

# **Micah 4 and Isaiah 2: Who Borrowed from Who??**

(A comparison and Exegesis of  
A Shared Eschatological Vision)

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Translation:

Micah 4:1-5<sup>†</sup>

1 **But in later days<sup>1</sup>,  
the mountain of YHWH's house will be established<sup>2</sup>  
as the highest of the mountains  
and it will be lifted up  
from the hills.**

Then the peoples will flow<sup>3</sup> up to it.  
2 **And many nations will come.  
For they will say:  
"Come! Let us go up  
to the mountain of YHWH  
and to the house of Jacob's God.  
For he will teach us from his ways  
And let us walk in his caravans<sup>4</sup>."**

**For from Zion will go forth teaching;<sup>5</sup>  
and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.**

3 **Then he will judge between many peoples,  
and he will arbitrate for<sup>6</sup> numerous distant nations.**

**And they will hammer their swords into hoes<sup>7</sup>,  
and their spears into pruning knives.**

**Nation will not lift sword against nation  
and they will not learn warfare anymore**

4 And each man will sit under his own vine  
And under his own fig tree  
Without trembling.

For the mouth of YHWH of hosts has spoken.

5 Indeed, all the peoples walk each man in the name of his own god.  
But we will **walk in the name of YHWH** our God forever and ever.

<sup>†</sup> Text in bold represents material found in both passages.  
<sup>1</sup> Or "at the end of the days/in the latter days." See below for comments.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "will be the one that is being established". The Niphal participle here can function as a quasi-fientive stative participle (see Waltke/O'Connor 616). However, for the sake of clarity and readability, the English future tense suffices.

<sup>3</sup> Or "stream". Context favors the more intense "to flow".

<sup>4</sup> Or "paths". See comments below

<sup>5</sup> Lit. "Torah". Because תּוֹרָה lacks the article, and is to be given to all nations, context favors using the simple 'teaching/instruction' rather than the actual Mosaic Law (Cf. Barker, 84).

<sup>6</sup> Though הוֹכִיחַ can mean 'judge, convict, or reproach', context favors a positive rather than negative connotation where YHWH peacefully settles the disputes between nations.

<sup>7</sup> Rather than the more traditional 'plowshares' (see below for comments).

Isaiah 2:1-5<sup>8</sup>

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amos<sup>9</sup> saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

2 **Now<sup>10</sup> in later days,  
the mountain of YHWH's house will be established  
as the highest of the mountains  
and it will be lifted up  
from the hills.**

**Then all the nations will flow to it**

3 **And many peoples will come.  
For they will say:  
"Come! Let us go up  
to the mountain of YHWH  
and to the house of Jacob's God.  
For he will teach us from his ways  
And let us walk in his caravans."**

**For from Zion will go forth teaching;  
and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.**

4 **Then he will judge between the nations,  
and he will arbitrate for many peoples.**

**And they will hammer their swords into hoes,  
and their spears into pruning knives.**

**Nation will not lift sword against nation,  
and they will not learn warfare anymore.**

5 House of Jacob, come! Let us **walk in the light of YHWH.**

<sup>8</sup> See the previous notes on Mic 4:1-5 for translation choices throughout this passage.

<sup>9</sup> Or 'Amoz'

<sup>10</sup> In both passages, וְהָיָה is a converted perfect which marks the beginning of a future tense narrative sequence (cf. Pratico, 201). This is why it appears above in bold text—the Hebrew is the same. However, while in Mic. 4:1 the waw is adversative (cf. Williams, 71), in the context of Isaiah this prophecy is not grammatically linked to the previous one. Rather, v.1 signifies a new vision. Therefore, the waw is likely introducing a future existential clause (cf. Williams, 95; also cf. the first part of example 32.2.5b in Waltke/O'Connor, 536), or it is simply pleonastic, serving a deictic temporal function, (Williams, 71; Waltke and O'Connor, 539) and thus can be left untranslated.

These two passages are considered by many to be two of the high points in all of the prophetic literature of the Bible. The raising up of God's temple and the unparalleled peace that is to follow has given hope to God's people for over 2,500 years. Because of their almost identical nature however, these two prophecies also raise controversy regarding authorship and inspiration. Are Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5 two different prophecies given to two different prophets on two separate occasions? Or are they two remnants of one original anonymous saying, which was adapted into the books named after these prophets hundreds of years later? Or perhaps Micah was the original author and Isaiah borrowed from him—or vice versa. Furthermore, what do these prophecies tell us about God's plan for the future? For Mt. Zion? For His Church? All of these issues must be examined and explored in some detail if we are ever to make sense of these passages in Scripture. That is the purpose of this paper, so let us first begin by looking at the Historical situation that gave rise to the prophets' words.

#### Historical context

If the words of Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5 belong to their respective namesakes, then they can both be dated to the reign of Hezekiah near the time of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.<sup>11</sup> The setting and its eventual outcome are described in 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32:1-23. These prophecies were most likely given to God's people in Jerusalem, who were being threatened by the surrounding Assyrian army, in order to give them hope that they would not suffer the same fate as their northern relatives had with the fall of Israel in 722 B.C. However, while the majority of scholars

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<sup>11</sup> See Smith, Gary V., Hosea, Amos, Micah: NIV Application Commentary. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 2001.

hold to a similar early dating of these passages<sup>12</sup>, there are some who deny authorship to the original prophets Micah and Isaiah and see these prophecies as having originated hundreds of years later after Israel returned from exile and rebuilt the temple. For example, Mays argues:

The prophecy could hardly have been spoken by Micah. The *vocabulary and style* of 4.1-4 have no parallels in oracles *which can be assigned to him with confidence*. The message has *no place in the mission of Micah*...and it is *clearly a direct contradiction of 3.12*, the prophecy for which he was remembered a century after it was uttered...Isaiah 2.2-4 has *no convincing relation* to the prophetic activity of Isaiah...The original saying fits best in a post-exilic setting. Prophecy of a positive relation between YHWH's reign and the nations sets in with Deutero-Isaiah...*Other oracles* which speak of a peaceful pilgrimage of other peoples to Zion are post-exilic...Micah 4.1 *seems to assume the existence of the temple* on Mount Zion. *Perhaps* the original saying was first spoken after the completion of the temple in 515 BC as an exuberant announcement of what YHWH's reign from 'his house' might mean for the entire world.<sup>13</sup> (Italics added for emphasis)

Mays is not alone in rejecting a pre-exilic dating. Clements likewise considers the theology of this passage too advanced for an eighth-century prophet.<sup>14</sup> Clements, Mays, and others like them, however, can offer no objective criteria for a post-exilic dating. The italics above show Mays arguments to rest entirely on unproven assumptions and subjective reasoning. For example, Mays' appeal to vocabulary and style as proof of different authorship assumes that the prophet Micah was only capable of using certain words and only in a certain style. Not only is this an invalid assumption, but also it is incorrect to begin with. Micah's vocabulary in 4:1-5 is very similar to his vocabulary in chapter 3—note the following terms found in both chapters: **יְהוָה**, **בֵּית**, **רֵאשׁ**,

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<sup>12</sup> For arguments for a pre-exilic date of these prophecies see the following: McComiskey, *EBC* vol.7, p.676, Oswalt, *NICOT*, p.115, and Watts, *WBC*, p.28.

<sup>13</sup> Mays, James Luther, *Micah: A Commentary*. Westminster, Philadelphia. 1976. pp.95-96.

<sup>14</sup> Noted in Grogan, Geoffrey W., *EBC: vol.6*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. 1986. p.35.

מלחמה, יעקב, ישראל, ציון, שפט, וירושלם, and וזהר הבית. Furthermore, Micah's prophecy in chapter 4 that Zion shall be lifted up in no way contradicts his previous prophecy in chapter 3 that "Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height" because both would happen. Jerusalem would be leveled, but it would later be exalted by God. Mays supposed 'contradiction' between chs. 3 and 4 in Micah is no contradiction at all.<sup>15</sup> Also, the fact that Micah's words 'seem to assume the existence of the temple' (if the text does indeed do so) argues heavily for a pre-exilic rather than post-exilic, second-temple dating.

As for Isaiah's words in 2:1-5 having "no convincing relation to the prophetic activity of Isaiah", this 'argument' assumes that Isaiah's 'prophetic activity' excludes such oracles of hope. But again, this is an assumption that is lacking any objective proof. It is circular reasoning to argue that the resemblance of this prophecy to those of 'Deutero-Isaiah' is proof of a later date, because the later dating of 'Deutero-Isaiah' rests on the same assumptions rather than on objective textual evidence. It is much simpler, and much more faithful to the text, to deem both of these passages to have been spoken by the actual prophets Micah and Isaiah during the course of their prophetic ministry sometime during the late 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>16</sup>

#### Commentary

Micah 4:1 *But in later days, the mountain of YHWH's house will be established as the highest of the mountains and it will be lifted up from the hills. Then the peoples will flow up to it.*

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Smith, p.506

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the similarities between these prophecies and how that pertains to authorship see the comments below.

Isaiah 2:1-2 *The word that Isaiah son of Amots saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: Now in later days, the mountain of YHWH's house will be established as the highest of the mountains and it will be lifted up from the hills. Then all the nations will flow to it.*

Both of these prophecies begin with a description of what will happen to Mt. Zion in the future. The exaltation of YHWH's house will take place **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים**. This phrase has been translated in a variety of ways—"in the last days/in the days to come/in the latter days/at the end of the days/etc." Scholars are not in agreement as to which it should be. Some take the phrase as referring to the period of the second temple from 515 B.C. to 70 A.D. Others argue that Micah's prophecy was fulfilled spiritually through the ministry of Jesus and his Church.<sup>17</sup> Those who take **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים** as an eschatological term see this promise taking place with the second coming of Christ—either during the millennial reign or at the coming of the New Jerusalem, depending on their eschatological stance regarding the millennium of Revelation 20.

When determining the time of fulfillment, it must be noted that **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים** doesn't always refer to the end times.<sup>18</sup> In such passages as Gen. 49:1, Num. 24:14, and Dan. 2:28 the phrase simply refers to an indefinite period in the future. Context must determine meaning, and in this context, the universal worship of YHWH and subsequent worldwide peace argue strongly for an eschatological fulfillment, though some aspects could have been inaugurated by Jesus at his first coming.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the more ambiguous translation of **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים** as "in later days" is probably wisest. As Motyer notes: "The (lit.) 'end/culmination of the days' is neither necessarily distant nor certainly near,

<sup>17</sup> Waltke, Bruce, in McComiskey, Thomas E., ed. *The Minor Prophets: vol.2*. Baker, Grand Rapids. 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. 1990. pp.207-212

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Goldingay, John, *NIBC Isaiah*. Hendrickson, Peabody. 2001. p.42 Also, see below for more comments on the time of fulfillment of this prophecy.

but always imminent. It expresses the certainty of what God will do and the urgency of present readiness.”<sup>20</sup>

The prophets continue by saying that in this future time the mountain of YHWH’s house (i.e. Mt. Zion/Moriah, the place of the temple) will be lifted up and established as the ראש (highest/top/chief) of the mountains. Based on Zec. 14:9, some take this to mean that seismic activity will cause a drastic uplifting of the city of Jerusalem at the second coming of Christ.<sup>21</sup> While this may be the case, the primary significance lies in the Canaanite symbolism of mountain temples. Israel’s pagan neighbors associated mountain temple with their deities. The gods were seen as dwelling in these high sanctuaries—the higher the mountain or hill, the more powerful and prominent the god who is worshipped there.<sup>22</sup> What is being predicted by Micah and Isaiah is that in the future YHWH would be known worldwide as the true God who rules all of creation. Because of such recognition, people from all over the earth will journey to YHWH’s temple (either literal or figurative; see comments below). So great is this pilgrimage that it is described as a river of people paradoxically ‘flowing’ uphill (וַיִּנְהָרְוּ – ‘and they will stream/flow’). It is interesting to note that in the visions of Ezekiel and John (Ezek. 47 and Rev. 22), a river flows out from YHWH’s temple; in those of Micah and Isaiah, the pattern is reversed. The river that Ezekiel and John envisioned is most likely symbolic of the תּוֹרָה וְדַבַּר-יְהוָה mentioned in the final line of the next verse. Still more interesting is the fact that in John’s vision, the river produces fruit, which is ‘for the

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<sup>20</sup> Motyer, Alec, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. InterVarsity, Downers Grove, 1999. p.51

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Kaiser, Walter, *Mastering the OT*. Word, Dallas, 1992. p.59 also cf. Barker, pp.83-84

<sup>22</sup> Achtemeier, Elizabeth, *NIBC Minor Prophets I*. Hendrickson, Peabody, 1996. p.327 also cf. Oswalt, John. *NICOT Isaiah*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986. p.117.

healing of the nations’, most likely referring to the same nations that Micah and Isaiah are about to mention.

Micah 4:2 *And many nations will come. For they will say: “Come! Let us go up to the mountain of YHWH and to the house of Jacob’s God. For he will teach us from his ways. And let us walk in his caravans.” For from Zion will go forth teaching; and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.*

Isaiah 2:3 *And many peoples will come. For they will say: “Come! Let us go up to the mountain of YHWH and to the house of Jacob’s God. For he will teach us from his ways. And let us walk in his caravans.” For from Zion will go forth teaching; and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.*

We are now allowed to hear why everyone is flowing to the temple; the imperative followed by cohortative **לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה** is a common reference to religious pilgrimage (Gen. 35:3, Jer. 31:6, Zec. 14:16-19). They are going on a pilgrimage to YHWH’s mountain. Parallelism clarifies this mountain as the house of Jacob’s God, who they now recognize as the one true God. They are traveling there in order to learn from his ways. The call to pilgrimage is paralleled by the cohortative **וְנִלְכָה בְּאַרְחֹתָיו**, which reveals that the nations further desire to travel there in YHWH’s caravans (**בְּאַרְחֹתָיו**). While most translators render **אַרְחֹת** as ‘paths’, it can also mean ‘caravans’<sup>23</sup> and is can be found translated that way later in Isaiah 21:13. Though the vast majority of the time it means ‘paths’ or ‘ways’, in the context of pilgrimage and travel, ‘caravans’ seems as good a choice as paths and serves to bring out an important nuance. Merchants and travelers journeyed in caravans in the ancient near east primarily for safety and security through uncertain or dangerous areas.<sup>24</sup> When the nations finally realize that YHWH is the one true God and decide to go up to his mountain, they decide

<sup>23</sup> See Gen. 37:25, Jud. 5:6, Job 6:18-19.

<sup>24</sup> See Butler, Trent ed., Holman Bible Dictionary. Holman, Nashville, p.234

to do so in his caravans rather than the ones they normally travel in because they know that the only way to walk in security is to walk with YHWH.

The benefit that the pilgrims seek is תּוֹרָה (teaching/instruction), which is further clarified as דְּבַר־יְהוָה (the word of YHWH), that תֵּצֵא (will go out) from Zion. Some scholars feel that תּוֹרָה here is the Torah, or Mosaic Law given at Sinai.<sup>25</sup> However, because תּוֹרָה is lacking the definite article, it most likely refers not to the actual Torah given at Sinai, but to YHWH's instruction and guidance for the nations.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, even if the תּוֹרָה in mind here is the Mosaic Law, it is symbolic. For it will not be the Mosaic Law that all the nations will come to obey. That Law was fulfilled by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 5:17), and the new Law of the Spirit was then inaugurated at Pentecost (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17, Rom. 8:2). Therefore, Wesley is right in stating that the תּוֹרָה that will go forth from Zion is the full Gospel message—the ultimate דְּבַר־יְהוָה.<sup>27</sup>

*Micah 4:3 Then he will judge between many peoples, and he will arbitrate for numerous distant nations. And they will hammer their swords into hoes, and their spears into pruning knives. Nation will not lift sword against nation and they will not learn warfare anymore.*

*Isaiah 4:4 Then he will judge between the nations and he will arbitrate for many peoples. And they will hammer their swords into hoes and their spears into pruning knives. Nation will not lift sword against nation, and they will not learn warfare anymore.*

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<sup>25</sup> See Waltke, p.680; Kaiser, p.59; Smith, p.508.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Barker, p.84.

<sup>27</sup> Wesley, John, Wesley's Notes on the Bible. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1987. p.322

Upon the arrival of the many peoples, the numerous distant nations<sup>28</sup>, to YHWH's mountain, they will receive an audience with the judge of all the universe in order to settle any differences among them. Throughout the ancient world it was common for two parties to bring their disputes before a judge (Exod. 18:13, Deut. 16:18, Jud. 4:5), or sometimes a king (2 Sam. 15:4, 1 Kings 3:16) in order to receive his verdict. The nations are settling their differences not by violence or force, but by seeking the guidance of the wisest of judges. Though the Hiphil verb **וְהוֹכִיחַ** is often translated as 'rebuke' or 'reprove', it is parallel to and synonymous with **וְשָׁפַט בֵּין**. Therefore in this context of universal peace, as well as submission to and worship of YHWH, it is best rendered by the less negative 'arbitrate for'<sup>29</sup>. This is further illustrated by the fact that they would completely disarm themselves. Sword and spear symbolized the entire military arsenal (1 Sam. 17:14)<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, the hammering of swords into hoes<sup>31</sup> and spears into pruning knives "serve as comprehensive synecdoches for the transition from war to peace."<sup>32</sup> These nations will not go to war with one another anymore because they will be able to have any differences that may arise settled by YHWH; indeed they won't even need to learn how to wage war, nor will they even need to possess weapons for defense, because

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<sup>28</sup> Here, Micah uses the term **עַצְמִיִּים** which some translators render as 'strong' or 'mighty' rather than 'numerous.' While either is grammatically acceptable, 'numerous' seems to fit better given Isaiah's corresponding use of **הַבָּיִת** as well as in the context of all the people of the world coming to YHWH's temple. For a contrary view see Waltke, p.681.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Holladay, William L., A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1971. p.134 as well as Botterweck and Ringgren, p.65.

<sup>30</sup> Waltke, p.681

<sup>31</sup> Waltke notes Byington's argument concerning Joel 4:10's use of the term that **אֵתִים** are hoes not plowshares because 1) they could be made into a sword with less change of shape than the plowshare, 2) they might offer the more appropriate quantity of metal for a sword, and 3) primitive Israel lacked plowshares, so a later tradition interpreted **אֵתִים** as plowshares because in the course of time they replaced hoes. Waltke, p.681

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

there will be no aggressors to come against them. Instead, the nations of the earth will be able to put their tools to use in agriculture and caring for their needs.

Micah 4:4 *And each man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree without trembling. For the mouth of YHWH of hosts has spoken.*

Micah's prophecy further elaborates on what this universal disarmament and move to agrarian endeavors will look like. He says that because of this era of peace, every person will be able to 'sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree without trembling (in fear).' The idea of sitting under vines and fig trees expressed contentment, wealth, and safety. In fact, it was during this time that the invading king Sennacherib's messenger Rabshakeh promised that if the people of Jerusalem would surrender, every one of them would be able to "eat of his own vine and of his own fig tree" (2 Kings 18:31). However, Micah reveals that this is YHWH's ultimate plan, not only for Jerusalem, but for all nations in the future. In fact it will be because Jerusalem is lifted up, rather than given up, that these nations will be able to enjoy such blessing. Once again Micah uses synecdoche to describe this future peace where all needs will met and everyone will be safe from threat of attack. As Kaiser points out, "What is this but a return to the paradisiacal conditions that existed in the Garden of Eden...So certain is this promise that it concludes with what is tantamount to a personal signature: '*For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*' You just cannot get any more assurance than that!"<sup>33</sup>

Micah 4:5 *Indeed, all the peoples walk each man in the name of his own god. But we will walk in the name of YHWH our God forever and ever.*

Isaiah 2:5 *House of Jacob, come! Let us walk in the light of YHWH.*

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<sup>33</sup> Kaiser, p.59.

The final verses of Micah and Isaiah's prophecies differ more dramatically than they do in the previous verses. However, this is due to the differing functions of this prophecy by two separate prophets in two slightly differing literary contexts. Micah's message serves as a call for both endurance and hope, while Isaiah uses this prophecy as a call to repentance and return to faithful worship of YHWH.

After the wonderful conclusion of his prophecy, Micah brings his audience back to the grim present reality that is characterized by *anything but* peaceful obedience to YHWH. In this current reality, all the peoples of the world 'walk in the name of' their own gods. This idiom means "to give allegiance to and to be guided by that which the name represents."<sup>34</sup> The nations are currently relying on the strength of their own deities rather than on the **יְהוָה**.<sup>35</sup> This is made clear by the account Sennacherib's siege, which is taking place near the time that this prophecy is being given. Smith comments on the situation:

Although they are surrounded by the powerful Assyrian army (in 701 B.C.), which worships Assyrian gods, Micah, Hezekiah, and the faithful in Jerusalem are determined to walk in ways pleasing to Yahweh, Israel's God. This contrasting source of faith is clearly displayed in Sennacherib's letter and his servant's speech in Isaiah 36-37. The Assyrians believe it is foolish to trust in the power of Israel's God (36:7, 15, 18-20), but God destroys the Assyrian army and causes King Sennacherib to go home because he has blasphemed God's name (36, 37:6, 23-24).<sup>36</sup>

Smith believes that v.5 is spoken by some of the godly people listening to Micah<sup>37</sup>, others agree even taking it as a liturgical response to the public reading of this prophecy.<sup>38</sup> Still

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<sup>34</sup> Kaiser, p.60

<sup>35</sup> See McComiskey, p.422

<sup>36</sup> Smith, p.509

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Waltke, p.683

others take these words to be spoken by Micah on behalf of the faithful remnant.<sup>39</sup> This third option is probably the correct one. The text does not explicitly reveal a change of speaker in v.5 so it is best to see these words as Micah’s way of calling the faithful remnant of Jerusalem to endurance and hope in YHWH’s promise. However, Waltke’s (who takes this verse to be the peoples’ response to YHWH’s promise) conclusion has equal merit:

[The people of Jerusalem] live in the sober realization that at present the confusion and conflict of pagan religions still denies justice, lasting peace, and prosperity to the earth and that the future still awaits its final consummation. Until the nations join them, they pledge themselves—out of faith in the Lord who has spoken—that they will walk in his name, that is, conduct themselves in a way appropriate to their profession. This will be “forever and ever” because worship and life will not come to a dead end or lead into a cul-de-sac.<sup>40</sup>

Isaiah ends his prophecy in a different manner, though there is still some similarity. There is no mention of other nations or their gods; Isaiah simply urges his the people to walk **בְּאֹרֶךְ יְהוָה** (in the light of YHWH). Given the previous similarities with Micah’s prophecy, the **בְּאֹרֶךְ יְהוָה** Probably parallels Micah’s notion of walking **בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה**, which carried the idea of relying on YHWH for guidance and protection.

Throughout scripture, as well as in the inter-testamental writings, light conveys the idea of YHWH’s guiding of his people.<sup>41</sup> In fact, later in his ministry Isaiah will refer to YHWH’s guiding of his people in terms of light: “*And I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I*

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<sup>39</sup> Barker, p.87

<sup>40</sup> Waltke, p.683

<sup>41</sup> See Exodus 13:21, Luke 1:79, Wisdom 18:3.

will do, and I will not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16). Also, as noted above in v.3, Isaiah has proclaimed that it is the **דְּבַר־יְהוָה** that will go forth from Zion; no doubt this is what will guide the nations. This connection is strengthened by the familiar words of Psalm 119:105, “*Thy word (דְּבַר־ךָ) is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” Isaiah’s audience would most likely have made the connection and realized that walking in the light of YHWH meant walking according to his word as revealed through the Torah as well as his prophets.

The differences between the final verse of Micah and Isaiah’s prophecies are also due to differing literary purposes. Whereas Micah is giving this word to encourage the people after he had earlier pronounced God’s judgment on Jerusalem, Isaiah is using this message to spur his people to a holy jealousy.<sup>42</sup> Grogan observes: “Isaiah viewed the future obedience of the nations to the true God as a challenge to the house of Jacob to walk in his ways. The nations are not yet coming to Jerusalem to be taught by the Lord, but Israel already has his word. How unthinkable then that she should continue to walk in darkness!”<sup>43</sup> Goldingay adds: “If Yahweh is committed to achieving a purpose whereby the nations let their lives be shaped by Yahweh’s teaching, the least Israel can do is let that teaching shape their own lives now.”<sup>44</sup>

#### Excursus: Authorship and Fulfillment

Given the overwhelming similarities between these two passages, are we to conclude that they came from the same pen? Furthermore, has YHWH’s promise to establish the Temple Mount as the **שֵׁן** come to pass, or does it still await a future

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Delitzsch cited in Oswalt, p.118

<sup>43</sup> Grogan, p.35

<sup>44</sup> Goldingay, p.44

fulfillment? These are two final issues which must be examined in order to more fully exegete these passages.

Scholars hold varying positions on the issue of authorship of this prophecy. Some, such as Mays and Clements, feel that neither Micah nor Isaiah is the original author. However, as we noted above, the arguments for such a position are unfounded and carry little weight and can therefore be dismissed. Among those who take these prophecies to have been given by Micah and Isaiah there is little agreement as to who relied upon whom as a source. For example, Smith, McComiskey, Oswalt, and Kaiser all tentatively hold to Micah being the original author and Isaiah adapting the prophecy to fit his message.<sup>45</sup> Such scholars feel that Mic. 4:4 retains the full wording of the original message, which Isaiah later shortened. However, Motyer and Grogan feel that the phrase כִּי־פִי יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת דָּבַר found at the end of v.4 as well as the overall tone of the passage are Isaianic and therefore Micah borrowed the prophecy from him and added v.4.<sup>46</sup> There are also a large number of scholars who feel that neither Micah nor Isaiah were the original author of their prophecies, but that they adapted or borrowed from an older unknown source<sup>47</sup>—possibly a temple hymn<sup>48</sup> or wisdom saying.<sup>49</sup> Others such as Goldingay and Achtemeier, taking into account all of the above arguments, simply leave authorship as unknown.<sup>50</sup>

Are these the only options for authorship of these passages, or is there another? Surprisingly, the most obvious answer is also the least held among scholars—Micah and

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, p.507; McComiskey, p.422; Oswalt, p.115; Kaiser, p.58

<sup>46</sup> Motyer, p.51; Grogan, p.34

<sup>47</sup> Oswalt, p.115; Butler, p.30; Barker, p.83

<sup>48</sup> Butler, p.83

<sup>49</sup> Jensen cited in Oswalt, p.112

<sup>50</sup> Goldingay, p.42; Achtemeier, p.328

Isaiah each received the same prophetic word from YHWH independently at around the same time period. Most scholars consider this view to be unlikely or at the very least unnecessary.<sup>51</sup> However, there are a few interpreters such as Archer who hold to this position<sup>52</sup> and both Grogan and McComiskey concede the possibility of independent revelation of the same word to two prophets.<sup>53</sup>

In light of the above disagreement among scholars, it is best to take both passages as being originally written by their ascribed authors, and to leave open the possibility that one might have borrowed from, thus affirming the validity of, the other's prophecy. The idea of authors of scripture borrowing from one another need not diminish the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, for the Synoptic Gospels do this frequently.<sup>54</sup> However, it should be noted that the Synoptic authors were never presenting their material as prophecy; Micah and Isaiah do. Also, contrary to Oswalt, independent inspiration is not that 'strained' a position. If YHWH were to give a vision of such grandeur to his people at a difficult time in their history, it is not surprising that he would do so to more than one prophet. Two known prophets receiving the same word would do much to validate the message, especially since in the Mosaic Law, two witnesses were required for a testimony to be considered valid (Deut. 19:15). Also, YHWH himself "*does nothing without revealing his secret (singular) to his servants the prophets (plural)*" (Amos 3:7). It is by no means a stretch to maintain that both Micah and Isaiah could have received almost identical oracles independent of one another.

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<sup>51</sup> Oswalt, p.115

<sup>52</sup> As cited in Barker, p.83

<sup>53</sup> Grogan, p.34; McComiskey, p.421

<sup>54</sup> Oswalt, p.115

The final issue, to which we now turn, is that of fulfillment. When were the promises of Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5 to be fulfilled? As we noted above, the phrase **בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים** does not automatically imply that the promise will come to pass only in the eschaton. In fact, Butler argues that these promises will come to pass sometime in the course of world history and the only enemies that will remain will be poverty and hunger.<sup>55</sup> Though the phrase **בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים** alone does not demand an eschatological fulfillment, many commentators point out that the content of this prophecy certainly does. Noting such things as the universal worship of YHWH and worldwide peace, scholars such as McComiskey, Achtemeier, Mays, and Motyer feel that the lifting up of Zion and the pilgrimage of the nations will take place in the eschatological future when Jesus reigns as Messiah universally.<sup>56</sup> Kaiser and Barker agree that the prophecy will be fulfilled when Jesus reigns, but they take this to be descriptive of a literal Millennial reign from the actual Jerusalem, where Mt. Zion will be geographically raised up as the highest of mountains and all the nations will literally travel there to be instructed by YHWH.<sup>57</sup> Somewhat against these literal interpretations are the views of Oswalt and Waltke. They both maintain that the promises of Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5 began to be fulfilled with the incarnation of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. Both allow for a final fulfillment with the second coming of Jesus, but they see the prophecies as primarily being fulfilled, at least partially, already.<sup>58</sup> Waltke makes the strongest case for a Pentecost fulfillment and gives five basic reasons for doing so. His claims are: 1) Peter identified the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost with the new epoch predicted by Micah

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<sup>55</sup> Butler, p.30

<sup>56</sup> Cf. McComiskey, p.422; Achtemeier, pp.59-60; Mays, p.96; Motyer, p.51

<sup>57</sup> Kaiser, pp.59-60; Barker, pp.83-85

<sup>58</sup> Oswalt, pp.116-117; Waltke, pp.677-679

and Isaiah by transforming the LXX's καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ταῦτα of Joel 3:1 into ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις of Isaiah 2:2, thus linking the two.<sup>59</sup> 2) In the NT, prophecies concerning Mt. Zion found their fulfillment in Christ and his church. He goes on to say: “No *clear* NT teaching—which excludes symbolic apocalyptic literature and questions by uninspired Jews (Acts 1:7)—teaches a future national restoration of Israel. Romans 11 teaches the restoration of Israel to the kingdom, not of the kingdom of Israel.”<sup>60</sup> 3) Prophets represent the new age under the symbols of the old. He argues that prophecies about events prior to Pentecost find a material fulfillment (Israel’s return from exile, Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection), but after Christ’s ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the earthly material symbols were done away with and the spiritual realities portrayed by them superseded the earthly shadows.<sup>61</sup> 4) From the beginning, the meaning of OT worship primarily had in view the eternal heavenly realities behind the symbols.<sup>62</sup> 5) To show the exceeding greatness of the future, the prophets supercharged the old symbols with hyperbole.<sup>63</sup> However, Waltke does not mean to imply that at Pentecost Micah and Isaiah’s prophecies were *completely* fulfilled. He goes on to qualify his previous remarks by stating that there is a “temporal thickness to these prophecies.”<sup>64</sup> He summarizes his position by noting that they:

...embrace a beginning of fulfillment in Israel’s restoration from exile, a victorious fulfillment in the church age stretching from Christ’s first advent to his parousia, and a consummation in the eschatological new heaven and new earth when Christ’s kingdom becomes coextensive with creation. Zion’s final and consummate vindication will come when the

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<sup>59</sup> Waltke, p.677

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.678

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p.679

new Jerusalem is lowered from heaven to the regenerated earth (Rev. 21-22).<sup>65</sup>

By so clarifying his position, Waltke shows himself to be more in line with the majority of scholars who do not feel that the two millennia following Pentecost have seen the fulfillment of Micah and Isaiah's glorious vision. For indeed, they have not. Waltke and those like him are correct in putting emphasis on Jesus rather than geographical Jerusalem because he is the fulfillment of all OT prophecy; however, he did not fulfill every prophecy about him at his first advent. God's people still wait in anticipation for the day when all people from every nation will flow to him in worship and praise, which will result in an eternity of YHWH's שלום.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid

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