people Israel”* (Matthew 2:5-6), but let us state here what the Jews, because of their envy, have omitted from the prophecy, as the prophet says: ***“Out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel,”*** he added, ***“whose goings forth have been from of old”*** (Micah 5:2)<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ By saying: *“Out of you shall come a Ruler”*, he demonstrates the ordainment of incarnation; and by adding: *“whose goings forth have been from of old”*, he proclaims His divinity that He is born from the Father before time<sup>3</sup>.

#### Theodoret of Cyrus

***“Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel”*** (Micah 4:3).

The Lord allowed them the affliction to let them anticipate His coming, born by a virgin according to the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah, a contemporary to the prophet Micah, who designated the location of His birth.

By the coming of the Savior King the believing remnant will return to set the Church of the New Testament, the New Israel. **This holy remnant** that accept the Savior Messiah will walk according to the spirit of the fathers, the saintly men of God; and thus *“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children”*

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Micah.*

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogues I.*

<sup>3</sup> *Letters, 151.*

(Malachi 4:6).

Some believe that the “*remnant*” here refers not only to the believers from the Jews, but to those from the gentiles as well; all of them will join the citizenship of the ‘*New Israel*’ according to the words of the apostle Paul: “*And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to those who were near, for through Him we both will have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:17-19).

Gathering the Jews together with the gentiles in one faith, “*He is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Hebrew 2:11).

❖ He discerns between “*those afar off and those who are near*” (Ephesians 2:17); the Jews are definitely the ones “*near,*” while the gentiles are those “*afar off*”. Yet the Savior Himself brought the gospel to the gentiles. The apostle here refers to the fact that Christ, by His coming, has truly preached peace to those afar off, namely to the gentiles as it is clearly shown by several testimonies that those, who came to faith from a gentile origin had greater worthiness to be called children than those from a Jewish origin. However, we cannot deny that the others have got that as well, that is why he added “*and those who are near*”<sup>1</sup>.

Marius Victorianus

### 3. A CAPABLE SHEPHERD:

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

He Himself shall take over the task of shepherding in the name of God the Father, having the one will. The name of the Lord Jesus will be glorified and will reach the end of the earth.

The prophet sees in this King, the Lord Christ, a good

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<sup>1</sup> *Marius victorinus: Epistle to the Ephesians 10: 2: 17.*

ماريوس فيكتورينوس (حوالي ٢٨٠-٣٥٥م): عالم نحو قام بترجمة أعمال الأفلاطونيين، وإذ قبل الإيمان مؤخرًا (حوالي ٣٥٥م) استخدم ذلك ضد الأريوسيين.

Shepherd for His people of whom it is said: “*He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Matthew 7:9).

- ❖ The authority by which He taught greatly astonished them, and because they were overjoyed by what He told them, Jesus asked them not to leave until He finishes His talk. After He came down from the mountain the congregation stayed with Him and followed Him because of the great love revealed in His talk. What astonished them more is that, in His talk, He referred to no one else the way the prophet Moses did, but in every occasion He demonstrates that He is the One with authority to take decisions; to every statute He mentions the words: “*But I say to you*” (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). When He reminds them of the ultimate Day of Judgment, He demonstrates that He is the one to realize justice, both by punishments and rewards; something that greatly disturbed them<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

Before His ascension Jesus said to His disciples: “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*” (Matthew 28:18).

If the kings of both kingdoms, Israel and Judah, together with their princes and armies could not protect them, the divine Shepherd will certainly guarantee the peace of His kingdom and will keep His people not against Assyria and Babylon, but against the devil and all the forces of darkness.

He is the amazing Shepherd who sets shepherds and grants them Himself to work in them and by them until the perfect peace is realized through His holy sacrifice.

#### **4. AN ACTIVE SHEPHERDING:**

***“And this Man shall be the peace. When the Assyrians come into our land, and tread in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princely men”*** (Micah 5:5).

The two verses 5 and 6 are a piece of poetry of ten verses, which portrays the Assyrian invasion against which seven

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Matthew, homily 25: 1.*

shepherds and eight princes are designated to counter and cause the enemy to retreat defeated to his land. Those princes unite together and one leader will appear to save them from Assyria.

The Lord Christ is called "*Peace*" (Ephesians 2:14), as He realizes peace between man and God the Father; between the soul and the body; peace among men as well as among nations. **St. Hippolytus** of Rome believes that Assyria refers here to the anti-Christ<sup>1</sup>.

Assyria has been the most dangerous enemy in those days; and here it refers to the devil, the enemy of man, the opponent to the Church of Christ, who will definitely be defeated and victory will be for the Church of Christ.

Who are the seven shepherds and the eight princes appointed by the new King from among men? The figure 7 refers to perfection in this world and the figure 8 refers to entering into what is beyond the time and to crossing over to eternity. It is fitting for the ministers of Christ to be perfect shepherds in the Lord, and heavenly kings not drawn by the glory and the riches of the world. Their Law is the 'divine peace' and the Lord Himself is their peace, according to the words of the Lord Christ to His disciples: "*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).

The devil would never stop attacking our inner land by every way possible to take it for him by force, and to turn it into a kingdom of darkness instead of a kingdom of light. He would never stop hoping to be able to tread on our palaces, to defile our hearts which are the temple of God and in which the Spirit of God dwells. There will always be war between God and the devil and the battle field will be in our inner depths. If we accept His care, we shall surely enjoy His conquest.

The prophet Isaiah portrayed the work of this King Shepherd and His care through His ministers, saying: "*Behold, a King will reign in righteousness; and princes will rule with justice; a man will be as hiding place from the wind*" (Isaiah 32:1-2). It is

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<sup>1</sup> St. Hippolytus of Rome: *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 57.

as though this heavenly King, who became a Man, has opened Himself for us to hide in Him when the winds and storms of the devil violently blow against us! He is our stronghold and our refuge in the midst of temptations.

**Theodoret of Cyrus** demonstrates in his interpretation of Isaiah 32:1, that this text does not apply to Hezekiah, Josiah, or Zerubbabel, saying: [We should understand that our Lord Christ is the King, and the saintly apostles and their successors are the princes having been ordained to guide the Churches, of whom the blessed David proclaimed: *“Instead of your fathers, shall be your sons; whom you shall make princes in all the earth”* (Psalm 45:16)].

❖ It seems to me that he refers to the apostles, who became teachers in the Church, and concerning their authority, power, and glory, he says: *“You shall make princes in all the earth”* (Psalm 45:16). Remember how the apostles went to all corners of the earth and how they became princes of more authority than all the other rulers and emperors. Those emperors have authority only while alive, and then have no authority after death, whereas the apostles had authority while alive, and had more after their death. The laws of the emperors only apply within the borders of their land, whereas those of the fishermen apostles covered every corner of the earth. The Roman emperor could not issue laws for the Persians, nor could the Persians do for the Romans, whereas those Palestinians issued laws to the Romans, the Persians, the Scythians, the Indians, the Moroccans, and the peoples of the whole world. Their laws continued to be effective not only while they were alive, but after their death as well; and those who submit to those laws prefer to die rather than to forsake them<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

*“They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrud at its entrances; thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrians, when he comes into our land and when he treads*

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps 45.

***within our borders” (Micah 5:6).***

The land of Nimrud is another name for Assyria; and here it refers to all the wicked nations.

**Fr. Victorinus, Bishop of Petao** believes that Nimrud refers to the anti-Christ and that the Lord Christ sends 7 shepherds, the great seven Archangels, to strike the kingdom of the anti-Christ<sup>1</sup>.

If the enemy enters our land and treads within our borders, then through the care of the Lord Christ, and His care through His apostles, the battle will turn to our benefit, the kingdom of the devil will collapse as though by a sword and we shall escape from his grasp, saying together with the Savior: *“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

## **5. AN ECUMENICAL EXTENSION OF THE SHEPHERDING:**

***“Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord; like showers on the grass; that tarry for no man; nor wait for the sons of men” (Micah 5:7).***

Having talked of the good Shepherd, who has chosen His disciples and apostles to work through them and of how the battle has turned to a victory for us and a defeat for the kingdom of the devil, the prophet presents us with an amazing portrait of the Church and its work on the ecumenical level.

It is ***“the few remnant of Jacob”*** that received faith in the Lord Christ and enjoyed the dwelling of His Holy Spirit on them on the day of the Pentecost to become the leaven for the whole dough. They set forth ***“in the midst of many peoples”*** working with the Spirit of the Lord for the salvation of many from all nations, tongues, and peoples, and scattering among the world to become its salt and light, by which the spiritual kingdom of Christ is established.

Being ***“dew from the Lord”*** they do not work with a human prejudiced mind, but with a heavenly mind *“like dew from the Lord”*; and being born from above, they present the heavenly things

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<sup>1</sup> *Victorinus of Petau: Commentary on Apocalypse, from seventh chapter, 8.*



wishing for all to share with them the sweetness of the new heavenly life.

They are *“like showers on the grass that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men”*, namely they do not depend on human support, but on the free grace of God. They water others with the water of the Spirit as a heavenly rain from the Lord *“that tarry for no man”*.

Speaking of the new flock under the care of the divine Shepherd, he proclaims the spiritual conquest filled with sweetness. The Church becomes *“like dew from the Lord”* to the world and *“like summer showers on the grass”*, beautiful, delicate, refreshing, and shining.

The remnant of Jacob is the spiritual Israel, namely the congregation of true believers, who become like divine dew, the secret of blessing and growth for many. These blessings do not come from men, but *“from the Lord”*.

## **6. A VICTORIOUS SHEPHERDING:**

*“And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver” (Micah 5:8)*

In this phrase he portrays the Church in its delicateness toward the peoples presenting the living fellowship with God, yet is powerful in spirit and destroys the strongholds of darkness.

The prophet likens the believers to the dew which peacefully refreshes the plant as well as like showers that irrigates the fields, and now he likens them to lions among the beasts of the forest, feared by all.

The believer is characterized by pure love coming from his depths, as the gift of the Holy Spirit to him, as well as by firmness against evil, iniquity, and corruption. That is why the apostle Paul provokes his disciple Timothy to strive as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The Lord Christ refers to the power of the believers in the truth, saying: *“... which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist”* (Luke 21:15); and the apostle Paul, speaking

of the opposition of the believers against the devil and his hosts, says: *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

***“Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries; and all your enemies shall be cut off”* (Micah 5:9).**

Conquest shall be realized for the new Israel to become like a lion and a capable warrior, who can destroy his spiritual enemies. This battle is consummated when God puts the enemies under the feet of Christ, the Head of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:25-28).

The Psalmist, seeing the multitude of demons collapsing before the Church, praises saying: *“The peoples fall under you”* (Psalm 45:5).

***“And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, that I will cut off your horses from your midst, and destroy your chariots”* (Micah 5:10).**

When the Lord dwells and reigns in the heart, the believer becomes in no need for a military might, but for the great power of God. He can then strongly say: *“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me”* (Psalm 23:4).

As the secret of the power of the Church is the mighty Lord and not the human arm nor the human ability, the Lord cuts off the horses from her midst and destroys her chariots to let her enjoy the Spirit of the Lord, who lifts her from glory to glory, and to make her walk through the world as though riding on a fiery chariot.

The Church -the new Israel- **enjoys the following divine blessings:**

1. He will cut off the material tools of war, the horses and the chariots [10] so that the Church would only depend upon the exalted grace of God. *“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem”* (Zechariah 9:10).

2. He will cut off from her the earthly cities to grant her heavenly cities; He will destroy her temporal strongholds to become her fiery wall [11].

3. He will cut off the vain worships with all its sorceries and soothsayers [12].

4. He will cut off every idol in the heart, so that the Lord can set His throne in it and completely occupy it [13].

5. The devil and his hosts will fall under the divine wrath [15].

***“I will cut off the cities of your land, and throw down all your strongholds” (Micah 5:11).***

The Lord will cut off from His Church her land turning her into a second heaven, where He dwells; and throws down all her temporal strongholds, to become a fiery wall around her. It is as though her cities would turn from military strongholds into cities for habitation, which will be guarded by the Lord being *“her rock, her fortress, and her deliverer”* (Psalm 18:2).

***“I will cut off witchcrafts from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst” (Micah 5:12-13).***

The Lord will cut off from her every sorcery and soothsaying claiming to prophesy future events by the power of Satan; and will open her eyes by His Holy Spirit to recognize the divine secrets instead of the satanic works.

***“And you shall no more worship the work of your hands. I will pluck off your groves from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities” (Micah 5:13-14).***

The Lord will pluck off the groves, the wooden images, the symbols of Asheroth the goddess of the Canaanites.

***“And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard” (Micah 5:15).***

He ends his talk by warning those who reject faith in the Savior the Shepherd of souls. They will fall under His wrath and would not enjoy His heavenly blessings.

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 5

### WHO WILL CARE FOR ME BUT YOU?

- ❖ I wonder who will care for my soul, but You?  
No one would love me and deliver Himself for me except You!  
The care of humans without you is destruction for my soul.  
Your care is unique and amazing.
- ❖ You came to me in Bethlehem to make it the house of heavenly bread.  
Whoever eats it would never get hungry.  
And whoever drinks from Your love would never thirst again.  
You came to us, O You old in days and eternal!  
To carry me with You to Your eternity.
- ❖ You were born from a virgin, O the Creator of the world.  
And made me, I servant, a little brother.  
And granted me sonship to Your mighty Father.
- ❖ You chose for Yourself disciples and apostles.  
You set of them princes and shepherds to carry the spirit of Your care.  
I see You in them.  
And enjoy Your amazing work through them.  
You granted them an authority over the forces of darkness.  
Through You they crushed the devil under their feet.
- ❖ You granted them Your Holy Spirit to shepherd Your people.  
They drew souls from all nations, tongues and peoples.  
They became for the world like the dew that gave fatherly compassion.  
Like the showers that turns the desert into a heavenly garden.
- ❖ They became like sheep among wolves.  
Devouring them, the wolves turn into mild sheep.  
You granted them the spirit of strength to confront vanity.  
And they became lions that have no fear.
- ❖ By Your shepherding You granted Your people an exalted

peace.

You have cut off their horses from their midst and destroyed their chariots.

Having become for them a heavenly fiery wall to protect them; You have cut off every sorcery and soothsaying from their midst.

You have instead revealed to them the secrets of Your heavens. How an amazing divine Shepherd You are!

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **A TRIBUNAL OF TWO SESSIONS**

### **WHO WILL BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE**

### **YOU?**

#### **LET US DEBATE!**

God, who granted man the freedom to become an icon of Him, deals with him as equals. He sets a tribunal and asks His people to enter into a debate with Him in the presence of the mountains that are silent and well established over the human history. He presents the case and requests from His people to proclaim frankly how the Lord has wearied them.

He reminds them of His dealings along the history to let them again enjoy His divine love and bear His righteousness.

In His debate He proclaims that He seeks nothing from the

believer; He is in no need of his worship or of his offerings, but He seeks him, in person, to become His living icon. Although He does not despise his sacrifices and offerings, yet they are not a goal by themselves. It is fitting for the believer in his humility, as he is attached to his God, to present his heart for God to dwell in it together with his offerings.

Finally, in seeking the believer's heart, He refuses to let evil dwell in it as well lest his wounds would become un-healable.

God presents His case against His stubborn people in two sessions requesting their response:

1. **The first session**                      **1-8.**
2. **The second session**                **9-16.**

## **1. THE FIRST SESSION:**

***“Hear now what the Lord says, ‘Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice’” (Micah 6:1).***

God instructs the prophet Micah to arise and proclaim the pleading against the stubborn people, asking the mountains and the hills to listen and to follow up the proceedings.

The two chapters 6 and 7 portray a court of justice, where the Lord gives His people the opportunity to repent before the great day of justice dwells upon them.

The prophet Micah confirms that what he is uttering is not his own, but what he is instructed by the holy Lord to say. Thus it is fitting for them to hear and to listen.

God calls on the mountains and the hills to testify against His people, who built pagan altars over the heights, and who offered sacrifices to foreign and vain gods (1 Kings 14:23; Jeremiah 17:2, 3; Hezekiel 20:27-28). It is as though He is pleading His case against the inhabitants of those mountains and hills, who were engaged in idolatry.

***“Hear, O mountains, the Lord’s complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will plead with Israel” (Micah 6:2).***

*“He cries aloud, and spare not” (Isaiah 58:1) to let the*

foundations of the earth hear him, as the issue is very serious. If the peoples' hearts have become as solid as rocks, God is calling the rocks of the earth to listen and to rebuke His people, because Israel has ears, yet they do not hear.

***“The Lord has a complaint against His people”***. Because giving God the back is a sin causing a contention with God, the apostle Paul says: *“When we were enemies we were reconciled with God”* (Romans 5:10).

If sin in general causes a contention with the Holy One, who does not stand sin, it would be much more serious if it comes from His people and children, whom He wants to be holy to Him (Leviticus 20:26) as He is holy.

***“He will contend with Israel”***; interpreted by some as *‘He will debate with Israel’*, to confirm to them His gift of ‘the freedom of will’ and to let them consider His holy commandment, not as an order that is difficult to obey, but as a work of love from a heavenly Father toward His beloved children.

- ❖ In many instances in the holy books we see this amazing portrait of God’s undescrivable goodness that is fitting for His compassionate love, proclaimed by His desire to enter into such an amiable debate with humanity<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ It may appear like a contention, but hear what follows that concerning believers: *“He will again have compassion on us”* (Micah 7:19). The Book says: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”* (Matthew 5:5), and: *‘who believes in Me will not be judged, but would be transformed from death to life; and he who does not believe would be judged’*<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Cassiodorus**

***“O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me”*** (Micah 6:3)

God, although He is the mighty Judge, has not issued a judgment against His people, but seeks to enter into a debate with

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps 50.

<sup>2</sup> Cassiodorus: *Exposition of the Psalms 134:14*.

them; He inquires, if He has wearied them! How could they justify their unfaithfulness despite His exalted faithfulness to them?!

It was not possible for them to respond to this question, as God, the Loving and Merciful, have not and would not do wrong to His people nor to anyone; He is so beneficent and merciful that, in case He allows for some affliction or rebuke, it would be for the sake of our justification, our repentance, and our return to Him. He is not a cruel Master, but a loving Father.

- ❖ Do you want me to address you, who have done me wrong, with the same words of God to the cruel and thick-necked Israel: “*O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you?*” It is truly a sad thing to fish for opportunities to attack one another and to destroy the fellowship of the Spirit, which we have, by our controversies to end up being more vicious and violent toward each other than the barbarians who joined forces to fight us nowadays, becoming at war against one another and even within the same household; this will surely lead us to perdition<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Gregory, the Nazianzus**

- ❖ By saying: “*What have I done to you? And how have I wearied you?*” He reveals their denial; while enjoying all the blessings He gave them, they are paying Him back with what contradicts that<sup>2</sup>!

**St. John Chrysostom**

***“For I brought you up from the land of Egypt; I redeemed you from the house of servants; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (Micah 6:4).***

Being unable to answer his question, God paraded His dealings of love towards them since the days they were enslaved in the land of Egypt; how He sent before them leaders supported by His grace: Moses the great among the prophets, Aaron the first high priest, and Miriam, who led the women to create an atmosphere of joy and praise.

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<sup>1</sup> *Against the Arians and on Himself, Oration 33:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *St. John Chrysostom: the Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 68:2.*



***“O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted; and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord” (Micah 6:5).***

God's care towards His people continued when they were in the wilderness; He kept them safe from the conspiracies of Balak king of Moab till they crossed the desert and entered the Promised Land; He is always true.

Moses mentioned the episode of Balak and Balaam in his Book of Numbers (Chapters 22-24).

**“Acacia Grove”** is the location where Israel built there camp on the eastern bank of the River Jordan just before crossing over to the Promised Land (Joshua 2:1); where the people got many commandments and divine promises.

**“Gilgal”** was the first location where Israel camped after they have crossed over the River Jordan (Joshua 5:3); where the people renewed their covenant with God (Joshua 5:3-9).

**St. Ambrose**<sup>1</sup> believes that God presents Himself to us as a role model to teach us. Even while rebuking His people, He reminds them of His care when they were under affliction in bondage and under a heavy burden in a foreign land.

***“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?” (Micah 6:6).***

The Jews assumed that they can please God by the multitude of sacrifices without practicing the spiritual life in their daily behavior, as if God is only preoccupied with the offerings and sacrifices that are offered to Him in His temple. They did not realize that God seeks man himself: *“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways”* (Proverbs 23:26). He wishes to prepare us to enjoy the eternal glories, *“to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1-2), to present sacrifices of heartily love as a pay back for His love to us.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter 41:24.

***“Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7).***

The first answer by Israel came in the form of three questions: (1) Is God pleased by presenting the regular sacrifices of calves?

(2) Will He be pleased by doubling the offerings and sacrifices to thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil?

(3) Will He be pleased by presenting exceptional sacrifices, like the firstborn of their children, which is banned by Law (Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 2 Kings 3:27; Judges 11:30-40)? The sacrifice of the firstborn of the children has infiltrated into Israel among other faulty idolatry practices.

It is obvious that the sinner -however attracted by sin- feels a great emptiness in the depths of his soul, which he wishes to fill by pleasing God even if he has to offer Him the most valuable of his possessions -his children-, yet the need is actually for the sanctification of the heart, the mind, and the practical behavior in the Lord.

❖ God is not reconciled and sins are not forgiven by thousands of rams and goats or by the fruits of transgression, but through God’s grace and by the good life<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

❖ Will everyone who turns from sin to faith also turn from his faulty practices (that became like a mother to him) to life? I will quote one of the twelve prophets, who says: *“Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* (Micah 6:7). Is it possible for a mother to purchase her way to God by offering her firstborn? This should not be misunderstood as an attack on the words: *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Flight from the world*, 6:33.

<sup>2</sup> *Stromata* 3:16:101.

## St. Clement of Alexandria

- ❖ Whenever they are rebuked for their lack of a certain virtue, they hasten to justify themselves by saying that they offer sacrifices all the time. Hence we can understand why all prophets reject this defense on the basis that sacrifices are not set for their own sake, but as a tool referring to their behavior. Having disregarded their necessary commitments and preoccupied themselves only with their sacrifices, God proclaims that He will no more accept them (Amos 5:22; 6:20)<sup>1</sup>.

## Theodoret of Cyrus

***“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).***

As Israel assumed that they please God by presenting Him with animal sacrifices, a multitude of offerings, and even human sacrifices, the prophet intends to correct their concepts by transforming them from being preoccupied with animal sacrifices, while practicing oppression, to practicing the practical love and walking humbly with the Lord.

Preparing the minds of His people to accept the entrance of the gentiles into faith, the divine statement is addressed to every man in the world: ***“He has shown you, O man”*** and not addressed as: *“O Israel”*.

- ❖ Now, it is our duty to lead a life of virtue; God seeks that from us to lean neither on Him nor on anyone else nor on destiny, but on our own deeds, as shown by the words of the prophet Micah: *“He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy ...”* (Micah 6:8)<sup>2</sup>.

## Origen

- ❖ Who is so foolish to assume that God is in need of what is offered to Him? To show that this idea is ridiculed it is enough

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<sup>1</sup> *On Isaiah 1:11 Commentary.*

<sup>2</sup> *Origen: De Principiis, 3:1:6.*

to quote the Psalm, saying: *“I say to the Lord: You are my God; You do not need my goodness.”* It is fitting for us to believe that God is neither in need for a flock of sheep nor for any thing material or earthly nor even for the righteousness of man. Any upright worship presented to God is not for His benefit, but for that of man; as no one can say that a spring of water will benefit by drinking from it or that light will benefit by being seen. The animal sacrifices that the early Church used to offer, no more followed by the present day Church, was meant for the sake of seeking attachment to God and a provocation to our fellow men to do so. The sacrifice is a seen sacrament or a holy sign to an unseen sacrifice<sup>1</sup>.

- ❖ If you ask: What should I offer? The answer is: Offer yourself! What does God seek from you but yourself? Among the earthly creatures He did not create what is better than you; He seeks your self from yourself<sup>2</sup>!

#### **St. Augustine**

- ❖ *“The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and full of mercy”* (Psalm 145:8). *“Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord God, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live’”* (Ezekiel 18:23). *“He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe”* (1 Timothy 4:10). That is why it is equally fitting for the children of God to be merciful (Matthew 5:7), *“Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave us”* (Colossians 3:13), *“Judge not, that we be not judged”* (Matthew 7:1). *“Who are you to judge another servant? To his own Master he stands or falls”* (Romans 14:4)<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Tertullian**

- ❖ *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?.”* That is why the gospel says: *“Arise,*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine: *City of God* 10:5.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermon* 48:2.

<sup>3</sup> *On Purity*, 2.

*let us go from here*” (John 14:31), while the Law says: “*Follow the Lord your God*”. You have been taught the way of escape, so why the delay<sup>1</sup>!?

**St. Ambrose**

- ❖ If God is fire, “a *consuming fire*” (Deuteronomy 4:24), so anything made of hay or wood should get away from the fire lest it would be consumed<sup>2</sup>!

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ He says: forget about your multitude of burnt offerings, sacrifices, and firstlings! If you intend to please the Deity, practice what God has commanded you from the beginning through Moses: to have justice and sound decisions in all circumstances; to choose what is better and not what is worse; to be able to continue testifying to every possibility of love and feeling of brotherhood; and to be prepared to practice what pleases God in every way. By saying: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might; ... And you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) He means that doing that is better than sacrifices in the eyes of God<sup>3</sup>.

**Theodore of Mopsuestia**

- ❖ What would be the benefit, if you abstain from eating birds or fish when you bite and devour your brethren? That is why the apostle Paul says: “*If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another*” (Galatians 5:15). You are harming yourself as well as others by many ways. When you slander your neighbor, you make him who listens to your slander, become in a worse condition; If he happens to be wicked, he will care no more for his wickedness when he finds someone else sharing his wickedness; and if he is righteous, when you reveal the sins of others to him, you lead him to

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<sup>1</sup> *Flight from the world*, 6:33.

<sup>2</sup> *Homily 2 on Ps. 5*.

<sup>3</sup> *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on Micah 6:6:8*.

haughtiness, to count himself as someone special<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## **2. THE SECOND SESSION:**

In the first session the pleading was addressed to the mountains and hills, whereas in the second session He called on the city of Jerusalem together with the wisdom to watch and to fear His name.

***“The Lord’s voice cries to the city; wisdom shall see Your name: Hear the Rod! Who has appointed it?” (Micah 6:9)***

Some believe that when He calls on the city, those with “Wisdom” can see His name, namely can recognize Him and His word will work in them.

He first talks, and if the believer listens with a spirit of contrition and humility “*the divine Rod of chastisement*” will not come down on him and he will enjoy the divine mercies.

***“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination?” (Micah 6:10).***

What are the words of “the divine Rod of chastisement”? It reveals the oppression they practice against their brethren. Here he mentions an old case against humanity along the generations, namely that the rich practice oppression against the poor; they assume that they are getting richer when they actually treasure for themselves evil and unfaithfulness. It is the case involving financial, social, and ethical corruption despite God’s warnings to us.

If the oppressor assumes that he has collected abundant treasures, he has actually collected treasures of evil on himself; and if he assumes by cheating in weights that he got a plenty of good, he has actually got a curse! The wise Solomon says: “*Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death*” (Proverbs 10:2).

***“Shall I count pure those with the wicked balances? And***

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<sup>1</sup> *Concerning Statues, 3: 12.*

***with the bag of deceitful weights?” (Micah 6:11).***

Here he means deceit in its literal and narrow meaning, when they deceive the simple in balances; as well as in its wider meaning, when they deceive them by twisted words and ways to take away their possessions.

***“For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth” (Micah 6:12).***

It is no wonder when we see rich oppressors, as the more man gets, the greater will be his desire to get more unless his inner self gets satisfied, because much possession will never satisfy his inner thirst!

He speaks of the greedy rich, whose hearts are full of oppression and their stores are full of what they got through it. Oppression leads them to lie and to practice deceit to achieve what they desire. Their tongue utters deceit; *“They say: The Lord does not see us; The Lord has forsaken the earth”* (Psalm 8:12).

❖ Let the mouth hasten to escape from the disgraceful talks<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

The Psalmist says: *“You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man”* (Psalm 5:5-7).

❖ Every haughty man is deceitful and every deceitful man is a liar. He, who utters vanity, labors hard, whereas he, who utters the truth, talks with complete ease<sup>2</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

***“Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins” (Micah 6:13).***

Those who persist on oppression, deceit, and lying, will be struck with incurable sickness. When they assume to be fulfilled with what they got, they will suffer an incurable inner ailment, a

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<sup>1</sup> *Concerning Statues, 3: 12.*

<sup>2</sup> *On Ps 140.*

perpetual feeling of emptiness and lack of peace.

❖ *“The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood”* (Psalm 5:5-6). God hates a worker of iniquity and He destroys him, who speaks falsehood. Let us now see which case is worse: to be hated by God or to be destroyed by Him? He, who is hated by God although he would certainly be unhappy with his animosity with God, yet he is still alive with hope for repentance; whereas he, who speaks falsehood, will be destroyed and will exist no more. Unfortunately, a liar is worse than him who, works iniquity ... *“A lying mouth destroys the soul”* (Wisdom 1:11)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

***“You shall eat, but not be satisfied; hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; and what you do rescue I will give over to the sword”*** (Micah 6:14).

They eat, yet would never be satisfied, because having mixed their food with evil they deprived themselves of the divine blessings. The feeling of hunger will never forsake them whatever they eat or get. *“They enlarge their desire as hell, and cannot be satisfied”* (Habakkuk 2:5). *“Why do you spend money for what is not bread; and your wages for what does not satisfy?”* (Isaiah 55:2). *“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase. This also is vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

***“You may put some away, but shall not save them”*** (14).

The more an oppressor holds of what belongs to others and count as his own, will soon slip away from his hands and he will not be able to save him. Whatever he tightly holds as something dear to him, he will soon lose. Whatever way an oppressor uses to keep the *“unrighteous mammon”* (the dishonest wealth), will be torn away by the divine sword and will vanish.

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<sup>1</sup> Homily 2 on Ps. 5.



- ❖ A greedy person, being in need of many things, cannot be considered as rich. He is actually a keeper of his wealth, but not its master; he is a slave and not a prince. He is always ready to give away even a part of his body, but never of his buried gold. He acquires things he is neither free to use nor to enjoy. He actually treasures limitless punishments for himself<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

***“You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourself with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine” (Micah 6:15)***

The oppressor assumes that he sows to reap, but what he has sown will soon wither, his labor will be wasted and he will have nothing to reap. He may gather olives, tread them in the press, and fill his storehouses with oil, but he will never anoint himself with oil either because his olives do not produce oil or because he somehow loses the oil he produces. Likewise with the grapes, even if he treads them in the press, he will not drink wine. In other words, even if God allows the oppressor to fill his storehouses with oil and wine, something will happen to keep him from benefiting of what he gathered; he would be unable to anoint his body with his oil and to drink of his wine.

***“For you have kept the statutes of Omri; and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have followed their counsels; therefore I will make you a desolation, and your inhabitants an object of hissing; so you shall bear the reproach of My people” (Micah 6:16).***

Omri and Ahab were two typical examples of oppression and greed (1 Kings 16-22), who used their authority to deprive the poor of their possessions and ended up gaining nothing. When Omri reigned over Israel, he led the people to idolatry (1 Kings 16:21-26) and was succeeded by his son Ahab, the most evil of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 16:2-33).

*“I will make you a desolation, and your inhabitants an object of hissing” (16).* Evil desolates and destroys a nation to

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning Statues, 2: 14.

become a disgrace, to be gloated by other nations that hiss in ridicule. What makes it worse is that this happens to the people of God, who, instead of enjoying the divine glories before the heavenly creatures, they become a reproach before the idolatry nations and go down to everlasting shame and contempt in the great day of the Lord (Daniel 12:2).

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 6

### WHO WILL BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE YOU?

- ❖ If You judge, O Lord, who will be justified before You?  
Both heaven and earth testify to Your work with me.  
Your works are exalted; and Your love is amazing.  
Tell me how could I be justified?
- ❖ You brought me away from the servitude of the devil.  
And bore me to the freedom of the glory of the children of God.  
As You did, when You brought Your people away from the  
servitude of the Pharaoh,  
And brought them over to the Promised Land.  
You destroyed the opposition of the devil for my salvation;  
As You corrupted the plot of Balaam, who loved the wage of  
oppression.
- ❖ Tell me, O my Lord, How can I please You?  
You are in no need of my offerings or gifts!  
The heaven and the earth are both the work of Your hands.  
You are not in need of my prayer or my worship.  
As You are in Yourself wholly glorified.
- ❖ You truly seek me, and not what I have.  
You seek my heart, to set it a heaven.  
You seek my mind, to fill it with Your secrets.  
You seek my love for my brethren, to pour Your love over me.  
You seek my walking humbly with You.  
In order to lift me up to Your heavens.
- ❖ I confess to You every corruption that infiltrated into me.  
Take away from me the wicked balances and the deceitful  
words;  
Take away from me every oppression and selfishness;  
The whole world cannot satisfy my soul;  
And the sin brings on me disgrace and shame.
- ❖ You alone are everything to me.  
When I acquire You, I acquire the truth.

When You fulfill me, I will never get hungry,  
When I bear You inside me, I get filled with the splendor of  
Your glory.  
You are everything to me,  
With You, I seek nothing more!

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **A DIVINE LEGAL CASE (Cont.)**

### **GLORY TO YOU, O GRANTOR OF**

### **BLESSINGS**

#### **A GRIEF AND A GLORIFICATION:**

Revealing God's longing for entering into a debate with His people to motivate them to enjoy His love instead of being immersed in corruption, the prophet Micah proclaims the bitterness of his soul because of the corruption prevailing among his people. Then again he beholds God's plan for salvation and rejoices glorifying God. Although God is holding a legal case against His people and is calling the whole earth to testify against them, He does not do so to proclaim His justice, but to reveal the glory of His love for every soul that returns to Him. He is in no need for a testimony to His justice, to His righteousness, or even to His love as much as He wants to pour His love in the hearts of all mankind.

This chapter starts with woe and bitterness, yet ends with joy and praise.

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| <b>1. A confession of iniquity</b>                         | <b>1-10.</b>  |
| <b>2. A divine promise of blessings</b>                    | <b>11-13.</b> |
| <b>3. A final intercession on their behalf</b>             | <b>14-17.</b> |
| <b>4. A glorification: The victory of the divine grace</b> | <b>18-20.</b> |

## 1. A CONFESSION OF INIQUITY:

In this legal case the whole humanity is exposed. Being unable to justify its denial and unfaithfulness towards God, who is faithful in His love, it proclaims the bitter fact that it became like a fruitless vine and a fig tree with no first-ripe fruit. Hatred ran in the blood of men: one against his brother; blood shedding infiltrated among them for no reason; and animosity prevailed among the members of the same family.

***“Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger” (Micah 7:1)***

A painful portrait of the extent of the draught dwelling on the kingdom because of evil, which is conformable to the time of the reign of Ahaz, the worst of the kings of Judah, or to the beginning of that of Hezekiah before the movement of reform. Some believe that it is a prophecy of what would befall the kingdom in the coming days of the evil king Manasseh.

Judah and Jerusalem seem like a garden after the harvest is gathered; with nice-looking leaves, but with no single cluster of grapes or a single fig to eat.

By saying: “*woe is me,*” the prophet counts what has dwelt on the whole kingdom as though it has dwelt on him alone; and the bitterness in which the people live as though he tastes it personally. Such are the true feelings of the men of God; we hear the moans of the prophet Jeremiah: “*My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly!*” (Jeremiah 4:19); “*My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick; ... For the hurt of my people I am hurt; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me*” (Jeremiah 8:18, 21).

- ❖ Who is the speaker, when the prophet says: ‘***Woe is me; for I have become like one who gathers hay in the time of harvest***’. Does the prophet literally gather hay or does he even intend to? Does he own a field?! The only One who truly gathers what he has sown is not the prophet, but the Savior Lord, Jesus Christ.

But because of the several iniquities among the pagan nations and even among those, who claim to constitute the Church, the prophet mourns and says what he says in (7:1) I hope that every one of us searched himself: Is he an ear of grain? Will the Son of God find something to pluck or to gather in him? Will we find some of us blown by the wind? Looking at the Churches or what are so called and finding them packed with sinners, he cries out saying: *“Woe is me! ...”* The Lord comes seeking fruits from the vine, as everyone of us is planted as *“a vineyard on a very fruitful hill”* (Isaiah 5:1); or as *“a vine brought out of Egypt”* (Psalm 80:8); planted to carry fruits (Jeremiah 2:21); but He comes to gather fruits and finds only few clusters remaining. Who among us bears the fruitful clusters of virtue<sup>1</sup>!?

### Origen

- ❖ The wicked are sifted like light hay, whereas the righteous are saved like heavy grain. Let us listen to what the Lord says to Peter: *“Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that Your faith should not fail”* (Luke 22:31-32). Those sifted as light hay would be carried away by the wind, while those, who, like seeds that fall down on a good ground, would spring up and yield a crop a hundredfold (Luke 8:8). The prophet likens evil to hay that is burnt up after the harvest. ‘Job’ says: ***“They are like straw before the wind”*** (Job 21:18), then adds right away: *“and like chaff that a storm carries away.”* Indeed the wicked is soon crushed and scattered like dust, according to the first Psalm that says: *“The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away”* (Psalm 1:4)<sup>2</sup>.

### St. Ambrose

***“The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets”*** (Micah 7:2)

The good disappeared from the land and there is no one

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on Jeremiah, 15:3:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Prayer of Job and David, 2:5:18.*

upright left, as the rulers take possessions by force, the judges ask for bribes, treason prevails among friends, and hatred among members of the same family. Corruption became public among the people; but God remains faithful, leading His people from darkness to His amazing light.

The human kingdom is transformed into a jungle in which every one is devouring the other; its law is oppression and bloodshedding; and everyone finds his happiness in hunting his brother as though with a net. The Psalmist says: "*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful disappeared from among the sons of men; they speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak*" (Psalm 12:1-2).

- ❖ Let us grieve for some time, to rejoice eternally; let us fear the Lord; let us hasten to confess our sins to Him; let us correct our position and straighten our path lest we hear the words: "*The faithful have disappeared from the land and there is nobody who can put them right*"<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Ambrose**

- ❖ If travel is hard in itself, it would be harder if the traveler is alone with no companion. It is the same thing here, meaning that fellowship and brotherly encouragement are very important. That is why the apostle Paul says: "*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*" (Hebrews 10:24). The old men of God became worthy of being spiritually beautified, not because they practiced virtue, but because they did despite its absence or the scarcity of those who practice it anywhere. This is what the Holy Book means by saying: "*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation*" (Genesis 6:9).

On this account we marvel how could Abraham, Lot, and Moses, who shined like stars in the midst of pitch darkness, like roses among thorns, and like a flock of sheep in the midst of many wolves; who took the way contradictory to that of others with no hesitation! You can imagine how difficult it could be and how much trouble it must have brought on them taking a

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<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose: *Concerning Repentance*, 2:7 (52).

way opposite to the others and traveling against the direction of the crowd. It would be like when a boat is confronted by opposing mighty waves; it would be more difficult when it concerns virtue<sup>1</sup>!

- ❖ ***“Woe is me!...the faithful have disappeared from the land”*** (Micah 7:1-2). That is our role, to grieve. When our prayers, our advices, and our warnings are of no avail, nothing remains for us except to weep. So did Christ, when He provoked those in Jerusalem without avail, He wept for their sake; and so did the prophets; and so should we from now on! It is time for grief, tears, and mourning! It is fitting for us to say: *“Call for the mourning women to come; send for the skilled women to come; ... to take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run with tears”* (Jeremiah 9:17). Perhaps this way we can wipe away the illness of those, who surround themselves with fields that they obtained through robbery<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ There is nothing more disturbing than getting connected to such a people; smoke would not harm the eyes like the fellowship of the wicked destroys the souls<sup>3</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

***“Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe; and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they wrap it up”*** (Micah 7:3)

The kingdom came to be worse than a jungle. With a well planned scheme the leaderships work together, yet without the spirit of love, aiming to rob, to steal, and to kill; the hands of everyone are preoccupied with hunting and destroying souls. Whatever the desires of their hearts and the thoughts of their minds, their hands meticulously execute.

The rulers, entrusted to defend the truth, used their authority to acquire wealth, seeking bribes in the form of gifts and clothing their wickedness with a garment of friendship and virtue,

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. John Chrysostom: *The Gospel of St. John, Homily 64:4.*

<sup>3</sup> On Psalm 120.



corrupting their souls as well as those of others.

***“The best of them is like a brier; the most upright of them a thorn hedge; the day of their sentinels, of their punishment has come; now their confusion is at hand” (Micah 7:4)***

There is no one among them to depend on; the best of them is like a brier and the wisest like a thorn hedge. Whoever comes in contact with them will get nothing but wounds and trouble. They became like a barren land, and against them the divine verdict is issued: *“Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field”* (Genesis 3:18) *“instead of becoming a holy heaven that produces fruits of the Spirit, of love, joy, peace, goodness, meekness, and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

***“Put no trust in a friend; have no confidence in a loved one; guard the door of your mouth from her, who lies in your embrace” (Micah 7:5)***

What grieves the prophet Micah’s heart is that man lost confidence in his friend and his wife; that selfishness infiltrated even among members of the same household; everyone works for his own account and fears the others; that the family lost its social and spiritual warmth; and that the society collapsed through the spirit of greed.

When deceit prevails in man’s life, he would no longer trust even the one who lies in his embrace. **Father Joseph** believes that Samson, having married a wicked and a deceitful wife, could not keep the commandment of the prophet Micah and gave up his long kept secret, something that brought on him much bitterness<sup>1</sup>.

**Father Isaac**, on the other hand, sees in this verse a call for the secret prayer.

- ❖ Before anything else we should carefully observe the evangelic commandment to enter into our secret place, close our door, and pray to our Father in seclusion, which can be realized in the following way:

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<sup>1</sup> St. Cassian: *Conferences* 17:20.

- **To pray in our secret place**, when we throw away from our inner hearts the disturbing thoughts and the vain cares, and when we enter with our Lord into a secret and a private talk.
- **To pray behind closed doors**, when we pray with closed lips in complete silence and quietness to Him, who seeks the hearts and not the words.
- **To pray in seclusion**, in order to reveal our supplications which come from our hearts and minds to God only and hide them from the adversary hosts (the devils). We should pray in complete silence not only to avoid disturbing our brethren praying with us by our whispers or by our loud words, but also to hide our supplications from our enemies, who are watching us especially when we pray. By this we fulfill the commandment: *“Guard the door of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace”* (Micah 7:5) <sup>1</sup>.

**Abbot Isaac**

***“For the son dishonors the father; the daughter rises up against her mother; the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household”*** (Micah 7:6)

It is truly a bad time, in which the son dishonors his father, the daughter rises up against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; in which even the natural love is uprooted from all. The Lord Christ referring to the attitude of the non-believers towards the believers even if they are their own brothers or sons, says: *“Brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake”* (Matthew 10:21-22; Luke 21:16-17).

- ❖ What will the sword of the Word do? *“It will discern the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrew 4:12); it will separate the evil from the good; and the believer from the non-believer (Matthew 10:35) <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Cassian: Conferences 9:35.*

<sup>2</sup> *On the Holy Lights, Oration 39:15.*

## St. Gregory the Nazianzus

❖ ***“The enemies of man are members of his own household”*** (Matthew 10:36). A situation like this happened among the Jews with the appearance of the false prophets, which caused a dissension among families, some members believing in one, while some believe in another. That is why the prophet Micah advised them, saying: *“Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one; guard the door of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace”*; and ***“Your enemies are members of your own household”*** (Micah 7:5-6)<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

***“But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me”*** (Micah 7:7)

The public corruption does not justify our sliding into evil; even if there is no single man upright among men, we should be committed together with the prophet Micah to look to the Lord and to wait for His salvation.

When man confesses his wickedness and corruption, the door of hope in the exalted work of God will open. God, as Philanthropist, in His anger hates and can never stand sin, and yet He loves the sinner. By a true repentance God’s ears would be inclined to hear the sinner’s moans and would respond to his cries.

Seeing the situation that prevailed on the society around him, the prophet realized how serious it was, and how it looked like a sick man with no hope to be cured. Yet, lifting the eyes of his heart up towards God and seeing the doors of hope shining before him, his depths sang praise and glory to God, who grants conquest and shines His light to scatter the darkness.

The prophet proclaims that God will never change; He, who saved in the old days, is saving today and will save in the future; being compassionate, He would never be angry forever!

❖ ***“Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob”*** (Psalm

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<sup>1</sup> St. John Chrysostom: *The Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 35:2.*

146:5). Do you see the richness of the encouragement and the advice? Now, referring to the beatitude, he means getting all the blessings, and he reveals the wide ranges of hope. After referring to the happiness of those whose help is God, he reveals the power of the One who helps, proclaiming that a human being is different from God: one will perish, while the Other will endure, together with His works. That is why he adds: “*Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them*” (Psalm 146:6), then adds: “*Who keeps faith forever.*” That is His role, His habit, and His personal attribute; He would never disregard the sinners nor forsake those in affliction; He would always lift His hand for the sake of the victims of those who plot against them<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

So, as the situation becomes darker before the eyes of the men of God, they raise their eyes to God hoping for His work; He is the God of the impossible. There is no hope for salvation except in Him alone, the Savior of the world. The prophet Micah did not put his hope in some man to correct the situation of the people of God or that of humanity, but he put it in the Savior of the world alone, which is also expressed by the Psalmist in Psalm 141.

- ❖ The prophet says to everyone in general: Don’t put your trust in the princes, in the emperors, in the rulers or in the judges of this world (see Psalm 146:3)... Who are the princes? They are the humans. And who are the humans? They are those “*in whom there is no help*” (Psalm 146:3); “*when their breath departs, they return to the earth*” (Psalm 146:4). And what happens when they return to the earth? “*On that very day their plans perish*” (Psalm 146:4). Today they are there, and tomorrow they are no more<sup>2</sup>!

#### **St. Jerome**

By saying: “*I will wait for God of my salvation*” the prophet proclaims that he is not putting the blame on the circumstances around him nor on God, who allowed for the

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Homily 55 on Ps. 145.

affliction to happen, but he accepts the Lord's chastisement with patience for the sake of his salvation and that of his brethren. And as the prophet Jeremiah says in his lamentations: "*Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment of their sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord. Let us lift our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled...*" (Lamentations 3:39-42). Let us complain against ourselves and not against the days in which we live. Let us endure the chastisement as a motive to repent in order to enjoy a fellowship with "*the God of our salvation*"; and then "*My God will hear me*".

***"Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall I shall rise; when I sit in the darkness, the Lord will be a light to me"***  
**(Micah 7:8)**

When man confesses his darkness and realizes that the Lord is a light to him, he will not fear an enemy anymore as long as the Lord is with him. Even if he falls and is about to collapse, he will find the hands of the Lord hauling him and setting him right, as the Psalmist says: "*Though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand*" (Psalm 37:24). And if he sits in the darkness, the light of the Lord will shine on him and he will say: "*Those who hate me will see and be put to shame, because You, Lord, have helped me and comforted me*" (Psalm 86:17). With every divine work in the life of the repentant the devil and his hosts will feel disappointment, shame and disgrace.

- ❖ There is no danger in falling in weakness, if man is free from a desire to fall. If you have the will to rise, He is ready, who will raise you<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ I wish that we would never rejoice over somebody's sin, but we should grieve; being written: "*Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy, when I fall I shall rise; when I sit in the darkness, the Lord will be a light to me ...*" (Micah 7:8-10). Whoever rejoices over the fall of another, rejoices over the victory of the devil.

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<sup>1</sup> Exposition on the Psalms 37:15.

We should rather grieve, when we hear that somebody perishes, he, for whose sake Christ died; He who does not despise even hay in the time of the harvest<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

***“I must bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He takes my side, and executes judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I shall behold His righteousness” (Micah 7:9)***

Dwelling of affliction because of the spread of corruption led the prophet to reconsider himself and to confess that he did wrong towards God, and hence he is worthy of chastisement. When man confesses his falls, the Lord will cover him with His righteousness and will keep him by His divine grace. The prophet does not consider the affliction as a rejection of the Lord towards him, but as a divine wish to lead him to repentance and to the enjoyment of fellowship with Him.

He feels his need for the hand of God working for his edification. This is the sign of receiving the divine light: the complete surrender to the hands of God the Beneficent and the Grantor of righteousness.

❖ We also bear ailment, as a chastisement for a sin, aiming to change us, according to the words of the Scripture: *“The Lord reproves the one He loves”* (Proverb 3:12). And the Holy Book also teaches us, saying: *“For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many die. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned by the world”* (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). That is why it is fitting for us to recognize our iniquities, and bear in silence all the grieves that come upon us, remembering the words of the prophet: *“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him”* (Micah 7:9). Moreover, we should demonstrate how we are changed by revealing fruits fitting for the repentance, recalling the words of the Lord: *“See, you have been*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose: *Concerning Repentance*, 2:8 (78).

*made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you”* (John 5:14). It happens sometimes that sickness comes upon us as a request of the devil, and our Master, the Beneficent, allows for us to enter into a battle against the adversary to make his haughtiness come to nothing through the heroic patience of His ministers<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. Basil the Great**

***“Then she, who is my enemy, will see, and shame will cover her who said to me: ‘Where is the Lord your God?’ My eyes will see her; now she will be trampled down like mire in the streets.” (Micah 7:10)***

A magnificent portrait of the life of conquest! As the believer enjoys the light of the Lord, he would not fear the darkness of the devil, the pleasure of sin, the weakness of the body, nor the deceit of the evil world. The devil starts to mock the fallen, crying out: *‘Where is the Lord your God?’*, as though God is incapable of keeping His children from falling, but when he sees the hand of God raising him, shame will cover him.

When man falls down looking at himself and hearing the mocking words of his enemy, he may see himself trampled down like mire in the streets, but when the divine hand raises him up, he will realize the divine possibilities working in him.

## **2. A DIVINE PROMISE OF BLESSINGS:**

***“In the day when your walls are to be built, in that day the decree shall go far and wide” (Micah 7:11)***

When the believer enjoys a flood of blessings, he will fear the enemy with all his kingdom of darkness no more; and will get filled with hope that God Himself will be a divine Wall to protect him to the end; then he will praise together with the Psalmist, saying: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).

❖ *“God is our refuge and strength”* There are other refuges without strength; whoever resorts to them would become weaker

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<sup>1</sup> *The long Rules, 55.*

and not stronger. As an example, when you resort to the refuge of someone mightier than you, it may happen, in such an unpredictable world, that this man loses his authority and you may find yourself in a weaker position. Our refuge, as believers, is not as such; God is our refuge and Strength; when we resort to Him, we become more secure<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

***“In that day they shall come to you from Assyria and from the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the river, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain” (Micah 7:12)***

The prophet presents them with the divine promise of returning from captivity, coming from Babylon to the Promised Land; and forsaking Egypt, to which some of them have resorted during the captivity. They will return, not in humility or fear, but will set forth ***“from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain”***, namely will go steady from strength to strength.

***“Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds” (Micah 7:13)***

Again he warns them against going back to sin and corruption after returning from captivity. God, who grants them strength and dignity through returning from captivity to the Promised Land, would allow for the desolation of the land, if they go back to their past corruption.

The prophet asks God to look on His flock and heritage, who dwell as though on rough land on the mountain of Carmel, or like sheep in a forest in need of a heavenly Shepherd, who is capable, by His compassionate love, of bringing them back to Him.

He asks Him to shepherd and protect them by His rod and not by that of the enemies, being His people with no one to protect them like Him; to bring them back from the woodland and mountains to the plains of Bashan and Gilead; He is ***“the great Shepherd of the sheep”*** (Hebrew 13:20), who gives Himself up for their sake.

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps. 46.



### 3. A FINAL INTERCESSION ON THEIR BEHALF:

***“Shepherd Your people with Your rod, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell solitarily in a woodland, in the midst of Carmel; Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the old day” (Micah 7:14)***

Realizing that resorting to God should be by prayer, the prophet lifts his heart up to God, the good Shepherd, asking Him to lead His people by His mercies as in the glorious days of the old.

The prophet calls the people *“the flock of God’s heritage”*, being *“the sheep of His pasture”* (Psalm 79:13; 100:3); *“His little flock”* (Luke 12:32); *“His portion”* (Jeremiah 12:10); *“His heritage”* (Psalm 94:5); and *“His allotted share”* (Deuteronomy 32:9). It is as though he is asking God to look on His people, being their caring Shepherd and their keen Proprietor.

- ❖ We are *“His people and the sheep of His pasture”* (Psalm 100:3)... It is one flock! See how, as a loving Shepherd, He left the ninety-nine to seek the lost one, laid it on His shoulders rejoicing (Luke 15:4-5), and redeemed it with His blood. This Shepherd fearlessly delivered Himself to death for the sake of His flock; and by His resurrection, He brought them back to Him<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

***“As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, show us marvelous things” (Micah 7:15)***

God responds to the supplication and intercession of His prophet, presenting marvelous things as He did when He brought His people out of the land of Egypt, terrifying the pagan nations.

- ❖ What is more marvelous is that our sins are devoured and quenched in the water of baptism, the way the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea. ***“He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in showing clemency; ...He will cast all our sins into the depth of the sea” (Micah 7:19)***<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> On Ps 100.

<sup>2</sup> Explanation of the Psalms 114:5.

**St. Augustine**

***“The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might. They shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf” (Micah 7:16)***

What did this amazing Shepherd do? The marvels He did with His people made the surrounding nations that gloated for their tribulation, hunted those who fled among them, and sold them as slaves or delivered them to captivity, stand in awe before the care of God for His people; put their hands on their mouths unable to utter one single word against the people of God; and their ears became deaf unable to hear their good news.

That is the exalted work of God with His Church and with every soul, when they return to Him with repentance; bringing them back from shame and disgrace to exalted inner glories.

***“They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like worms of the earth. They shall come trembling out of their fortresses; they shall turn in dread to the Lord our God, and they shall stand in fear of You” (Micah 7:17)***

If the nations, adversary to the divine truth, are likened to the serpents of the earth that lick the dust, God, with His love, allows the devil -the old serpent- to tempt us, yet in his temptation he licks the dust in us to let us be justified before God. **St. Ambrose**<sup>1</sup>, in his talk about repentance, says that the apostle St. Paul asked the Corinthians to deliver the adulterer to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5); for Satan to lick the dust in him; but not to destroy his soul.

All what the devil and his hosts can do is to lick the dust that clings to our feet. The Psalmist says: *“His enemies will lick the dust”* (Psalm 72:9); and the Lord Himself says to the Church: *“They shall bow down to you, with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for Me shall not be put to shame”* (Isaiah 49:23).

**Origen** says: [The verdict against man after his fall was *“You are dust, and to dust you shall return”* (Genesis 3:19). Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose: *Concerning Repentance, 1:13 (60)*.

having enjoyed fellowship with the second Adam, he would hear the divine voice, saying: ‘You are heaven, and to heaven you shall return.’ The work of the good Shepherd is to transform us from the curse in the first Adam to the blessing in the second Adam; becoming a holy heaven, the serpent would find no dust in us to lick.

#### **4. A GLORIFICATION: THE VICTORY OF THE DIVINE GRACE:**

The prophet ends His book by offering glory and praises to God, who no one is like Him:

- a. God of love, the Forgiver (18).
- b. God of the saving power (19).
- c. God of unceasing truthfulness (20).

***“Who is God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18)***

This is God’s pleasure, to forgive, to grant His mercy, and to proclaim His love.

Micah uses his own name, which means “Who is like God?” to praise God the Forgiver of sins. The wise Solomon, believing that the prudent or wise believer following the example of God the Forgiver of sins would do likewise toward his brethren, says: *“Those with good sense are slow to anger; and it is their glory to overlook an offense”* (Proverb 19:11).

In a talk about the equality of the Father and the Son, their unity, and the role of God the Father in forgiving sins, **Pope Athanasius** says: [But the Son of Man said to a paralytic He healed: *“Your sins are forgiven”*; and to prove to the protesting Jews that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic: *“Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house”* (see Matthew 9:2, 6)<sup>1</sup>.

❖ *“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* (Mark 2:7). By giving

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<sup>1</sup> *De Synods, part 3, 49.*

this definition, the protesting Jews have set the basis and proclaimed the Law. Intending to confuse them by using their very words, it is as though He is telling them: [Having confessed that principle –that only God can forgive sins-, My equality to Him (the Father) is not any more a subject of question.] It was not only those people who proclaimed that, but the prophet Micah also said: “*Who is a God like You?*” Then he pointed to His specific Attribute, adding: “***Pardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage***” (Micah 7:18). Therefore, if someone does this, He is surely the One God. Notice how Christ debated them with meekness and compassion<sup>1</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ If the Word is a creature, how could He nullify God’s ordainment and forgive sins when it is stated by the prophet that this is the job of God alone? “*Who is God like You? Pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression.*” Whereas God says: “*You are dust, and to dust you will return*” (Genesis 3:19). How can a mortal creature nullify sin? It is only God who can do that, saying: “*If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*” (John 8:36). The Son, who makes man free, has to be not a creature, but indeed the Word Himself and one essence with the Father; He, who initially issued the verdict of Adam’s death, would be the only One who can forgive sins. And as it is said by the Word: “*You are dust, and to dust you will return*”, it would be only fitting that by the Word Himself freedom would be realized and judgment would be nullified<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Pope Athanasius, the Apostolic**

- ❖ To demonstrate the greatness of the miracle of sin-forgiveness the prophet Micah says: “*Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity, and passing over the transgression...*” He testifies that the forgiveness of sins is the job of God alone. As bringing souls to the Kingdom is greater than destroying death, He did that by

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<sup>1</sup> St. John Chrysostom: *The Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, 2:67.

His own power<sup>1</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ I wish we do not listen to Satan, when we get entangled in the troubles of the world whether through suffering a body ailment, a loss of children or any other trouble. I wish we do not listen to the adversary saying: “*Where is the Lord your God?*” (Micah 7:10) When we suffer a painful temptation, we should be aware of Satan’s tricks, by which he tries to lead the disturbed soul astray. When contemplating in the amazing works of God, saying together with the prophet: “*Who is God like You, Pardoning sins and passing over the transgressions*”, the soul figures itself as though in heaven, while Satan keeps crawling around it like a serpent<sup>2</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

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<sup>1</sup> *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God, homily 10: 23.*

<sup>2</sup> *Letter 45.*

***“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19)***

God casts our sins into the depths of the sea of His forgiving love, never again to recall them. The prophet Jeremiah says: *“The Lord’s mercies are new every morning”* (Lamentations 3:23). Every morning we behold Him as a father, who forgives the sins of his children and pours his love into their hearts. He casts our sins as though into the depths of the Red Sea together with the Pharaoh and his hosts, never again to recall them. It is said about the repentant: *“None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live”* (Ezekiel 18:22); and the Lord Says, *“I have blotted out, like a thick cloud your transgressions; and like a cloud your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you”* (Isaiah 44:22).

- ❖ It is fitting for us to clothe him, who is utterly naked. And who is he, who is utterly naked? It is him, who completely lacks God. We, who have God, should deprive ourselves and clothe him, who has not. St. John the Baptist says: *“He, who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise”* (Luke 3:11)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Origen**

- ❖ It is the grace of Baptism to which the prophecy of Micah refers: *“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities; He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea”* (Micah 7:19)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **St. Jerome**

***“You will show faithfulness to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old” (Micah 7:20)***

He is faithful; He has promised mercy to Abraham,

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<sup>1</sup> *Homilies on the Gospel of Luke, 23:5.*

<sup>2</sup> *St. Jerome: Letter 69:6.*

confirmed His promise to Jacob and will keep on fulfilling His promises to our saintly fathers as long as we keep walking with the spirit of faith working with love.

The Lord has sworn and we believe that He will surely fulfill His promises to us (Hebrew 6:18-20).

## AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF MICAH 7

### HOW RICH IS YOUR AMAZING GRACE!

- ❖ You loved me, Your beloved vine.  
You gave every possibility to set in me Your paradise.  
But, foolishly, I denied all Your gifts.  
I became a barren, fruitless wilderness.  
A land that produces thorns and thistles.
- ❖ My hands were transformed to work evil;  
My mind got preoccupied with what is not fitting for You.  
My heart became narrow for love.  
The ruler, the judge, and the powerful in me all became corrupted.  
I turned into useless briars and thistles.
- ❖ I lost my inner peace;  
I no longer trust a friend;  
Nor have confidence in a companion.  
My depths turned into a battleground.  
A struggle between the lusts of the body and those of the spirit.  
And a controversy between the mind and the emotions.  
Everything in me became in confusion.
- ❖ Your voice called me and raised me up from the humiliation.  
Lifted me from the servitude up to the freedom of the glory of the children of God.  
Now I can cry out in the face of the old serpent, saying:  
*“Do not rejoice over me, my enemy;  
When I fall, I will arise; when I sit in the darkness,  
The Lord will be a light to me.”*
- ❖ Your chastisements for me turned into glory!  
You brought me over from the abyss of sin to the paradise of Your righteousness.  
You set me forth to cross over from strength to strength.  
And to soar up by the two wings of Your Holy Spirit from glory to glory.



How amazing is Your care, O good Shepherd.

- ❖ In all my afflictions, the serpent could not sting me;  
But licked the dust that stuck to my feet.  
You made me a new heaven where Your righteousness dwells.  
You granted me conquest after conquest by Your amazing  
grace.
- ❖ Glory to You, who pardons iniquity, and who forgives  
transgression.  
Glory to You, the whole Merciful and Compassionate.

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