

In this study we want to reflect on what the prophet Micah has to say about the one in our title described as, “the Shepherd king of Israel.” Micah himself labored and prophesied approximately from 742 to 687 B.C. He was more or less a contemporary of Isaiah, though the latter’s ministry included the reign of Uzziah king of Judah. In Micah Ch. 1:1 we read that, “The Word of the Lord was given to Micah of Moresheth, during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.” His prophetic strain was that of judgment, though there were promises of better days, particularly, “in the last days,” Mic 4:1. It is clear that notwithstanding Israel’s misery because of God’s judgment for her rebellion she would rise again on account of the rule and blessings of the Shepherd King.

Before looking at the passage proper let me just remind you that the period of judgment and all the suffering and shame that involved was lengthy. The conditions during the period of the captivity and the restoration to the land were mixed, there was hardship and persecution but there were the spiritual highs too at the time of the return from exile and then in the land, particularly when Haggai & Zechariah prophesied.

However from Malachi’s time from around 432BC and onward things went downhill. Probably the worst period was under the Seleucids especially when Antiochus Epiphanies was king. Things were really bad for the Jews from 164BC until the Maccabean revolt.

Things were a bit better under the Romans, though it has to be said that Herod the Great was brutal and he enforced his will on the people of the land. This of course brings us chronologically down to the time of Jesus’ appearing on the stage of history as man. With that we conclude this brief overview of things down to the birth of Jesus.

Let us wind back then to what Micah says about Israel’s Shepherd King. We will begin by asking the question - **1. Where Did He Come from?** By this we mean, what can we say about where He was from? We are told, “*His origins are from of old: His going forth from the days of eternity.*” V2b. Some suggest that this just means ‘from ancient times’ and is taken to mean he was spoken of but came along in due course. Others suggest that it is an indication that he was an archangel. But there is much more intended here in this reference. **The Hebrew word ‘Olam’, when it is used with reference to a person it is applied only to God and can only mean from eternity in other words from everlasting. His native realm we may say was eternity – He existed eternally.** Put another way, in the words of a theologian of old, “There never was when He was not.” We see a similar reference in Moses Psalm 90: 1-2 “Lord you have been our dwelling place ---- “from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” So then the first thing to observe is that the Shepherd King is none other than the Eternal. He comes into this world, as we shall see, to rule over Israel, v2. Before we leave the question where did He come from, let’s be clear we don’t mean He simply came down to earth from heaven, though that is true, what is emphasized by the prophet is that He, this Shepherd King is Eternal God as to His Person. We shall see later that Y’shua the Messiah was called the King of Israel.

2. Where on Earth Did He Come from? V2 Supplies the answer – “Bethlehem – House of Bread,” earlier the name was Ephrathah, Fruitful, Genesis 35:19. Historically it figured as a town in Judah and of David the son of Jesse a few miles south of Jerusalem. It was actually so insignificant among the places in Israel that it wasn’t named in the listings because of its small (little) population. Although Bethlehem was small in Judah yet from there the Ruler would come, that is, be born there.

There is a solemn side to the information given here Micah 5:v3 The Lord would abandon Israel for a long time, until the right time when, 'she who is in labour gives birth etc.' We will return to this reference later as it involves the 'how' of His coming. It is noteworthy however that sometime after Jesus was born when the Maggi (Wise Men) came from the East guided by the star they went first to Jerusalem during the time of King Herod to enquire, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" **Matt 2:1-2. Observe here too that king of the Jews when used with ref to Jesus is synonymous with King of Israel.** Herod was disturbed by their inquiry and summoned the experts in the law & the prophets to ask where the Messiah was to be born. Their reply was "In Bethlehem in the land of Judah." and they quoted Micah 5:2. We should not miss the point here that King of the Jews/of Israel and Messiah are all applied to Jesus from His birth in the Gospel records. Let us lay to heart how these things were brought to pass in God's way and time.

3. How Did He Come into the World? We can answer this in with a few words: *He Came in God's Appointed Way.* Put another way by the wonder working power of the Almighty. Before we look more closely at this let's remind ourselves that God furthered His purpose regarding the Seed Promised to Abraham, here in Micah, the Shepherd King, by miraculously providing the son He promised Abraham and Sarah would have. In the same way He made a promise Isaac & Jacob.

In Abraham and Sarah's case the conception and subsequent birth of Isaac were miracles of God. In Gen. 17: 15 -17: When the Lord told Abraham that Sarah would have a child with Abraham he fell on his face and laughed within himself saying, Will a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?

See too in the case of Rebecca & Isaac, the former was barren. This was also the case with Jacob and Rachel. God removed the barrenness in order that his promise to Abraham would stand. The Lord of life worked His miracles to further His purpose. But let's be clear, that's exactly what he did in order that the excellence of the power may be seen to be of God and not of men. The patriarchal background helps to prepare us for what took place in the conception and subsequent birth of the one born Israel's Shepherd King. The Incarnation/enfleshment of the One who existed eternally was on a different level that's true. But God's supernatural actions in the patriarchal period were an illustration of the greater. Thus we find in Isaiah 7:14 the prophets tells Ahaz of a time when, "The virgin shall conceive and be with child and that His name shall be called Immanuel." With regard to the word virgin much has been written by Jewish and Christian scholars on this subject but when all is said and done re the meaning of the Hebrew 'Almah Virgin (Parthenos in Greek LXX translation of the Hebrew Bible & in the Greek NT) the Spirit of God led Matthew/Levi the disciple to explain that the 'how' of Jesus' conception & birth that it was down to the work of the Holy Spirit so that what was conceived in the virgin was the holy & sinless Son of the Most High: Matt 1:20 – 25 and Dr. Luke in his gospel account (Luke 1:35) underscores these things. Further to his prophecies in Isaiah declares in a quotation from Isa 9: 6. The male child born & the son given is called Wonderful Counselor etc. See too He is to sit "upon the throne of His father David & of the increase of His government and peace (kingdom) there shall be no end-." Let us never weary of praising God for His wisdom & power in the bringing in to this world Israel's Shepherd King. Let me just say before we leave this, we can never fathom the mystery of the Incarnation of the Shepherd King of Israel, the Eternal, who continues to have two distinct natures in One glorious Person forever. Finally let us ask -

4. Why Did He Come into the World? There have been, as there are, scholars who think that Jesus was a perfect man sent by God to show us how to live our lives. Some add that by his death (their view - the martyr's death) he showed us how far human love can go in the selfless service of others, leaving us an example to follow. These views completely miss the point of His coming. In seeking to answer the question what I propose to do here is to take the last clause of Micah 5:v5 first. He is our Peace: Hebrew, "In This One shall be peace. That is to say, He is the one who brings & imparts peace to those for whom He came. The good news proclaimed to the shepherds as we earlier noted was, "Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth, on those upon whom His favour rests." Luke 2:14.

Way back in the patriarchal period see in Gen.49:10 Jacob looked forward to the time when 'Shiloh' (Peace Bringer) would come from Judah's line & whose is the Royal Sceptre.

The Psalms speak of King Messiah as one who brings peace, not only to believing Israel but to all His believing ones from the nations in all ages. Psalm 72 but see also Ps 2. How do people participate in this peace? In the language of the Scriptures writers, "Through faith in the blood of His cross, that is through His, (Atonement) **at - one- ment death**. This is what gives us true peace of heart and mind, Paul Rom 5: 1f "Having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So may it be that we hear the Shepherd King of Israel and the nations whisper to our heart, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world gives give I unto you." John 14:27.

Finally recognize that He came to stand up for me against all that the opposition can do to me. Mic. 7:8 "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, though I fall down I will arise. Though I sit in darkness the Lord will be my light." He not only rules over but defends His own. It is clear in the Bible that to persecute His people is to persecute Him. This is what the one time anti Jesus rabbi Saul of Tarsus found out on route to Damascus to persecute Jesus' followers. The risen Jesus appeared to him in dazzling splendour. And said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me ---?" Acts 9: 4b.

To these things we heartily say, "Hail Israel's King and mine, His goodness fails me never."

The individual follower can realize that even in the thick of our trials, when our faith is shaken and trembling, "He is my defence I shall not be moved." And yes there is more, He came to Shepherd even someone like me. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." He feeds us on the heavenly pastures of His word by which He strengthens us in duty's path. This isn't meant to be a plug for the ministers but they are appointed by Him to feed His flock etc. John 21.

Ah, but most wonderful by far is what John the apostle tells us about Jesus our Shepherd King concerning things to come, when His own will be with Him forever in the Universe renewed: "—He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them --- "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and lead them, to fountains of living waters and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

O may He gather Israel to Himself in this day of grace and gather Gentiles too into the Commonwealth of Israel, His Church on earth, so that they may know they have one King and one Shepherd, Jesus Christ. "And May the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen, so let it be!"

