Count Down
Micah 5:1-4
Dr. Pierre Cannings

I.   Present Predicament v. 1
a. Troops
  i. Present Muster
     1. These verses place Micah's readers back into the reality of the present moment. The promise of 4:1–8 is not yet. In the current moment, Zion suffers in disorientation and loss. Yet the prophet encourages the people toward truth in the redeeming hand of the Lord. The nations who trampled on Zion will in time be trampled on. Zion's hope rests in the future promises of God
  ii. Seige
     1. "The act of cutting oneself was a well-known expression of mourning in the nations surrounding Israel. Israel, however, was forbidden to engage in this practice (Deut 14:1), thus giving the command a sarcastic tone.
     2. It describes the present predicament of the people of Jerusalem. They are slashing themselves in lamenting their plight. גדד could mean "gather in troops" in the qal (Ps 94:21). Jerusalem is being invaded and the present ruler is being insulted by a slap on the face
     3. Now you are in mourning, besieged one." But the first meaning of the Hebrew root גדד is "to slash." The hithpolel form used here and in 1 Kgs 18:28 means "to slash oneself with knives" either as a part of pagan worship or as mourning for the dead (Deut 14:1; Jer 16:6). The thought here seems to be that the people of Jerusalem had been slashing themselves like Baal worshipers, thinking that would help save them. Zion is now suffering attack.
b. Laid siege
  i. Will Smite
     1. The Judge of Israel
        a. On the Cheek
        b. Her ruler (Judge) is being treated shamefully by his enemies. The word "Judge" probably was used to call attention to the impotency of the present ruler. The earlier

judges were charismatic deliverers or saviors. The present king could not even save himself.

II.   Significant Plans of Past v. 2

    a.   You

        i.   Insignificant -Bethlehem Ephrathah

            1.   Matthew quoted 5:1 in reference to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Matt 2:6).

            2.   v. 1 to the Davidic dynasty which sprang from Bethlehem, and from the way in which Bethlehem and Ephrathah are associated in other passages. The family of David were Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah (1 S. 17:12)

            3.   The Lord announces his birthplace and his Davidic roots.

            4.   It may refer to Ephrathah as the seat of the Davidic clan, which at the time this was written seems to have been reduced to its lowest terms. But in contrast with the present low estate of the family,

            5.   Deliverance will come from the least expected place. Bethlehem Ephrathah was the smallest, most insignificant clan in Judah. The word צעיר is not the regular word (מְעַט) for "little or small" but a word rarely used to call attention to the trifling or insignificant (Ps 68:27)..

            6.   The meaning of Ephrathah is to be determined from 1 Sam 17:12.

            7.   Jesse - The father of David is said to be an ʾeprātî, i.e., a man of Ephraim (Judg 12:5; 1 Kgs 11:26), just as the two sons of Elimelech and Naomi born in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:2), before Boaz and Jesse. This evidence strongly suggests that at the end of the 2d millennium B.C.E., a clan of Ephraim (Mic 5:1 speaks of an ʾelep; Judg 6:15; 1 Sam 10:19;) was settled in Bethlehem.

            8.   Compared to Jerusalem with its magnificent buildings (3:10), Bethlehem is characterized as "small" This probably applies to both size and significance. Yet in spite of its relative insignificance, this birthplace of David (1 Sam 16:1, 18; 17:12) would also become the birthplace of his greatest descendant, the Messiah (Matt 2:1–8; cf. John 7:42). Perhaps the "low state of David's line when Messiah was born also is implied here." "Out of seeming littleness and weakness God has perfected strength

        ii.   Too little to be a Clans of Judah

            1.   Clan - The Israelite tribe descended from Jacob's fourth son Judah (Gen 29:35; 1 Chr 2:1). The tribe of Judah was allotted a large territory encompassing most of the southern region of Canaan (Josh 15:1–12). In Israel's later history, the tribe of Judah was the only tribe to remain loyal to the Davidic dynasty (1 Kgs 12:20),

b. The One
   i. Go Forth
      1. Forth –
         a. The deliverer had not yet come. Until he did Yahweh would give the people of Judah into the hands of their enemy until one about to give birth (the qal active participle suggests that in the mind of the prophet the event was imminent) brought forth
      2. Ruler of Whole Israel
         a. since Yahweh is going to raise up a mighty king for Israel in his own good time, it is clear that the present oppression and suffering are only transitory and will come to an end when the Messiah is born.
         b. From Bethlehem would come "one who will be ruler over Israel" (i.e., over the entire nation, north and south). At last Israel will have a completely fit ruler
   ii. From Long Ago
      1. Days of Eternity
         a. The phrase "from ancient days" (מימי עולם) is of indefinite scope, but is undoubtedly intended to convey the impression of great antiquity; *cf* Am. 9:11, Mal. 3:4
         b. the messianic hope has "deep roots which go further back than the institution of kingship, though the latter gave it its dominant orientation.

III.   Secure Future vs. 3-4

a. Until the time
   i. Give them up
   ii. Will return
b. He Will Arise
   i. Arise
      1. The thought of v. 1 is here continued. "Stand" is probably used in the sense of "stand firm, steadfast, invincible." His power will emanate, not from the nation over whom he rules, but from God himself
   ii. Shepherd His Flock
      1. Shepherd- Shepherd - Is 40:11; 49:9; Ezek 34:13–15, 23, 24; Mic 7:14
         a. As David was a shepherd (Pss 23; 78:70–72), so his antitype, the royal Shepherd, will lead, feed, protect, and exercise authority over his own. As a Shepherd, he will be invincible: David protected his flock from the lions and bears; the ruling Shepherd will be endowed *bĕʿōz yhwh*

(with the strength of Yahweh), exercising divine strength to protect the flock

     b. First, he will begin his rule over them ("will stand" probably meaning something like "will be installed as King"; cf. Ps 2:6 for the concept). Alternatively, the sense may be that his reign will endure or last forever. Second, he will be their Shepherd-King—feeding, leading, and protecting them—essentially taking good care of them (see 2:12 and 4:8 and comments; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; 7:8; Pss 23:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:2–6; 31:10; Ezek 34:11–16, 23–24, 31; Zech 10:3; Matt 2:6; John 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:4). Such a shepherding ministry was a royal function in the ancient Near Eastern world.

  2. In the Strength of the Lord
    a. Strength - Strength - **God's might**

iii. They will Remain

  1. Remain - **live in safety, dwell securely**
    a. As a result of the above, the royal Shepherd's people ("flock") will live securely. The Hebrew for "live securely" means simply "live," "dwell," or "sit";
    b. *will be great unto the ends;* this clause furnishes the reason for the security of Israel

  2. In the Majesty of the Lord His God
    a. he promised Ruler will carry out his ministry in the "majesty" (=regal authority and power) of the "name" (=the Lord himself or his manifested character) of the Lord "his God" (speaking of the special, intimate relationship between the two).

iv. He will be Great

  1. To the ends of the Earth

Word Studies

Bethlehem -**3. Demography**. Bethlehem of Judah (Judg 17:7–9; 19:1, 2, 18; Ruth 1:1–2; 1 Sam 17:12) is called Ephrathah (Mic 5:1—Eng 5:2). This Ephrathah cannot be the Ephrathah of 1 Sam 10:2 (on the border of Ephraim and Benjamin) near Ramah (Jer 31:15, [1]N of Jerusalem), which in a poetic text is set in parallel with Kiriath-Jearim (Ps 132:6; cf. Melamed 1961; Tsevat 1962; Vogt 1975, with reference to Eusebius; Briend 1983). In Gen 35:19 and 48:7 (both [2]P), Bethlehem is related, not to Ephrathah, but to the "way to Ephrathah" or "coming to Ephrathah" (see also *T. Reu*[3]. 3:13).

Such identifications are late (like the identification of Mamre with Hebron) and reveal that the postexilic author felt there was a problem with Mic 5:1. The meaning of Ephrathah is to be determined from 1 Sam 17:12. The father of David is said to be an *ʾeprātî*, i.e., a man of Ephraim (Judg 12:5; 1 Kgs 11:26), just as the two sons of Elimelech and Naomi born in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:2), before Boaz and Jesse. This evidence strongly suggests that at the end of the 2[4]d millennium B.C.E., a clan of Ephraim (Mic 5:1 speaks of an *ʾelep*; Judg 6:15; 1 Sam 10:19; cf. Neu 1986) was settled in Bethlehem. The Chronicler's genealogies, which are artificial but always have some foundation, treat Ephrathah both as a spouse of Caleb (1 Chr 2:19) and as a woman who became Caleb's wife after the death of Hezron his father; she was "grandmother" of Tekoa (1 Chr 2:24), a village located in the Judean Desert (cf. Myers *Chronicles* A[5]B). The Chronicler admits an extension of the clan as far as Debir near Hebron, where Caleb lived (Judg 1:11–12; Josh 15:13).

The name of the father of David, Jesse (*yišay;* *ʾiyšay* in 1 Chr 2:13) is not common among Israelites. It may be Aramaic (cf. *ʾšy* in the Daskyleion Inscription; Dupont-Sommer 1966:47) or simply [6]W Semitic (cf. *yu-šaî* in an Egyptian list of slaves; Hayes 1962), and probably is an abbreviation of Abishai, another member of the clan (1 Sam 26:6).

That the clan of Ephraim moved from the [7]N to the [8]S of Jerusalem is indicated (1) by the travels of Samuel, son of the *ʾepratî* Elkanah (1 Sam 16:1–12; cf. 1:1–2), (2) by the story of the Levite and his patron Micah (Judg 17:7–9), and (3) by the narrative of the Levite's concubine from Bethlehem (Judges 19). Finally, the elders of Israel recognized David as their kinsman: "We are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam 5:1).

The genealogy of David, inserted at the end of the book of Ruth (4:18–22; Campbell *Ruth* A[9]B), suggests other marital relations which prove that the Ephramite clan of Jesse did not include all the inhabitants of Bethlehem. Amminadab and Nahshon, ancestors of Boaz, are said

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[1]N north (ern)
[2]P Pesher (commentary)
[3]*T. Reu. Testament of Reuben*
[4]2d second
[5]AB Anchor Bible
[6]W west (ern)
[7]N north (ern)
[8]S south (ern)
[9]AB Anchor Bible

to be "father and brother of the wife of the Levite Aaron" (Exod 6:23). Through Ram (Amram or Abiram?) they have Hezron as an ancestor. There is a problem with Hezron; he is related either to Reuben (Gen 46:8–9; Exod 6:14; Num 26:6; 1 Chr 5:3), or to Judah through Perez (Gen 46:12; Num 26:21; Ruth 4:18–19; 1 Chr 2:5). Such a double connection can be explained historically by transfer from [10]E (Bohan on the [11]W side of the Jordan is spoken of as the "son of Reuben"; cf. Josh 15:6; 18:17; de Vaux 1953:541) to [12]W (Perez-uzzah and Baal-Perazim are toponyms between Kiriath-Jearim and Jerusalem). Similarly, the clan of Karmi was transferred from Reuben (Num 26:6) to Judah (Josh 7:1; 1 Chr 2:7). These historical transfers also have a sociological connotation, because Hezron is related to *ḥaṣer*, a Hebrew term that denotes a village with a typical enclosure for herds; one of the Kerioth-hezron (Josh 15:25; cf. 15:3) is the *hǎṣar-ʾaddār* of Num 34:4. Numerous *hǎṣērôt* are to be found in the [13]S of Judah, but also beyond the Jordan (1 Chr 2:21–24, with Machir in Gilead and Ephrathah). As suggested by Eissfeldt, the *bên hamišpĕtayim* of Reuben (Judg 5:16) are also related to enclosures for herds (Eissfeldt 1949; 1954).

There were also Arabs in Bethlehem, descendants of Ishmael. David had two sisters, Zeruiah, the mother of Joab (father unknown) and Abigal, the mother of Amasa (2 Sam 17:25; 1 Chr 2:7), whose father was Ithra (Heb *yitrāʾ*) the Ishmaelite; the latter bears a true Arabic name *(watar)*. However, the most important connections are with Reuben.

When the tribe disappeared, having been conquered by Moab, David, who was banished from Saul's court, entrusted his father and mother to the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3–4).

4. Bethlehem in Israelite History. Fighting against the Philistines and the Amalekites, Saul found in Bethlehem-Ephrathah support for his campaigns. He enrolled the sons of Jesse (1 Sam 17:13), along with Elhanan, the son of Dodo (2 Sam 23:24; son of Jaareoregim in 2 Sam 21:19). Afterwards Bethlehem was taken by the Philistines (2 Sam 23:14), remaining in their hands until the victories of David, when it became a dependency of Jerusalem, the new capital city. According to 2 Chr 11:6 Bethlehem was fortified by Rehoboam, but no city walls have been discovered in the excavations of the site. Nevertheless, walls that belong to the same period (Iron I–II) were unearthed in Beit-Jalah (Giloh; Mazar 1981). As Giloh is not mentioned as a fortified city in Chronicles, it may be that the two sites were identified. In the list of Judean towns found in Joshua 15 (established probably under the reign of Josiah), mention is made of Bethlehem only in the LX[14]X and not in the M[15]T. It seems that Bethlehem was very small at the time (Mic 5:1—Eng 5:2, "you … who are little to be among the clans of Judah"), and noted only as the origin of the dynasty.[16]

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[10]E east (ern); or "Elohist" source

[11]W west (ern)

[12]W west (ern)

[13]S south (ern)

[14]LXX Septuagint

[15]MT Masoretic Text

[16] Henri Cazelles, "Bethlehem (Place)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 712–713.

Clan - **group of a thousand**, military, part of a tribe[17] The Israelite tribe descended from Jacob's fourth son Judah (Gen 29:35; 1 Chr 2:1). The tribe of Judah was allotted a large territory encompassing most of the southern region of Canaan (Josh 15:1–12). In Israel's later history, the tribe of Judah was the only tribe to remain loyal to the Davidic dynasty (1 Kgs 12:20), so Judah became the southern kingdom in opposition to the northern kingdom of Israel made up of the other tribes of Israel. For more information on the tribe and kingdom of Judah and its history, see these articles[18]

Shepherd - Is 40:11; 49:9; Ezek 34:13–15, 23, 24; Mic 7:14[19]

Strength - **God's might**

Remain – live in safety, dwell securely

Peace- comprehensive sense, meaning a good, healthy state, which is close to the sense of salvation or peace[20]and he will be the one who brings salvation[21]

[17] Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 59–60.

[18] John D. Barry et al., eds., "Judah, Tribe of," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[19] *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[20] Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1509.

[21] Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1509.

Commentary Studies

These verses place Micah's readers back into the reality of the present moment. The promise of 4:1–8 is not yet. In the current moment, Zion suffers in disorientation and loss. Yet the prophet encourages the people toward truth in the redeeming hand of the Lord. The nations who trampled on Zion will in time be trampled on. Zion's hope rests in the future promises of God.[22]

Form/Structure/Setting

This is a salvation oracle. There has been much debate about the starting and concluding points of this pericope as well as about the unity of the passage. 4:14 (5:1) should be considered as the origin of the pericope. It describes the present predicament of the people of Jerusalem. They are slashing themselves in lamenting their plight. גדד could mean "gather in troops" in the qa[23]l (Ps 94:21). Jerusalem is being invaded and the present ruler is being insulted by a slap on the face. But a new ruler will be born in Bethlehem whose heritage goes back a long time—to the beginning of David's line (v 1). The present evil situation will continue until the one about to give birth (the mother of the new king of Jerusalem, cf. 4:9), brings forth her child (v 2). Then the rest of his brothers will return from exile. Mays believes that v 3 interrupts the thought moving from v 2 to v 4. This new king will be crowned and rule in the glory and name of Yahweh. The people will dwell secure and the new king will be great to the ends of the earth (v 3). Does the pericope end with v 3? Probably so. The words "the ends of the earth" furnish a natural conclusion. The next verse begins with another reference to peace when Assyria is conquered. There is no reference to the new David in the next pericope.

Comment

The language of 4:14 (5:1) is difficult. The RS[24]V, J[25]B and NE[26]B follow the LX[27]X and read "you are walled about with a wall." The KJ[28]V and TE[29]V read "gather your forces" (cf. Ps 94:21). Harrelson (155) suggests, "Now you are in mourning, besieged one." But the first meaning of the Hebrew root גדד is "to slash." The hithpolel form used here and in 1 Kgs 18:28 means "to slash oneself with knives" either as a part of pagan worship or as mourning for the dead (Deut 14:1; Jer 16:6). The thought here seems to be that the people of Jerusalem had been slashing themselves like Baal worshipers, thinking that would help save them. Zion is now suffering

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[22] Douglas Mangum, ed., *Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament*, Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Mic 4:9–13.

[23] qal the basic stem of Heb. verbs

[24] RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

[25] JB A. Jones (ed.), *Jerusalem Bible*

[26] NEB The New English Bible

[27] LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

[28] KJV King James Version (1611) = AV

[29] TEV Today's English Version

attack. Her ruler (Judge) is being treated shamefully by his enemies. The word "Judge" probably was used to call attention to the impotency of the present ruler. The earlier judges were charismatic deliverers or saviors. The present king could not even save himself.

But there is hope. Deliverance will come from the least expected place. Bethlehem Ephrathah was the smallest, most insignificant clan in Judah. The word צעיר is not the regular word (מְעַט) for "little or small" but a word rarely used to call attention to the trifling or insignificant (Ps 68:27). Out of Bethlehem would come a new ruler (מושל), one who would rule in strength, whose origins were from "old times" (קֶדֶם) and from ancient (עולם) days.

The ancient days could be referring to the origin of the new ruler in terms of the first Adam in the garden of Eden. Edmond Jacob says that the messianic hope has "deep roots which go further back than the institution of kingship, though the latter gave it its dominant orientation. Since the return of the golden age formed part of the most ancient patrimony of Israel it is quite natural to suppose that it also included the hope of the return of man as he existed at the beginning" (*Theology of the Old Testament* [New York: Harper, 1958] 327, 335). Whether or not the image of primitive man was in Micah's mind, the idea of a new David certainly was. The days of David are spoken of as בימי עולם "the ancient days" in Amos 9:11, so such language would not be out of place in Micah.

The deliverer had not yet come. Until he did Yahweh would give the people of Judah into the hands of their enemy until one about to give birth (the qa[30]l active participle suggests that in the mind of the prophet the event was imminent) brought forth (same word is in Isa 7:14) a child "for me" לִי. The child was to be Yahweh's ruler (5:1 [5:2]). Then the rest (יתר "remnant") of his brothers (in exile) will return to the children of Israel.

Explanation

This is one of the most familiar pericopes in Micah for Christians. Matthew quoted 5:1 in reference to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem (Matt 2:6). However, the OT text is slightly altered in Matthew's account. Instead of saying, *"little* to be among the *clans* of Judah," Matthew says, *"by no means least* among the *rulers* of Judah." Also Matthew omits "Ephrathah," and adds, "my people" Judah.

This passage has been widely referred to as "messianic" and as similar to Isaiah's promise of the birth of a new king in 7:14. Although some scholars have questioned assigning this pericope to Micah there is no compelling reason for not doing so. Granting that all of these pericopes might have undergone some editing, it is possible to understand Micah saying essentially the same thing as Isaiah said, namely, that the present king is weak and embarrassing. The only solution to the problem is for a new king to be born not in Jerusalem (it was too corrupt for Micah) but in Bethlehem where the line of David began. Micah sees a new beginning for the kingdom of God which would extend through the earth. This last thought was probably influenced by some of the royal psalms (Pss 2, 17, 72).[31]

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[30]qal the basic stem of Heb. verbs

[31] Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1984), 43–44.

1. *And thou, Beth Ephrathah*] [32] reads, "Bethlehem Ephrathah"; but "Bethlehem" is a gloss as is shown by [33]'s rendering and by the metre. The identification with Bethlehem is, however, correct as appears from the reference to Judah in the following line, from the evident allusion of v[34]. 1 to the Davidic dynasty which sprang from Bethlehem, and from the way in which Bethlehem and Ephrathah are associated in other passages. The family of David were Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah (1 S. 17:12); Mahlon and Chilion are likewise classified (Ru. 1:2); Ephrathah and Bethlehem are parallel terms in Ru. 4:11; [35]'s version of Jos. 15:59, which is generally conceded to represent the original text, identifies Ephrathah and Bethlehem; while 1 Ch. 2:19, 50, 4:4 enumerates Bethlehem in a list of Judean towns associated with Caleb and Ephrathah. The only evidence at variance with these facts is furnished by Gn. 35:16, 19, 48:7, 1 S. 10:2; in Gn. 35:19, 48:7 Ephrathah is identified with Bethlehem as above, but from Gn. 35:16 and 1 S. 10:2 it appears that the Ephrathah in question, which was the burial-place of Rachel, was near Bethel and was in the border of Benjamin. Hence we are forced to conclude that there were at least two places named Ephrathah, one in Benjamin and one in Judah, and that the phrase "that is Bethlehem" in Gn. 35:19, 48:7 is a gloss due to some reader who confused the two places.[36*] The Ephrathah of our text seems to have been the name of a larger district within which Bethlehem was situated, or of the clan to which Bethlehem belonged. On the basis of the existence of an Ephrathah in Benjamin, Oort endeavoured to show that this prophecy had to do with that site and was intended to announce the coming of the Messianic kingdom through the restoration of the downfallen dynasty of Saul,[37†] but upon the exposure of the weakness of this proposition by Kue[38].,[39‡] Oort himself abandoned it.[40§]—*The least among the thousands of Judah*] The only possible rendering of [41] is, "little to be among the thousands of Judah," *i.e*[42]*.* so small that one would hardly have expected to find thee in the number. But grammar and metre combine to recommend the corrected text. The word rendered *clans* is of somewhat doubtful significance as applied to Beth Ephrathah. It ordinarily designates, aside from its strictly numerical usage, either a band of one thousand men under a common leader, or a family. Here and in 1 S. 23:23 it has either the latter meaning, or else denotes the region or district occupied by an אֶלֶף. It may refer to Ephrathah as the seat of the Davidic clan, which at the time this was written seems to have been reduced to its lowest terms. But in contrast with the present low estate of the family, *from thee one will come forth for me who shall be ruler over Israel*] This implies that at the time of its utterance there was no king over Israel and thus indicates the late

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[32]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[33]𝔊 The Septuagint, in the received Greek Version.

[34]v. verse

[35]𝔊 The Septuagint, in the received Greek Version.

[36*] So *e.g.* Dillmann, Stk., Dr., Addis, Gunkel, Holzinger, Carpenter and Battersby.

[37†] *ThT.* V, 501–512.

[38]Kue. Abraham Kuenen.

[39‡] *ThT.* VI, 45–66.

[40§] *ThT.* VI, 273–279.

[41]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[42]*i.e. id est*, that is.

origin of this passage *For me, i.e*[43]. in accordance with my purpose and as a result of my plans; the speaker is Yahweh.—*Whose origins are from of old, from ancient days*] *i.e*[44]. he will belong to one of the oldest families, viz[45]. the Davidic; *cf*[46]. Ez. 34:23 *f*[47]., 37:24 [48]f. Ho. 3:5. The phrase "from ancient days" (מימי עולם) is of indefinite scope, but is undoubtedly intended to convey the impression of great antiquity; *cf*[49]. Am. 9:11, Mal. 3:4.[50*]—**2**. *Therefore will he give them up until the time when she who is to give birth shall have borne*] The connection of this gloss with the preceding verse is very loose. The thought seems to be thus:—since Yahweh is going to raise up a mighty king for Israel in his own good time, it is clear that the present oppression and suffering are only transitory and will come to an end when the Messiah is born. The change from the first person of v[51]. 1 ("for me") to the third person here is awkward; the failure to define the subject is striking; and the lack of any mention of the antecedents of the pronoun "them" is confusing. The treatment of v[52]. 2 as a marginal note best accounts for these facts. The statement concerning the expected birth is evidently an allusion to Is. 7:14 and comes from a time when that prophecy was being given Messianic significance. This would point to an age long after the days of Isaiah.[53†]—*And the rest of his brethren will return unto the sons of Israel*] The only proper antecedent for "his" is the promised Messiah. The exile is evidently presupposed, but the exact meaning of the phrase "the rest of his brethren" eludes us. Probably We. is right in seeing in it an allusion to the Shear Jashub of Is. 7:3. Perhaps the prophet has in mind the return of all the exiles and their reunion with those who had not been carried away; or

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[43]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[44]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[45]viz. *videlicet*, namely, to wit.

[46]*cf. confer*, compare.

[47]*f*. and following.

[48]f and following.

[49]*cf. confer*, compare.

[50*] An interesting analogy is furnished by the "Messianic" passage of Leiden Papyrus, No.344 [*v.* A. H. Gardiner, *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (1909)], where the "Messiah" is apparently represented as a reincarnation of the god Re and thus can be spoken of as a contemporary of the first generation of mankind; *cf.* JMPS. on *Semitic Prophecy, BW.* XXXV (1910), 223–233.

[51]v. verse

[52]v. verse

[53†] Stk.'s attempt to maintain Micah's authorship of this passage involves a mythological interpretation of the Messiah as the *Urmensch*, the "days of old" as the age of Paradise, and "the one who is to bear" as the mother of the gods (both here and in Is. 7)—all of which seems farfetched and fanciful. Much more plausible is the interpretation in the form offered by Gressmann (*Eschatologie*, 270 *ff.*) and Burney (*Journal of Theol. Studies*, X, 580–4), which is to the effect that this prophecy as well as Isaiah's Immanuel oracle rested upon a popular expectation of the advent of a Messianic ruler whose birth should be signalised by some remarkable portent. This passage refers to three phases of the expectation, viz. (1) that the Messiah will be of divine origin having existed in reality or in the mind of God from time immemorial; (2) that whether his fatherhood be human or divine he is to be born of a woman; and (3) that his birth will usher in a new age of peace and prosperity.

again, he may look forward to the reunion of Israel and Judah in the Messianic age; *cf*[54]. Ho. 3:5, Is. 11:13[55]f. Ez. 16:55, 61, Zc. 8:13.—**3**. *And he will stand and shepherd* (*his flock*) *in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh, his God*] The thought of v[56]. 1 is here continued. "Stand" is probably used in the sense of "stand firm, steadfast, invincible." His power will emanate, not from the nation over whom he rules, but from God himself. The words "his flock" are not expressed in the Hebrew but are implied in the verb used.—*And they will endure*] This verb, found in [57], seems to be due to a copyist's error, for it is redundant in the metre and, as it stands, yields no satisfactory sense. It is commonly explained as meaning "dwell in safety," but the verb alone never has that meaning. The rendering here adopted is the least difficult; but it is doubtful, since in Ps. 125:1, 1 Jo. 4:20, the two passages cited in support of it (BDB[58].), the meaning "abide," "endure," is conveyed rather by the modifying phrase לעולם than by the verb itself. The elimination of this word takes away all occasion for Duhm's transposition of v[59]. 3b to follow v[60]. 2 as a continuation of the gloss.—*For now he will be great unto the ends of the earth*] According to [61] this clause furnishes the reason for the security of Israel, viz[62]. the universal acknowledgment of the power of the Messiah. According to the text as here presented, it gives a convincing illustration of the effect of Yahweh's strength as revealed in the Messiah.

    1. ה [אֶפְרָתָה loc. with old fem[63]. ending, Ges.[64] [65]§ 90 g; *cf*[66]. יְשׁוּעָתָה, עֶזְרָתָה, etc. [67], אפ with this spelling occurs also in Ru. 4:11, Gn. 35:16, 19, 48:7, Ps. 132:6, 1 Ch. 2:24, 50, 4:4, Jos. 15:59 [68]; but without הָ in Gn. 48:7, 1 Ch. 2:19. Hence it is better to retain ה in

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[54]*cf. confer*, compare.

[55]f and following.

[56]v. verse

[57]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[58]BDB. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson*, edited by Francis Brown, with the co-operation of S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs (1891–1906).

[59]v. verse

[60]v. verse

[61]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[62]viz. *videlicet*, namely, to wit.

[63]fem. feminine.

[64]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[65]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[66]*cf. confer*, compare.

[67]אפ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[68]𝔊 The Septuagint, in the received Greek Version.

Mi. 5:1 and to regard loss of ה from before צע[69]' as due to haplo[70]. Fr. Schulthess, *ZAW*[71]. XXX, 62 [72]*f*., following [73] [74]= 'aphărtā, would preserve [75] intact here, and treat אכ[76]' as *epitheton ornans*, related to the Aram[77]. אַפְרָא and Assy[78]. *apparu* which mean 'pastureland,' 'marsh.' But the character of the region around Bethlehem does not warrant the application of such an epithet, nor can one clear case of the use of this word as an appellative be cited from either Heb[79]., Ar[80]., Syr[81]., Aram[82]. or Assy[83]. It is equally true, of course, as Schulthess points out, that nothing is known elsewhere of a Beth-Ephrathah, yet the formation of names with 'Beth' is one of the most common.—צעיר] Position in sentence is against this being in predicate relation to אתה; better as an appositive. On the adj[84]. with art[85]. as having superlative force, Ges[86].[87]§ 133 g. The masc[88]. form is no indication that Bethlehem is used as representing its people and not as designating a place, for town-names with בית not infrequently take the masc[89]. instead of the fem[90].; Kö. § 248 c 249 c [91]f. Nor is it true that צ[92]' applies only to persons (Hal.); *cf*[93]. Dn. 8:9 (of a horn), Je. 49:20 (of sheep), and the place-name, צעירה,

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[69]צע' sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[70]haplo. haplography.

[71]*ZAW. Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*.

[72]*f* and following.

[73]ᢒ The Peshitto, cited from the Paris Polyglot.

[74]= equivalent, equals.

[75]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[76]אכ' sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[77]Aram. Aramaic, Aramean.

[78]Assy. Assyria, Assyrian.

[79]Heb. Hebrew.

[80]Ar. Arabic.

[81]Syr. Syriac.

[82]Aram. Aramaic, Aramean.

[83]Assy. Assyria, Assyrian.

[84]adj. adjective.

[85]art. article.

[86]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[87]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[88]masc. masculine.

[89]masc. masculine.

[90]fem. feminine.

[91]f and following.

[92]צ' sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[93]*cf. confer*, compare.

2 K. 8:21.—וַיֵּצֵא לִהְיוֹת מוֹשֵׁל] It is difficult to make מ׳[95] לה׳[94] the subj[96]. of יצא (Now., Marti); it is better to assign an indefinite subj[97]. and treat ל׳[98] מ׳[99] as expressing purpose, *i.e[100].* "one will come forth to become ruler"; on indef[101]. subj[102]., Ges[103].[104]§ 114 d; on ל with inf[105]. to express purpose, Ges[106].[107]§ 114 [108]f. g.—מוֹצָאֹתָיו] חֹם. in this sense; but *cf[109].* Assy[110]. *mûṣû*, used *e.g[111].* of the sources of the Tigris. A nominal clause with relative force; *cf[112].* Kö. § 362 P.—**2**. יתנם] For meaning "deliver up," *cf[113]* Ju. 20:13, 1 S. 11:12 and BDB[114]. 679b.—עת יולדת] A noun in cstr[115]. rel[116]. with a sentence, equivalent

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[94]לה׳ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[95]מ׳ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[96]subj. subject.

[97]subj. subject.

[98]ל׳ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[99]מ׳ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[100]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[101]indef. indefinite.

[102]subj. subject.

[103]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[104]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[105]inf. infinitive.

[106]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[107]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[108]f and following.

[109]*cf. confer*, compare.

[110]Assy. Assyria, Assyrian.

[111]*e.g.* for example.

[112]*cf. confer*, compare.

[113]*cf. confer*, compare.

[114]BDB. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson*, edited by Francis Brown, with the co-operation of S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs (1891–1906).

[115]cstr. construct.

[116]rel. relative.

to a noun limited by a temporal clause; *cf*[117]. Ges[118].[119]§ 130 d. 155 1.—ילרה] Fut[120]. pf[121].; Dr.[122] [123]§ 17 Ges[124].[125]§ 106 o Kö. [129]§.—אל =[126] [על; *cf*[127]. BDB[128]. 757a; it is unnecessary to change the text. The meaning "along with," "together with," which some prefer here (*e.g*[129]. BDB[130].), is usually found only where על connects closely with a noun (*e.g*[131]. אֵם עַל בָּנִים, Gn. 32:12), not where it governs a phrase modifying a vb[132]. as here (so Now.).—ורעה] Not uncommonly used fig[133]. of the activity of a ruler; but only here without an obj[134]. expressed. Assy[135]. *reʻu* commonly means "to rule, reign," and רʻ[136] here seems to have that force.—עתה] Used of fut[137]. time as in 4:7[138]

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[117]*cf. confer*, compare.

[118]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[119]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[120]Fut. future.

[121]pf. perfect.

[122]Dr. S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (1874; 3d ed., 1892).

[123]§ S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (1874; 3d ed., 1892).

[124]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[125]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[126]= equivalent, equals.

[127]*cf. confer*, compare.

[128]BDB. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson*, edited by Francis Brown, with the co-operation of S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs (1891–1906).

[129]*e.g.* for example.

[130]BDB. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson*, edited by Francis Brown, with the co-operation of S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs (1891–1906).

[131]*e.g.* for example.

[132]vb. verb.

[133]fig. figurative.

[134]obj. object.

[135]Assy. Assyria, Assyrian.

[136]רʻ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[137]fut. future.

[138] J. M. Powis Smith, William Hayes Ward, and Julius August Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911), 102–106.

4. *And this will be the protection from Assyria*] [139] is usually rendered, "and such shall be our peace. Assyria, etc"; but the connection thereby established is very harsh and abrupt. By some, the first words are connected with vv[140]. 1–3; and rendered, "and such an one shall be our peace."[141*] But the description of the Messiah as abstract 'peace' is unusual. The translation here adopted furnishes an admirable sense in this connection and inolves only the slightest textual change. *This* refers to the following, not the preceding context. *Assyria* stands as representative of the great world-tyrant of the time, whether Babylon, Persia, or Syria (*v. s[142].*).—*When he comes into our land, and when he treads upon our soil*] The invasion is not conceived of as a remote possibility, but rather as an event likely to occur and therefore needing to be reckoned with.—*Seven shepherds, yea—eight princes of men*] This collocation of two numbers, the second being greater than the first by a unit, is employed to express the idea of indefiniteness; *cf*[143]*.* H[144].[A145H], 21.[146†] The supply of leaders will be equal to all demands that may be made. *Shepherds* and *princes of men* are equivalent terms, both designating military leaders; *cf*[147]*.* Jos. 13:21.—**5**. *And they will shepherd*] *i.e*[148]*. in sensu malo*, exercise punitive power over her.—*The land of Assyria and the land of Nimrod*] "Nimrod" is chosen as a synonym for "Assyria," perhaps, because of its suggestion of the root *marad*, "to rebel." The only other references to Nimrod (Gn. 10:8–11, 1 Ch. 1:16) show that the whole Babylonian-Assyrian empire was classified as the territory of Nimrod, the founder of Babylon.—*And they will rescue from Assyria*] [149] "he will rescue," referring to the Messiah of vv[150]. 1–3; but this ignores all the intervening context. van H.'s solution of the difficulty by dropping this context as a later addition is too drastic treatment. The whole progress of thought here requires the plural.

4. זה] Eerdmans, *ThT*[151]*.* XLI (1907), 502, would give זה here the meaning of Ar[152]. *dzu*, lord of; but this rendering is necessary nowhere else, not even in Ju. 5:5; nor does it

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[139]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[140]vv. verses.

[141*] So Kl., Ro., Or. The application of זה to the Messiah began with Ki.

[142]*v. s. vide supra*, see above (usually general remark on same verse).

[143]*cf. confer*, compare.

[144]H. *W. R. Harper, Commentary on Amos and Hosea, ICC.*, 1905.

[145AH] *W. R. Harper, Commentary on Amos and Hosea, ICC.*, 1905.

[146†] The view of Gressmann, *Eschat.* 284, that seven and eight are to be added together yielding fifteen, which is the number of Ishtar (*KAT.*[3], 454) the goddess-mother of the Messiah, can only be counted among the curiosities of the history of interpretation.

[147]*cf. confer*, compare.

[148]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[149]𝔐 The Massoretic Text.

[150]vv. verses.

[151]*ThT. Theologisch Tijdschrift*.

[152]Ar. Arabic.

belong to the Syr[153]., Aram[154]., and Eth[155]. equivalents.—ארמנותינו] is hardly appropriate here. The prophet is picturing a condition when the enemy will never be permitted to do more than cross the border; entrance of the *palaces* is out of the question; *cf*[156]. v[157]. 5 and [158] [159].—נסיכי אדם] *i.e*[160]. "princely men"; *cf*[161]. Pr. 15:20 א׳[163] [162]כְּסִיל, "a foolish man"; *cf*[164]. Ges[165].[166]§ 128 I.—**5.** פְּתָחֶיהָ] *i.e*[167]. "in its entrances," establishing a blockade; or "in its passes," pursuing the fugitives to their mountain fastnesses. But the parall[168]. calls for a weapon; hence it is better to read some form of פְּתִיחָה, *drawn sword*, as suggested by Aq[169]. E´ and [170].[171]

This is also an oracle of judgment and salvation—a mixed type—and the last of the three consecutive "Now" oracles (see comments at 4:9–10). It is one of the most familiar passages in Micah and contains the promise of the birth of a new King in Bethlehem whose greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

5:1 Micah, representing the people ("us"), continues to address Jerusalem (see 4:13b). The opening words of the Hebrew text are open to at least three readings. The first is in the main

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[153]Syr. Syriac.

[154]Aram. Aramaic, Aramean.

[155]Eth. Ethiopic Version.

[156]*cf. confer*, compare.

[157]v. verse

[158]𝕲 The Septuagint, in the received Greek Version.

[159]ℭ The Peshitto, cited from the Paris Polyglot.

[160]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[161]*cf. confer*, compare.

[162]כְּסִיל sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[163]א׳ sign of abbreviation in Hebrew words.

[164]*cf. confer*, compare.

[165]Ges. Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[166]§ Wilhelm Gesenius's *Hebräische Grammatik, völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch* (1909[28]). English trans. by Collins and Cowley, 1910[2].

[167]*i.e. id est*, that is.

[168]parall. parallelism.

[169]Aq. Aquila's translation, cited from Field's *Hexapla*.

[170]𝕭 The Vulgate, cited from Hetzenauer, *Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ Editionis* (1906).

[171] J. M. Powis Smith, William Hayes Ward, and Julius August Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911), 108–109.

text of the NI[172]V: "Marshal your troops, O city [lit. 'daughter'] of troops."[173] This analysis is defended by Waltke and others and is the view preferred here.[174] The second is in the NI[175]V footnote as an alternative translation: "Strengthen your walls, O walled city." But this reading involves changing the Hebrew verb root from *gādad* to *gādar*.[176] Longman favors a third reading: "Now gash yourself, daughter of marauder!" (a common meaning of the Hb. verb *gdd*). He explains, "The act of cutting oneself was a well-known expression of mourning in the nations surrounding Israel. Israel, however, was forbidden to engage in this practice (Deut 14:1), thus giving the command a sarcastic tone."[177]

The "siege" against the citizens of Jerusalem could refer to that of King Sennacherib's Assyrian army in 701 B.C. But it more likely refers prophetically to that of King Nebuchadnezzar's Neo-Babylonian army 588–586 (cf. 4:9–10). If so, the ultimate reference of Israel's (i.e., Judah's) "ruler" probably would be to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar blinded by having his soldiers quite literally "strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod" (see 2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 39:6–7; 52:10–11). Although "some suggest this ruler was Christ because (a) Christ was struck on the head (Matt 27:30; Mark 15:19) and face (John 19:3) and (b) He is referred to in Micah 5:2," Martin argues that the ruler is Zedekiah:

(1) The first part of verse 1 refers to the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem. (2) The word "ruler" translates *šōpēṭ* ("judge"), whereas the word for ruler in verse 2, which does clearly refer to Christ, is *mōšēl*. *Šōpēṭ* forms an interesting wordplay on the similar-sounding word for "rod," *šēbeṭ*.) (3) Christ was not smitten by troops of an enemy nation while Jerusalem was besieged. However, Nebuchadnezzar did capture Zedekiah and torture him (2 Kgs 25:1–7). (4) A soon-coming event, not a distant-future one, seems to be suggested by the Hebrew word for "but now" in Micah 5:1 (not trans. in the NI[178]V). This is followed by the distant future in verses 2–6. This pattern of present

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[172]NIV New International Version

[173] Note the assonance in the Hb. text between תִּתְגֹּדְדִי, "marshal your troops," and גְּדוּד, "troops."

[174] See, e.g., B. K. Waltke, "Micah," in *The Minor Prophets*, 3 vols., ed. T. E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 2:701–2. He explains that although the *hit.* of גדד normally means "cut oneself," the meaning "throng together" is required in Ps 94:21 and Jer 5:7. *HALOT*, 177, treats this as a secondary root, a denominative of גְּדוּד, "band, troop." The syntactical use of the verb here is imperfect of injunction (*IBHS*, 509).

[175]NIV New International Version

[176] The LXX has νῦν ἐμφραχθήσεται θυγάτηρ Εφραιμ ἐν φραγμῷ, "Now the daughter of Ephraim will be completely walled in."

[177] T. Longman III, "Micah," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 655–56. *HALOT*, 177, likewise reads גדד, "make incisions upon oneself" but emends בַּת־גְּדוּד to הִתְגֹּדַד, the infinitive, yielding an emphatic construction. Waltke, "Micah," notes, however, that גְּדוּד occurs in Jer 48:37 with the meaning "cuttings upon the hands as a sign of mourning" and in Ps 65:11 [10] as "furrows" (2:701). See also Clines, *DCH* 2:316–17.

[178]NIV New International Version

crisis followed by future deliverance is also seen in 4:11–13 in which the present (4:11) is introduced by "but now" and the distant future is discussed in 4:12–13.[81796]

The pattern just referred to (present or soon-coming distress followed by later deliverance) also is seen in 4:9–10 (see previous comments on those verses).

5:2 Micah next quotes the Lord directly. The conjunction at the beginning *(wĕ)* is adversative ("But"). A sharp contrast is drawn between the weak and helpless ruler of v. 1 and the strong, ideal, Messianic King/Ruler of this verse. The Lord announces his birthplace and his Davidic roots. There is a change in addressee from Jerusalem (v. 1) to Bethlehem ("you").[81807] Ephrathah (meaning "fruitfulness") is either another name for Bethlehem ("house of food") or the district in which Bethlehem was located (see Gen 48:7; Ruth 4:11) or possibly a clan name. Since it is in the tribal territory of Judah, it also is called "Bethlehem Judah" (Judg 17:7) and "Bethlehem, Judah" (Ruth 1:2). Bethlehem was situated about five miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. These expanded names distinguish it from the Bethlehem to the north in the territory of Zebulun (Josh 19:15).

Compared to Jerusalem with its magnificent buildings (3:10), Bethlehem is characterized as "small" (cf. the Christmas carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem"). This probably applies to both size and significance. Yet in spite of its relative insignificance, this birthplace of David (1 Sam 16:1, 18; 17:12) would also become the birthplace of his greatest descendant, the Messiah (Matt 2:1–8; cf. John 7:42). Perhaps the "low state of David's line when Messiah was born also is implied here."[81818] "Out of seeming littleness and weakness God has perfected strength."[81829] The apostle Paul expressed this principle in 1 Cor 1:27–29. Even though Bethlehem is small, it is "by no means least" (Matt 2:6). In fact, it was greatly honored through the birth of the Messiah there.

The singular of the Hebrew for "clans" *(ʾelep)* apparently developed semantically from an original nuance of a numeral ("thousand," Num 35:4; Josh 7:3) to a "military company of 1,000" men (Exod 18:21, 25; 1 Sam 8:12) to the approximate number of a "clan" (Judg 6:15; 1 Sam 10:19, 21) to the "city" where a clan lived (here; Amos 5:3) to the "ruler" of a clan (cf. Matt 2:6). Here "cities" or "towns" (GN[183]B reads "towns") seems to be the most appropriate sense contextually,[91840] though "clans" also is satisfactory. "For me" is equivalent to something like "to bring praise and glory to me by serving me and doing my will" (cf. Ps 40:7–8; John 4:34).

From Bethlehem would come "one who will be ruler over Israel" (i.e., over the entire nation, north and south). At last Israel will have a completely fit ruler! Probably too much has been made of the fact that the Hebrew for "ruler" here is *môšēl* instead of *melek* ("king"). Certainly

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[17986] J. A. Martin, "Micah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1985), 1486.

[18087] There is also assonance between אַתָּה ("you") and the previous occurrences of עַתָּה ("now"). Here אַתָּה is addressed to Bethlehem; in 4:8 it was addressed to Jerusalem. David, of course, had a vital connection to both.

[18188] A. R. Fausset, "Jeremiah–Malachi," 599; cf. Isa 11:1; Amos 9:11.

[18289] Ibid., 602.

[183]GNB *Good News Bible*

[18490] See Wolff, *Micah*, 144.

one cannot say that *melek* is reserved exclusively for God in this book, since it is used of the "king" of Moab in 6:5. The verb from which *môšēl* is derived *(māšal)* can be used to refer to the Lord's rule (Judg 8:23; Ps 89:9). The nouns *memšālâ* ("dominion," from *māšal*) and *mamleket* ("kingship," from *mālak*) occur parallel to each other in 4:8. It is possible to argue that perhaps the use of *môšēl* here implies that God himself (in Trinitarian terms, God the Father) will retain his regal powers as the Great "King" *(melek)* of the universe and that this ruler will rule for him in carrying out his plan for the earth.

But who is this ruler? There is a near consensus that he is none other than the Messiah. All the ancient Jewish interpreters regarded the ruler as the Messiah (cf. Matt 2:5; John 7:41–42). The testimony of the Targums also favors the Messianic interpretation of the prophecy.[185] Longenecker includes 5:2 among the passages accepted in Judaism as applying directly to the Messiah.[186]

The verse ends with "whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." NI[187]V footnotes provide this alternative rendering: "whose goings out are from of old, from days of eternity." A few, preferring the alternative reading (especially "from days of eternity"), have charged that the translation in the text shows carelessness in handling Old Testament Messianic prophecies and other doctrines.[188] On the contrary, equally competent scholars differ on the contextual interpretation of certain biblical passages, and this happens to be one of them. Those who prefer the footnote alternative naturally use it to argue for the eternal existence of the Messiah. Those who prefer the main text believe that the expression *mîmê ʿôlām* refers to the ancient "origins" of the Messiah in the line of David (as indicated in the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7:12–16) and in the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10).

The immediate context appears to favor the main text: "*Bethlehem … of Judah*, out of *you* [emphasis mine] will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel." God does not say "from *me* will come for *you* …"[189] The stress is on the "origins"[190] of the future Davidic ruler in the Davidic town of Bethlehem. McComiskey maintains that in this passage "the Davidic roots of the coming ruler are emphasized by the prophet Micah."[191] Significantly, Jesus is introduced in Matt 1:1 as "the son of David, the son of Abraham"—no doubt, in part, to present him as the fulfiller of the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants. Certainly the deity and eternality of the Messiah (the Son of God) are still plainly taught in other passages, particularly in the New Testament (John 1:1–3; 8:58; cf. Isa 9:6, "Mighty God, Everlasting Father").[192]

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[185] P. J. Gloag, *The Messianic Prophecies* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1879), 118.

[186] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 89.

[187] NIV New International Version

[188] E.g., E. D. Radmacher and Z. C. Hodges, *The NIV Reconsidered: A Fresh Look at a Popular Translation* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1990), 56–58.

[189] G. Van Groningen also notes that although "Zion, Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel, indeed, will realize great benefit" from this ruler who will come from Bethlehem, it is *"for me"* that he will do his work (*Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 502).

[190] וּמוֹצָאֹתָיו, lit. "and his goings forth."

[191] T. E. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 28.

[192] See also NIVSB, Rom 9:5 n.; J. R. White, *The King James Only Crontroversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1995), 215–16; and numerous commentaries.

It is instructive that a Hebrew expression equivalent to "from of old" here *(miqqedem)* occurs in 7:20 *(mîmê qedem,* "in days long ago"), and that one almost identical to "from ancient times" here *(mîmê ʿôlām)* occurs in 7:14 *(kîmê ʿôlām,* "as in days long ago"). (The latter phrase also is used in Amos 9:11 of the time of David.) In both cases the phrases are anchored in history, 7:14 probably in the golden age of David and Solomon, and 7:20 in the patriarchal period. This same historical sense for *mîmê ʿôlām* is applied by the major Hebrew lexicons to its use in Mic 5:2: "ancient time, days of old,"[98] "days of old,"[99] "ancient times,"[100] "remote antiquity."[101] For contextual reasons numerous commentators also prefer this semantic category for ʿôlām here. So while either interpretation is possible, the context seems to favor the main text over the footnote alternative.

5:3 "Therefore"—because God has designed to punish his people before delivering them and because the Deliverer is to arise from the little town of Bethlehem, not the great city of Jerusalem—God will abandon Israel (Judah) by handing them over to their enemies. That condition will last until the promised Ruler is born and begins his rule. "Therefore" also is explained as meaning "because such great and blessed events are coming, the surrender of Israel to affliction can only be temporary, lasting till the point of time when, after painful pangs, the glorious birth takes place. He who is born for the salvation of the nation is, according to the context, no other than the ruler from Bethlehem."[102]

"She who is in labor" has been interpreted in at least three ways: (1) It refers to the mother of the Messianic Ruler promised in v. 2 (Mary):

In view of the fact that Bethlehem must eventually produce the glorious Ruler, it follows that the judgment threatened in 3:12; 4:10; and 5:1 must in some sense continue until the day of his appearing. The fact that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and not in Jerusalem, the city of David, presupposes that the family of David would have lost the throne. Such could only be the case if Israel had been overrun by her enemies.… God's abandonment of Israel would only be temporary. Israel's oppression would continue until the birth of Messiah. "She who is with child" must be the virgin who would conceive and bear a son called Immanuel (Isa 7:14). The Immanuel promise was uttered

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[98] BDB, 761.

[99] E. Jenni, "עוֹלָם ʿôlām eternity," *TLOT* 2:855. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3 vols., trans. M. E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997).

[100] A. Tomasino, "עוֹלָם," *NIDOTTE* 3:347. "The basic meaning of the nom. [noun] is farthest time, distant time.… It does not seem to mean eternity in the philosophical sense of the word (i.e., neither unbounded time nor eternal timelessness), although there are a few vv. where the meaning of the nom. is very much like the idea of eternity.… ʿôlām is usually used to describe events extended into the distant past or future. Such distant time is clearly relative: it can be a time in one's own life (Ps 77:5 [6]), a life span (Exod 21:6), or the furthest conceivable time (15:18)" (p. 346).

[101] *NIDNTT* 3:828.

[102] C. von Orelli, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. J. S. Banks (1897; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1977), 208.

about thirty years prior to the present passage. Thus the future king's birth would signal the beginning of the end of the nation's oppression (5:3a).[101983]

(2) It refers to Bethlehem, out of which Israel's Ruler would come (v. 2).[101994] (3) Most commentators (including this one) construe it as a reference to Israel (Judah) or, more particularly, Zion (Jerusalem). Thus it would echo 4:9–10. God's chosen people (the covenant nation), then, would bring forth the Messianic Ruler. The Ruler's "brothers" (=his people) would return from exile to join the other Israelites in Judah and Jerusalem as a restored, reunified, complete covenant nation again. Probably the believing, faithful, righteous remnant is in view in the "brothers." Although such prophecies "receive a fulfillment in the immediate future, and in Messiah's first advent, they also look forward to their exhaustive fulfillment in the final consummation of all things at Messiah's second advent in glory."[102005] The principle of progressive fulfillment is at work again. For the final, complete stage in the progressive fulfillment of the whole in the future, see Isa 11:10–16; Ezek 16:53–63; Hos 3:4–5; Zech 10:9–12.[102016]

5:4 Virtually everyone agrees that the antecedent of "He" is the coming Ruler of v. 2, namely, the Messianic Son of David. After his people return to him (v. 3), here is what the Messiah will do for them. First, he will begin his rule over them ("will stand" probably meaning something like "will be installed as King"; cf. Ps 2:6 for the concept). Alternatively, the sense may be that his reign will endure or last forever. Second, he will be their Shepherd-King—feeding, leading, and protecting them—essentially taking good care of them (see 2:12 and 4:8 and comments; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; 7:8; Pss 23:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 23:2–6; 31:10; Ezek 34:11–16, 23–24, 31; Zech 10:3; Matt 2:6; John 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:4). Such a shepherding ministry was a royal function in the ancient Near Eastern world.[102027] Van Groningen makes this comparison between the Messianic King and his ancestor David:

> As David was a shepherd (Pss 23; 78:70–72), so his antitype, the royal Shepherd, will lead, feed, protect, and exercise authority over his own. As a Shepherd, he will be invincible: David protected his flock from the lions and bears; the ruling Shepherd will be endowed *běʿōz yhwh* (with the strength of Yahweh), exercising divine strength to protect the flock.[102038]

The Lord himself will enable the Shepherd-King to do his work ("in the strength of the LORD"; cf. "Mighty God" in Isa 9:6 and "Spirit of … power" in Isa 11:2; see also Isa 61:1). The promised

[198103] J. E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1994), 332.

[199104] McComiskey, "Micah," 7:428.

[200105] Fausset, "Jeremiah–Malachi," 603.

[201106] For a final, complete restoration of elect Israel in the future, not only to their land but also to their Messiah, see Barker, "The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. C. A. Blaising and D. L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 304, 318–28; L. R. Helyer, *Yesterday, Today and Forever: The Continuing Relevance of the Old Testament* (Salem, Wis.: Sheffield, 1996), 324–44.

[202107] J. A. Soggin, "רעה *rʿh* to tend," *TLOT* 3:1248; Barker, "Zechariah," 664–65.

[203108] Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*, 505.

Ruler will carry out his ministry in the "majesty" (=regal authority and power) of the "name" (=the Lord himself or his manifested character) of the Lord "his God" (speaking of the special, intimate relationship between the two). The language here may echo that of the Shepherd-King's ancestor David, who also was a shepherd-king: "I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sam 17:45; cf. Mic 4:5).

As a result of the above, the royal Shepherd's people ("flock") will live securely. The Hebrew for "live securely" means simply "live," "dwell," or "sit"; but the ultimate sense is doubtless what the NIV[204] has (so it is a pregnant or elliptical construction). The picture evoked is that of 4:4, where the Hebrew for "sit" is the same verb used here. "For" further explains how all these accomplishments are possible. "Then" is literally "now," but it refers to the future time when all these things would come true. Finally, the Messianic Shepherd will be so great that his rule will be universal (cf. 4:1–5; Pss 2:8–9; 72:8–11; Zech 9:10; Luke 1:32–33). That is why he can accomplish all the preceding. Craigie concludes his treatment of this section with these practical words:

> Matthew's quotation of Micah's prophecy [Matt 2:6] has set it in a new perspective for the Christian reader of the Old Testament. The deliverer has come to this world in the person of Jesus; like David, Jesus is the new Shepherd of God's sheep, offering security from external enemies and a life of security. Jesus, of the Davidic line, is above all a gift of God to this world. To those who feel shut in on every side, like the besieged citizens of Jerusalem who first heard these words, Jesus brings the prospect of deliverance and security. And that is the essence of the Christmas message: God makes a gift to a besieged world through whom deliverance may come.[102059206]

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[204]NIV New International Version

[205109] Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, 40.

[206] Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 95–101.