

**APPROACHING
ONE LAW
CONTROVERSIES**

confronting issues series

APPROACHING ONE LAW CONTROVERSIES

Sorting Through the Legalism

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC
APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

APPROACHING ONE LAW CONTROVERSIES

Sorting Through the Legalism

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formerly *One Law for All: From the Mosaic Texts to the Work of the Holy Spirit*

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abbreviation chart and special terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	understand what a Biblical text means on its own
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	Ger: German
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	GNT: Greek New Testament
Ara: Aramaic	Grk: Greek
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	Heb: Hebrew
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Ba'ali, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	KJV: King James Version
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to	

LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*
NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world

OT: Old Testament
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Introduction

The *Confronting Issues* series began in 2007, as a selection of small stapled booklets, comprising a rather forthright article or two produced by Outreach Israel Ministries and (now) Messianic Apologetics. Today in the 2010s, because of the significant wave of changes and transitions occurring within the broad Messianic community, the *Confronting Issues* series is being retooled a bit, into small books, addressing some of the major debates of the day. It would be our hope and prayer that these new releases are able to interject a well-needed perspective into the conversation regarding the different topics of importance, offering fair-minded and constructive solutions, which carefully address the Biblical text, and can sincerely help Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in their walk with Yeshua the Messiah.

A definite controversy that has been present in the Messianic movement, certainly since my family got involved with it back in 1995, is whether non-Jewish Believers are at all supposed or anticipated to keep (any of) the Torah or the Law of Moses. *Many of us have committed ourselves to a Messianic walk of faith, because we want to live like Messiah Yeshua, in obedience to the Father's commandments.* We have taken a hold of things like the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, and eating kosher, as a means of grace by which we can emulate Yeshua and His Apostles. We approach our adoption of these practices as being an important part of our maturation in faith.

There are Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers who do not believe that non-Jewish Believers are to follow the Torah, there are others who are more open to it, and then again there are others who believe that all of God's people should be striving to adhere to Moses' Teaching, as we each mature via the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Within the 2000s, and now into the 2010s, divisions have been witnessed in various sectors of the Messianic world, per what has been commonly labeled as the "One Law" issue. At much of the center of the discussion, involves quotations from Torah passages such as Exodus 12:49, "The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you," or Numbers 15:29, "You shall have one law for him who

does *anything* unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them.” These statements have been frequently invoked by non-Jewish Believers to emphasize that within the community of Ancient Israel, both the native and welcome sojourner were supposed to adhere to the same basic Torah instruction. (Other passages include, but are not limited to: Leviticus 7:7; 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16.)

Certainly, Bible readers should be able to intelligibly and reasonably sift through various Torah passages, which use terminology such as “one law” or “one statute,” and then fairly deduce what is being communicated—and in the process, be able to push aside the many (mis)quotations of such passages, which can circulate in rather heated environments. It is true that within the community of Ancient Israel, that direction is witnessed involving how all—native and sojourner alike—were to come together at the Feast of Tabernacles, listen to, and heed Moses’ Teaching (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). *That all of God’s people today should be educated in the Torah, and be applying its principles of holiness to their lives, should hardly be a problem.* It is unavoidable, for example, how in Ancient Israel, an institution such as the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat* was inclusive, with not only natives and sojourners—but even animals—to be afforded rest (Exodus 20:10; 23:12; Deuteronomy 5:14).

For many adherents of a “One Law” ideology, the emphasis is on today’s Jewish and non-Jewish Believers both taking instruction from Moses’ Teaching, and being united together in Israel’s Messiah as brothers and sisters, as fellow members of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6).ⁱ Many have used Torah passages emphasizing “one law” or “one statute” to stress the equality of God’s people (cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11), and how a relatively uniform standard of jurisprudence for all within the community of Ancient Israel, was certainly contrary to the different law codes of the Ancient Near East—where different classes of people were not all held to the same standard before the law.

In practice, however, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement is not broadly facilitating assemblies and fellowships where study of the Torah and being disciplined in its precepts—as a person grows in the Messiah and His love—is what is emphasized. What people too frequently encounter from the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, is a

ⁱ If necessary, review the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*, which is most critical of Messianic Jewish bilateral ecclesiology models.

great deal of legalism, judgmentalism, pride and superiority, a condemnatory spirit, and stifling environments widely devoid of the presence of God's grace. Assemblies where "one law" or "one statute" is emphasized, hardly tend to be places where the Holy Spirit can easily write the Torah's commandments on hearts and minds at the Holy Spirit's pace onto a redeemed man or woman (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Instead, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement is place where rigidity and fundamentalism tend to abound, and even be encouraged.

A ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics recognizes that today's Messianic movement is a profoundly important, end-time move of God.ⁱⁱ We most definitely advocate that we all need to be paying close attention to how the Messianic movement has (1) been responsible for seeing a generation of Jewish people come to saving faith in Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel, and (2) has been responsible for seeing many evangelical Protestant Believers exposed to their Hebraic Roots in the Tanach and Jewish Roots in the Second Temple era. Messianic congregations, where Jewish and non-Jewish Believers come together as "one new man/humanity" (Ephesians 2:15), are places where the shared spiritual virtues of Judaism and evangelical Protestantism, get to interact, as we contemplate a grand future involving the trajectory of "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26) and the return of Israel's Messiah and King to reign over Planet Earth.

Given our wide array of writings and publications, our ministry does believe that all of God's people—Jewish *and* non-Jewish—should be following God's Torah, as we each grow in God's grace and holiness. This includes today's Believers honoring the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*,ⁱⁱⁱ appointed times of Leviticus 23,^{iv} and eating a kosher style of diet.^v While there are issues of Torah jurisprudence to be evaluated regarding each of these topics, and the expectations of the native and sojourner in Ancient Israel—rather than emphasize "one law" needing to be (strictly) followed, our approach to matters of Torah

ⁱⁱ Consult the articles "An End-Time Move of the Holy Spirit" by Mark Huey, appearing in the December 2013 issue of Outreach Israel News; "A Messianic Worldview," appearing in the May 2016 issue of Outreach Israel News; "A Messianic Vision," appearing in the July 2016 issue of Outreach Israel News; "A Messianic Orientation," appearing in the August 2016 issue of Outreach Israel News.

ⁱⁱⁱ Consult the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

^{iv} Consult the author's publication *Moedim: The Appointed Times for Messianic Believers*, and the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper*, and *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*.

^v Consult the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

observance must instead be to stress the work of the promised New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17), and in the Holy Spirit supernaturally transcribing God's commandments onto a redeemed heart and mind. As this happens, while there should be changes witnessed in terms of various outward commandments being observed—there should also be a substantially greater implementation of the critical Torah commands to love God and neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

There are passages within the Torah, where terminology such as “one law” or “one statute” is employed, which need to be considered. Likewise to be considered are the areas of commonality between the natives and sojourners in Ancient Israel. But also needing to be weighed, is the trajectory of God's plan and salvation history, from: the original giving of the Torah to Ancient Israel, to the expectations of the Prophets, to the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah and inauguration of the New Covenant.

What things has the One Law/One Torah sub-movement brought to the attention of Bible readers, which surely need to be probed and analyzed? What negative things has the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, been responsible for? Born again Believers should not want congregations and fellowships where legalism abounds, but instead where people can be encouraged to grow in the Lord as they proceed in greater sanctification.

No one in the general population of Ancient Israel was surely going to be discouraged from obeying as much of God's Instruction as they legitimately could. Yet, strident One Law/One Torah proponents have not done a very good job at assessing what various statements involving “one law” or “one statute,” meant in terms of their original context. It cannot be denied how at least one of the “one law” passages pertains to execution of sinners (Leviticus 24:22). What is this supposed to mean for us in a post-resurrection era where capital punishment has been decisively absorbed by Yeshua's sacrifice (Colossians 2:14)? When “one law” is emphasized among people in various groups, what spiritual dynamics are being invoked?

The thrust of a passage like Deuteronomy 31:12, “Assemble the people...so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law,” is that all within the community of God would learn and appreciate and follow the Instruction of God. This kind of statement invokes very positive, educative dynamics. But beyond this, and more critical for our Twenty-

First Century Messianic movement, is how the Prophets anticipated a massive turning toward Zion, by the nations of the Earth, to be taught the Torah (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).

Finding some preliminary answers to these questions is not going to be easy—but not because of any real fault of the Bible—but instead because of much of the immaturity and posturing seen in various parts of our Messianic faith community. To some of today’s Messianic Jews, non-Jewish Believers observing God’s Torah via the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, is tantamount to canceling out their distinctiveness as Jews. To others, though, non-Jewish Believers tangibly embracing things like the Sabbath, appointed times, and kosher is a sign that end-time prophecy is beginning to take shape. To many, non-Jewish families like mine, definitively looking to Moses’ Teaching, are helping to herald the return of the Messiah and hence the restoration of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel that incorporates the redeemed from the nations.

As you prepare to read this volume of the *Confronting Issues* series, some of you may have some high emotions when doing so. Some of you believe, because of your presuppositions, that God’s Torah is not to be followed by all of His people. Others of you may think that God’s Torah is relevant, but that distinctions and differences among His people are to be rigidly emphasized. And yet for many others, reading the articles “The Torah Will Go Forth From Zion” and “Approaching One Law Controversies,” and the associated FAQ entries, will be a major relief, answering some of the significant questions that you have asked. This publication should certainly challenge each of us to read the Holy Scriptures a bit more carefully, to honor and respect each other as fellow brothers and sisters in the Body of Messiah, and to press in even deeper to the Lord—so that He may allow His Spirit to help us consider the difficult subjects of the day as we encounter them.

*J.K. McKee, Editor
Messianic Apologetics*

MICAH 4:1-3; ISAIAH 2:2-4

“The Torah Will Go Forth From Zion”

כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרַה וְדְבַר־יְהוָה מִירוּשָׁלַם

ki m'Tzion teitzei Torah u'devar-ADONAI m'Yerushalayim

Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 both contain a very important prophecy, speaking of the significant influence of Israel in the “end-times,” and how the nations are to be instructed from God Himself in the ways of peace. Both of these passages feature prominently within the Jewish liturgical tradition, but they have had significantly more influence in motivating faithful Jews and Christians to be active in social justice, humanitarian efforts, and in helping to foster world peace. Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 are very well known to Jewish and Christian philosophy, even though in today’s Messianic community these passages are probably not probed as much as they should be for their theological, spiritual, and missional significance. This prophecy, delivered via *two* prophets, anticipates great changes that will affect the entire world, directly involving God’s Torah.

Not enough of today’s Christian laypeople—or even various Messianics—are aware of the profound message that Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 communicate (as opposed to theologians and Bible teachers). Too frequently, our level of engagement with these verses is just limited to the words of various praise songs. In some cases, in hearing about how God’s Word will go forth from Zion, Christians will associate it with the proclamation of the gospel of salvation in Yeshua—yet some key details of what this involves are noticeably left out. This prophecy speaks to the need for the nations to be instructed from the Law of God, specifically so that conflicts can be moderated and that His *shalom* will prevail. Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 have a great deal of importance for today’s Messianic movement, especially in terms of the relevance *or* non-relevance of the Torah for non-Jewish Believers. With

some of the discussions witnessed as to whether non-Jews should be Torah observant—or whether following the Torah is only relevant for Jews—it is quite surprising that this prophecy has not been given a great deal of attention.

Because the oracle of Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 is essentially the same, there is understandably discussion over where it would have first appeared. Did it (1) first appear in Isaiah, and then Micah, or (2) first appear in Micah, and then Isaiah? Did (3) either Isaiah and Micah both import this word separately from a third party source? Or, (4) did a redactor(s) edit this prophetic word into the final textual form of both the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Micah, because he found it consistent with the two Prophets' overall message? There might not be a definite answer agreed upon among scholars, but no Bible reader can fail to notice how this prophecy appears in two locations in the Tanach, intensifying its significance.

Any examination of both Micah and Isaiah commentaries on this passage will see a variety of opinions and options presented, as to where this prophetic oracle originated. Walter Kaiser does not try to be dogmatic at all, simply noting that the prophetic ministries of both Micah and Isaiah were “at most twenty to forty years apart,”¹ and how their messages could easily have overlapped. While an appropriate thought, many interpreters think that the prophetic word of Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 somehow originated separately from both Prophets, and then via some means—either the Prophets themselves or a redactor of their materials—made it into the Books of Micah and Isaiah. Brevard S. Childs summarizes,

“It is possible that the passage predated both prophets and was accommodated by each collection in a slightly different form. Although the redactional age of the composition remains contested, the material of the passage is clearly ancient, even with mythopoetic roots, which has been encompassed with old Hebrew pilgrimage traditions.”²

While it is entirely possible that via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, both Micah and Isaiah prophesied the same message as witnessed in Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, it is most inviting to think that both Prophets appropriated some kind of previous composition into their messages. It is reasonable for us to think that both Micah and Isaiah employed some kind of a popular hymn or a well known poem

¹ Walter Kaiser, *Mastering the Old Testament: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 58.

² Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 28.

Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4 "The Torah Will Go Forth From Zion"

used in the Temple worship of Israel, no different than how a pastor today might quote pieces from a hymn like Amazing Grace, although without having to state it as so. J. Alec Motyer thinks, "the fact that the poem is found in two prophets indicates its popular currency."³ What both of these Prophets referred to must have been a rather common expectation for some religious sectors within Ancient Israel, known and believed by many of the common people as well, and then possibly expanded as the Lord moved upon Micah and Isaiah. In the estimation of John N. Oswalt,

"The majority of recent scholars, in the light of what is now believed about oral tradition and literary formation, doubt if either author copied from the other. It is more likely that the saying, certainly one of remarkable beauty and force...had become a common possession of the several priestly and prophetic communities within the nation and that one or both of these prophets drew it from that common heritage."⁴

If the oracle seen in Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 originated from within the liturgy of Temple worship, can we actually determine the specific sources from which it was derived? Until Biblical archaeologists discover a lost inscription with this prophetic word, or perhaps some kind of forgotten collection of period songs and poems, the main material we have to consider is witnessed in the Tanach Scriptures. Regular pilgrimages to the appointed place in Jerusalem are commanded in the Torah (Exodus 12:17; 26:28; Leviticus 23:41-44), something which the nations surely do (Micah 4:2a; Isaiah 2:3a). The Psalmist expresses great joy at being in the presence of the Lord in His House (Psalm 84), and the nations declare how they will be going to the House of the Lord (Micah 4:2b; Isaiah 2:3b). Most importantly, the Psalmist declares how God is a Protector who delights in peace (Psalms 120-122), and the expectation is that as the nations are taught by God, their weapons of war will be turned into objects of peace (Micah 4:3; Isaiah 2:4).

The prophetic ministries of both Micah and Isaiah were quite close, and conservatives will agree that they occurred sometime in the 700s B.C.E., in conjunction with the pressing threat from Assyria on the Divided Kingdom. The Book of Isaiah is unique in that it specifically records how Isaiah's prophetic service began in the year of King Uzziah's death (Isaiah 6:1), 740 B.C.E., and then continued on to at least

³ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 53.

⁴ John N. Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 115.

the death of Sennacherib of Assyria (Isaiah 37:38), 681 B.C.E. Three kings of Judah reigned during the service of Micah, as recorded in Micah 1:1: Jotham (750-732 B.C.E.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.E.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.E.).⁵ While the prophetic ministries of both Isaiah and Micah overlapped, Micah probably began his service before Isaiah, and so for that reason we will be examining Micah 4:1-3 before Isaiah 2:2-4.

Both Micah and Isaiah prophesied in the time frame of the mid-Eighth to early-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.—sometime before and after the conquering of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria. But with the prophecy looking sometime into the future, does this even matter? By the time Isaiah delivered his prophecies, it is notable to recognize that the Southern Kingdom of Judah would have been the primary audience.⁶ But, if this oracle originated within Israel's Temple worship and/or Psalm traditions, then even with Isaiah's proclamation of this word taking on some different dimensions to a Southern Kingdom without a Northern Kingdom widely present, this message would still affect all of Israel in the future, as the people will be gathered back together and their restoration will have a resonating impact on the world at large. **It is something that surely, in some way or another, we are being affected by today via the growth and expansion of the Messianic movement.**

This paper will consider the significance of both Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, by examining both the text and the thoughts of a variety of Micah and Isaiah commentators. How important is this oracle within the scope of events to occur in salvation history? What does it teach us about the role of the Torah? Would the Apostles have considered this prophecy important in regard to the expansion of the gospel and the instruction of the non-Jewish Believers in the First Century? How important will properly understanding and applying both Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 be for the future development of the Messianic community?

Some of the thoughts we will be examining for both Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4 will overlap, but it will be important to analyze both passages and the array of suggestions offered by interpreters. This single prophecy, although delivered by two Prophets of God, can aid all of us in our service for Him today. We have a responsibility to make sure that we are providing for a venue of peace, where people can

⁵ Cf. Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp 275-276, 398.

⁶ Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 113.

understand the supernatural nature of the Torah and its ability to instruct men and women in the ways of holiness.

Micah 4:1-3

"And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war."

Within the Book of Micah, this prophetic word appears among a series of messages that alternate between being either positive or negative about the future of Israel. Preceding in Micah 3:9-12 is a rather negative word about how "Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins," concerning the imminent future for Micah's audience. Micah 4:1-5 then regards the more distant future for Israel, including some hope about how "the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains." Yet, the pattern alternates again in Micah 4:10 with a mention of Babylon, and how the daughter of Zion will have to go there in exile. Later in Micah 5:5 a reference is made to Assyria invading the Land of Israel.

Because of the specific mention of both Babylon and Assyria, liberal theologians will sometimes date the composition of the Book of Micah to the exilic or post-exilic period, denying the principle of predictive prophecy. Of course, of notable interest to any Bible reader is why Micah 4:1-3 appears in a somewhat disjointed section that alternates between negative words of judgment and positive words that promise restoration. Either a redactor of Micah's prophecies has simply strewn different sources together and failed to really organize them, or what is seen in the Book of Micah are firsthand prophetic oracles that were delivered orally and then transcribed more-or-less the way that the Prophet originally spoke them. In the view of S. Goldman, "the spoken word permits of abrupt transitions more readily than does the written word; and a change of tone, expression or gesture may have made the

transitions seem more natural to Micah's listeners than to his readers."⁷ The important point which is made throughout Micah, even though there is an alternation between positive and negative words, is that God will be faithful to save Israel and bring them back to fruition.

The time that Israel will be restored to its fullness will be *b'acharit ha'yamim* (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים) or "in the last days" (Micah 4:1a), meaning for Micah's audience "When present days are past" (NICOT).⁸ It is rightly concluded that these last days or end-times are the Messianic Age (cf. Daniel 12:4; Hosea 3:5). At this future point in history the Lord's House will become *rosh he'harim* (רֹאשׁ הַהָרִים), or "chief among the mountains" (Micah 4:1b, NIV), something which is to stand in contrast to what it has been in the past (cf. Micah 3:9, 11). Zion becoming chief or preeminent among the peaks of the Earth will signify great significance and importance, as past misfortunes are reversed. **Jerusalem will become the focal point of all humanity**, although as Goldman states, "In a figurative, not a physical, sense; Zion will be the religious metropolis of the world, the focus of men's spiritual desires."⁹ He may simply want to read the prophecy as meaning that beyond people streaming to Zion (Micah 4:1c), how Zion will have a worldwide effect without people always having to go there. As Psalm 48:8 exclaims, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish her forever." As people stream to Zion, then the fame of the city will spread.

It is important for us to realize how authority in the Ancient Near East was often associated with hills and mountains, in particular how high places were sites for idolatry (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Kings 23:3; 18:4). Yet, it is also true that Abraham sacrificed Isaac on a mountain (Genesis 22:2), Moses received the Ten Commandments on a mountain (Exodus 19:16), and the city of Jerusalem was located on a hill. Within the Tanach, God's power is often expressed in terms of His authority over mountains (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:12; Nahum 1:5). God's supremacy over nations and principalities can be portrayed in terms of His ownership of the mountains as Creator, seen in Psalm 68:15: "A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; a mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan."

⁷ S. Goldman, "Micah: Introduction and Commentary," in A. Cohen, ed., *Soncino Books of the Bible: The Twelve Prophets* (London: Soncino Press, 1969), 169.

⁸ Leslie C. Allen, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 321.

⁹ Goldman, "Micah," in Cohen, 169.