

EMBRACING THE PROMISE OF PEACE: EXPLORING ISAIAH 2:2-5 AND MICAH 4:-1-5

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This paper analyzes the parallel texts of Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-5, focusing on their shared vision of peace (shalom). While acknowledging minor textual differences, the study emphasizes their striking similarities in content, structure, vocabulary, and form. The analysis highlights that Micah 4:4 has a unique contribution in describing the material manifestations of peace (shalom), including prosperity and security symbolized by the imagery of individuals “sitting under their own vines and fig trees.” This imagery is interpreted as a “return to Eden,” reminiscent of humanity’s original paradisiacal state as described at the beginning of the book of Genesis. Hence, Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-5 envision a future where nations renounce war, transforms weapons into tools for human betterment, and collaboratively seek divine guidance from Jerusalem. This vision, as underscored by Pope Francis, demands sustained commitment to truth and justice. By analyzing the parallels and disparities between Isaiah and Micah’s prophetic messages, the essay aims to deepen our understanding of peace (shalom) not only within biblical theology, but also in contemporary peace studies. Ultimately, the paper concludes that these texts offer a hopeful paradigm for fostering peace (shalom), aligning with the Rabbinic emphasis on peace (shalom) and loving-kindness as fundamental pillars of a sustainable world. It suggests that this ancient vision can inspire contemporary peace-building initiatives across various sectors of society today. It highlights how the principles embodied in these passages can inform contemporary efforts to promote peace (shalom) through dialogue, reconciliation, justice, and environmental stewardship, echoing Pope Francis’ call for “peacemakers” who actively work towards healing and renewed encounter amid global conflicts, humanitarian crises, and ecological challenges.

INTRODUCTION

In his 2024 *Urbi et Orbi* message, Pope Francis emphasized the urgent need to embrace peace amid numerous global conflicts, spanning from Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Ukraine to the African continent. He appealed for humanitarian aid to Gaza and extended his thoughts to Lebanon, grappling with institutional impasse and deepening economic and social challenges. Expressing concern for the Western Balkans' integration into the European project, he also highlighted the imminent peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Additionally, addressing the grave humanitarian crisis in Rohingya and advocating for reconciliation in Myanmar, torn by long standing internal conflicts, the Pope underscored the imperative of abandoning every logic of violence.¹ Amidst a world besieged by war, famine, suffering, climate change and environmental destruction, how can peace be promoted? How can believers of the Word serve as witnesses to the call for peace?

Considering the questions posed above, this essay contributes to the ongoing exploration of peace, particularly within the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT), as a response to the Pope's call to uphold peace. It focuses on interpreting the concept of peace in two pivotal passages attributed to the eighth-century prophets of Israel: Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5. Through a comparative analysis of the portrayal of peace in these texts, it seeks to uncover nuances in language, imagery, and emphasis, thereby deepening our understanding of the theological significance of peace within the broader context of biblical theology. This investigation includes exploring its interplay with themes such as justice, righteousness, eschatology, and the reign of God, drawing on insights from these passages to enrich the ongoing study of peace.

¹ Francis, *Urbi et Orbi Message*, Easter 2024, Vatican website, 31 March 2024, accessed 1 April 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/20240331-urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html>

To begin, a differentiation between the books of Isaiah and Micah within the canonical texts of the HB is necessary. Following this, an examination of two seemingly similar passages in Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5 will be undertaken. This comparative analysis will allow for the discernment of any parallels and disparities between the prophetic messages of Isaiah and Micah, providing insights into their respective theological emphases and contextual nuances.

By delving into the principles of peace outlined in these passages, individuals and communities can strive to embody the vision of a harmonious society envisioned by the prophets. This involves promoting dialogue and reconciliation, advocating for justice and equality, fostering understanding and empathy across diverse perspectives, environmental concerns, and actively working towards transforming weapons into instruments of service and peace. Moreover, integrating teachings of peace from these passages into educational curricula, interfaith initiatives, diplomatic efforts, and grassroots movements can pave the way for a more peaceful and just world. As Pope Francis aptly stated, “there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter.”²

ISAIAH 2:2-5 AND MICAH 4:1-5³

| Isa 2:2-5 | Mic 4:1-5 |
|--|---|
| ¹ In days to come the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be | ¹ In days to come the mountain of the LORD’s |

² Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, 3 October 2020, 225, accessed 1 April 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html. (Hereafter *FT*).

³ Unless otherwise specified, English translation of the biblical texts is taken from NRSV.

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|--|---|
| established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; <i>all the nations</i> shall stream to it. | house shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised up above the hills. <i>People</i> shall stream to it, |
| ² Many <i>peoples</i> shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. | ² and many <i>nations</i> shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. |
| ³ He shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. | ³ He shall judge between <i>many peoples</i> , and shall arbitrate between <i>strong nations far away</i> ; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; |
| ⁴ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD! | ⁴ <i>but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no</i> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <i>one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.</i> |
| | ⁵ <i>For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.</i> |

Within HB, the books of Isaiah and Micah are classified as Latter Prophets. Despite being part of the same section, they possess distinct characteristics.

Firstly, the Book of Isaiah is often regarded as a single scroll, alongside Jeremiah and Ezekiel, constituting a substantial portion of the Latter Prophets. Conversely, the Book of Micah is included in a single scroll commonly known as “The Book of the Twelve” within the same section.⁴ The Latter Prophets encompass a diverse range of conditions and themes in ancient Israel’s life, with each book serving as a prophetic anthology marked by a coherent progression of thought and theme. Recurrent themes include the “day of the Lord,” “justice,” “hope,” “salvation,” “steadfast love,” and “covenant,” reflecting the prophets’ enduring concerns for Israel.⁵

⁴ For a thorough discussion of this topic, see L. S. Tiemeyer and J. Wöhrle, eds., *The Book of the Twelve: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, VT Supp 184 (Leiden: Brill, 2020). See also H. Marks, “The Twelve Prophets,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. R. Alter and F. Kermode, 207-233 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 207.

⁵ The rabbis maintain the order of the prophetic books of the HB which can be summarized as follows: first, the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and second, the Latter Prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve

Secondly, Isaiah's prophecy spans 66 chapters, covering a wide array of themes such as judgment, restoration, messianic prophecies, and visions of God's glory.⁶ Micah's prophecy, on the other hand, consists of only 7 chapters, focusing on issues like social justice, ethical behavior, and the judgment and restoration of Israel and Judah.⁷

In terms of writing style, Isaiah's work is characterized by elaborate poetic imagery, rhetoric, and complex literary structures.⁸ In contrast, Micah's style is more straightforward, featuring vivid imagery and language, and his messages are presented in a concise manner.⁹

Lastly, Isaiah ministered primarily in the royal courts of Judah during the reigns of kings such as Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, addressing political and religious challenges, including the threat of Assyrian invasion.¹⁰ Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, focusing on social injustices,

Scrolls). See L. Schiffman, *Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing, 1991), 118-19. The HB arranged the prophetic books chronologically. The first section composed of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Obadiah and Micah was thought to belong to the eighth-century BCE. The second section composed of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah is dated towards the end of the seventh-century BCE during the decline of Assyria. The third section composed of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi belongs to the beginning of the Persian period. It is interesting to note that within "The Book of the Twelve," an overarching idea can also be discerned: the fact that these prophetic books were written to address issues concerning the sin and infidelity committed by Israel towards YHWH and the latter's unwavering commitment to restore the former serves as an underlying motif. See H. Marks, "The Twelve Prophets," 207.

⁶ See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 796.

⁷ See James Luther Mays, *Micah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 17ff.

⁸ See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction*, 780ff.

⁹ See James Luther Mays, *Micah*, 21ff.

¹⁰ See Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 1: Chapters 1-18 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 9.

corruption among ruling elites, and impending judgment on Israel and Judah.¹¹

Certainly, Isaiah and Micah, although contemporaries and prophets in Judah, offer unique perspectives and contributions to the prophetic literature of the HB/OT. Despite this, an intriguing case of parallel passages or themes arises in Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5.¹² To explore the similarities and differences between these texts, we will begin by conducting a detailed verse-by-verse analysis of Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5.¹³ This analysis will shed light on the distinct emphases and messages conveyed by each prophet, while also highlighting any shared themes or imagery that may provide insight into their prophetic visions.

ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS

| Isa 2:2 | Mic 4:1 |
|--|--|
| והיה באחרית הימים נכון יהיה הר בית-יהוה בראש ההרים ונשא מגבעות ונהרו אליו כל- הגוים | והיה באחרית הימים יהיה הר בית- יהוה נכון בראש ההרים ונשא הוא מגבעות ונהרו עליו עמים |

Both texts commence with a temporal clause, **והיה באחרית הימים**. This expression denotes the eschatological future when God's promises will be fulfilled (see Gen 49:1ff; Num 24:14; Deut

¹¹ See James Luther Mays, *Micah*, 21ff.

¹² There are various biblical texts which demonstrate how certain passages, themes, or events are echoed or elaborated upon in different books of the HB/OT, contributing to the overall coherence and interconnectedness of the biblical narrative such as Creation Account in Gen 1:1-2:3; The Ten Commandments in Exod 20:1-17 and Deut 5:6-21; The Davidic Covenant in 2 Sam 7:8-16 and 1 Chron 17:11-14; the covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem in Josh 24 and Judg 2:6-15.

¹³ See Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987), 29-62.

31:29; Jer 23:30; Ezra 38:16; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5; etc.).¹⁴ It appears likely that the emphasis on the future stems from the current experience of suffering and tribulation. The prophets, indeed, envision a better future when YHWH's rule will establish order and ensure peace on both political and social levels.¹⁵ The differing arrangement of נכון and יהיה in Isa 2:2 and Mic 4:1 is noteworthy. Isaiah writes נכון יהיה employing a *participle* + *auxiliary* structure while Micah writes יהיה . . . נכון using an *auxiliary* + . . . + *participle* pattern. Neither rendition strictly adheres to syntactic rules (*auxiliary* + *participle*).¹⁶ Micah's arrangement finds support in Josh 8:4, where the sequence *auxiliary* + . . . + *participle* is also observed: והייתם כלחם נכנים.¹⁷ In Micah, this positioning lends a permanent sense to the niphal verb נכון. However, in poetry, syntax allows for more flexibility, and both arrangements convey the same meaning in Hebrew, and thus translate similarly into English.¹⁸

Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1 describe what will happen to הר (נכון) at בית-יהוה in the eschatological future: it shall be established (נכון) at

¹⁴ See James Luther Mays, *Micah*, 96. The use of the phrase "mountain of the LORD's house" must have a theological intention. It expresses the seat of YHWH's rule in the land. In the OT, "mountain" is used 486 times to refer to the place where the covenant of God to his people was made. The LORD chose Sinai and Zion as the places where He reveals Himself. On Mount Sinai, the Law was given, and the national worship was established. In Zion, God has put his name, and this became the final and central place of worship (Exo 15:17; Deut 12:1). Here the tribes assembled in worship (Pss 122:13; 133). See J. Steinmueller and K. Sullivan, "Mountain," in *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1956), 742-743.

¹⁵ See N. Blake Hearson, "Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5: An Exegetical and Comparative Study," *MJT* 6 (2008): 41. See also H.G.M. Williamson, *The book called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's role in composition and redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 190.

¹⁶ See Francis Anderson and David Noel Freedman, "Excursus: The Relationship between Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5," in *Micah: A New Translation and Commentary*, AB 24E (Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 2000), 413-427.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, eds. David Clines & Philip Davies, JSOT Sup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 305.

the top of the mountains (ההרים בראש), or as the NRSV paraphrases it superlatively, “as the highest mountains.” ראש (lit. “head”) is used as a metonym for the top or summit of a mountain or hill (see Exo 17:9).¹⁹ With the preposition ב, the phrase may be translated as “as the highest of the mountains.”²⁰ Additionally, “it shall be raised above the hills,” (Isa 2:2 ונשא מגבעות // Mic 4:1 ונשא מגבעות) with Mic 4:1 providing the independent pronoun הוא (it), which is not present in Isa 4:2 but is understood in the conjugation of ונשא. The purpose of the independent pronoun is for emphasis: “It shall be raised.” Nevertheless, its presence does not alter the meaning of the text. The “mountain of the LORD’s house” shall be established as the “head” of all mountains and lifted above the “hills”²¹ so that peoples/all the nations shall stream to it.²² Although in the Bible, עמים (used for both Jews and gentiles) has a broader meaning than גוים (used for the gentiles). Mic 4:1-2 and Isa 2:2-3 seem to use them interchangeably: for example, where Mic 4:1 has עמים, Isa 2:2 has כל-הגוים; and conversely, where Mic 4:2 has גוים, Isa 2:3 has עמים.

The poetic parallelism between עמים and גוים in Mic 4:1-2 as well as in Isa 2:2-3 most likely indicates that the two terms are synonymous: both refer to the gentile nations.²³ This is further suggested using the plural עמים (peoples) instead of the singular עם,

¹⁹ This word is presented in NAS, NIV: as the chief of . . . , KJV: in the top of . . . , NKJV: on the top of . . . , NAB: higher than. In contrast to 4QIsa^c and MT, 1QIsa^a lacks article. See Martin Abegg, et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 273.

²⁰ Hearson, “Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5,” 42.

²¹ See S. R. Driver, “Hill,” in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 383-384.

²² The Targum of Micah translates: All the kingdoms shall return to worship upon it. The *niphal participle* נִשָּׂא comes from the root נִשָּׂא which means “to lift” or “to bear.” In this case, it is used to indicate a gesture, a common description in Isa 2:2, 12-14; 6:1; 30:25; 57:7. Kellerman however observes that the *niphal participle* is associated with the noun gā’āh which is figuratively used as a statement about the majesty of God (see Exo 15:17, 21; Pss 93:1; 68:35; Job 40:10; Isa 2:19, 10, 21; Deut 33:2-5, 26-29. See D. Kellerman, “gā’āh,” *TDOT* 2: 344-350.

²³ See A. R. Hulst, in *TLOT* (1975): 1130-1146.

which would commonly be expected if it refers only to the nation of Israel. In the eschatological future, even the gentile nations will go to the LORD's Temple in Zion to receive instruction. Alternatively, the parallelism between עמים and גוים can be regarded as synthetic, i.e., the two terms are not the same but related because עמים can encompass both Jews and gentiles. So, in the latter days, all the nations—both Jews and gentiles—will be assembled on the Temple mount to be taught by the LORD. A third interpretation, albeit the least satisfactory, regards the parallelism of עמים and גוים as antithetic: עמים solely refers to the people of God, Israel, while גוים refers to the gentiles. In this interpretation, Isa 2:3 and Mic 1:2 are contrasted. In Isa 2:3, only the people of God (עמים) say, "Let us go up... to the house of the God of Jacob." For although all the gentile nations (כל-הגוים) shall go to Jerusalem (Isa 2:2), they are banned from entering the Temple. In contrast, Mic 4:2 allows the gentiles to go to the Temple. The identification of עמים with the Jews becomes problematic in the succeeding verses (Isa 2:3 // Mic 4:3) in which God's judgment or arbitration between "many peoples" (רבים עמים) clearly refers to settling disputes between various nations at war. עמים cannot simply be restricted to Israel. The גוים generally refer to Gentiles and heathens who are considered as helplessly lost, without God and hope. Yet the גוים will eventually participate in all the blessings envisioned by the prophets. They are destined to be blessed by God in future days (Gen 12:1-3), and they are to join in the great procession to Mount Zion.²⁴

²⁴ *Gōyim* usually refers to the surrounding pagan nations specifically defined political, ethnic or territorial groups of people without intending to ascribe a specific religious or moral connotation (see Gen. 10:5). The Dead Sea scrolls describe them as "people of nothingness" (1QM 6:6), the enemies of God (1QM 12:11) who are subject to judgment (1QpHab 5:4). They may refer to the "heathen nations," or "godless" (1QpHab 13:4; see 1QM 14:7; 15:2) who worship wood and stone (1 QpHab 12:13; 13:1. Clements, "גוי," in *TDOT* II (1990): 426-427.

With emphasis on the phrase, “and all the nations/peoples shall flow to it,” the vision seems to designate one people of God made up of both believers and non-believers: the **עמים** and the **גוים** who, in the days to come, will experience peace and security.

| Isa 2:3 | Mic 4:2 |
|--|--|
| והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל-הר-יהוה אל-בית אלהי יעקב וירנו מדרכיו ונלכה בארחתיו כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר-יהוה מירושלם | והלכו גוים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל- הר-יהוה אל-בית אלהי יעקב וירנו מדרכיו ונלכה בארחתיו כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר-יהוה מירושלם |

This verse serves as a continuation or amplification of the previous verse, with parallel elements spanning both verses. For example, Mic 4:1 state, “ונהרו ... עמים” // Mic 4:2 “והלכו ... גוים” // Isa 2:2 “אליו ... כל-הגוים” // Isa 2:3 “והלכו ... עמים רבים” // Isa 2:2 “אליו ... כל-הגוים” // Isa 2:3 “והלכו ... עמים רבים”. These verses explain why the gentiles will flock to Zion in the latter days. The perspective of Isa 2:3 and Mic 4:2 is the proclamation of God’s salvation. The imperative “לכו” is often used to invite people to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem since the city is situated atop a mountain and its Temple is located on a hill.²⁵ Scholars such as Kevin Cathcart and Robert Gordon compare this pilgrimage motif to Zechariah’s prophecy in 8:22-23.²⁶ The purpose of the ascent is also indicated: “וירנו מדרכיו ונלכה בארחתיו כי מציון תצא תורה.”²⁷ The difference between Mic 4:2 “וירנו” and Isa 2:3 “וירנו” (*scriptio*

²⁵ Dilbert Dillers, *Micah*, ed. Paul Hanson & Loren Fisher (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 50.

²⁶ See Kevin Cathcart and Robert Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets: The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 14 (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1992), 119.

²⁷ The Targum of Micah adds, “. . . that he may teach us ways which are right before him, and that we may walk in the teaching of his law.” (KJV: “. . . of his ways; NAS: “. . . about his ways; NAB: in his ways)

defectiva) is primarily orthographic, indicating alternative spellings used by biblical manuscript copyists which may reflect a unique literary style of Micah's redactor.²⁸ What is described here is the teaching of the Law, the "ודבר-יהוה," to the gentiles/peoples.²⁹ Having learned the instructions of the LORD, they shall now practice God's תורה which will come from Zion—the mountain of Jerusalem.³⁰ Their motivation to ascend to YHWH's Mountain is to receive salvation.³¹ The emphatic "כי" affirms the reason why peoples/nations should stream toward the mountain of the LORD's house: It is because of YHWH's presence in Zion/Jerusalem as the center of divine activity.³²

| Isa 2:4 | Mic 4:3 |
|---|--|
| ושפט בין הגוים והוכיח לעמים רבים וכתתו חרבותם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות לא-ישא גוי אל-גוי חרב ולא-ילמדו עוד מלחמה | ושפט בין עמים רבים והוכיח לגוים עצמים עד-רחוק וכתתו חרבתיהם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות לא-ישאו גוי חרב ולא-ילמדון עוד מלחמה |

²⁸ Anderson and Freedman, "The Relationship between Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5," 422.

²⁹ Hence, in the Targum of Micah, it says: "... and the teaching of the word of the LORD from Jerusalem," to emphasize that the *tōrāh* serves as the basis of one's ascent to the temple. It is YHWH Himself who will teach the people.

³⁰ Helfmeyer, "הִלֵּךְ," in *TDOT*, vol. 3: 397. See also, Wolfe, "The Book of Micah," 923, Mic 4:2 LXX (δεδίξουσιν) uses the verb in the 3rd person plural. The 4QIsa^c and MT (Isa 2:3/Mic 4:2) render it in the singular. See Abegg, et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 273.

³¹ Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 167. (NIV, KJV, NAS, RSV, NKJV translates תּוֹרָה as "law.")

³² Hearson, "Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5," 44. The Targum of Micah adds "... to the house of the Shekinah of the God of Jacob." See Kevin Cathcart and Robert Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets: The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 14 (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1992), 119.

Both Isa 2:4 and Mic 4:3 is often quoted for their superb literary quality and sublime message of peace. They may be divided into five parts, each comprising a complete sentence containing ellipsis and parallelism. For instance, lines 1-3 are grammatically parallel with each other (with *weqatal* verbs in the 3rd person), while line 4 is grammatically parallel with 5 (with *yiqtol* verbs in the 3rd person). This division helps to identify the perspectives of each prophet as they seem to describe the purpose of the peoples'/nations' ascent to the mountain of the LORD.

| Line | Book | Verb | Object |
|------|------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Isa | ושפט | בין הגוים |
| | Mic | ושפט | בין עמים רבים |
| 2 | Isa | והוכיח | לעמים רבים |
| | Mic | והוכיח | לגוים עצמים עד-רחוק |
| 3 | Isa | וכתתו | חרבותם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות |
| | Mic | וכתתו | חרבתיהם לאתים וחניתתיהם למזמרות |
| 4 | Isa | לא-ישא | גוי אל-גוי חרב |
| | Mic | לא-יש | גוי חרב |
| 5 | Isa | לא-ילמדו | עוד מלחמה |
| | Mic | לא-ילמדון | עוד מלחמה |

The verb שפט (to judge) in line 1 is synonymously parallel with the verb יכה (to arbitrate, KJV, NKJV: rebuke; NAS: render decisions for; RSV: decide for; NIV: settle disputes for; NAB: impose terms on) in line 2. Here, שפט and יכה likely describe God's act of settling disputes between nations, reconciling enemies, and

establishing justice (משפט) to achieve peace.³³ Hence, lines 1 and 2 underscore YHWH's role as a peacemaker.³⁴ Similar to the period of the judges of Israel, the verb שפט may also denote the function of governance, signifying God's reign over the nations on earth.³⁵ Hearson suggests that by embracing the teachings of YHWH (תורה), peoples/nations submit in obedience to YHWH as their true ruler and judge.³⁶ Throughout the prophetic literature, YHWH is depicted as one who judges or arbitrates based on the people's fidelity to the תורה.³⁷

Once more, Isa 2:4 and Mic 4:3 interchange גוים and עמים while Isa 2:4 employs הגוים, Mic 4:3 uses עמים רבים; and where Isa 2:4 has עמים רבים, Mic 4:3 includes גוים עצמים עד-רחוק. The use of the adjective רבים (many) in Mic 4:3 and Isa 2:4, along with the addition of גוים עצמים עד-רחוק (strong nations far away) in Mic 4:3, appears to emphasize the universal scope of God's reign in the latter days. This indicates that even those powerful nations situated far away will ultimately accept YHWH's rule.³⁸

Line 3 contains ellipsis whose pattern V+C ...+C may be operative:³⁹

³³ See J. van der Ploeg, "Studies in Hebrew Law," CBQ 12 (1950): 248-259.

³⁴ See *ibid.*

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ See Hearson, "Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5," 45. Roberts ("The End of War in the Zion Tradition: The Imperialistic Background of an Old Testament Vision of World Wide Peace," HBT 26, 1 [2004]: 2-22) understands this verse in relation to the conceptual world of ancient imperialism specifically Hittite-suzerainty background. He concludes that "the reason the nations can discard their weapons of war is that they are all vassals of Yahweh, and as such, they are not permitted to go to war against one another to settle their disputes; instead, their disputes will be settled by Yahweh's binding arbitration issued from the imperial capital of Jerusalem (p. 6)."

³⁷ See Hearson, "Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5," 45. See also Ploeg, "Studies in Hebrew Law," 248.

³⁸ See *ibid.*

³⁹ See Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, eds. David Clines & Philip Davies, JSOT Sup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 305.

| | Verb | Complements |
|--------|-------|------------------|
| Line 3 | וכתתו | חרבותם לאתים |
| | ... | וחניתיהם למזמרות |

The verb **וכתתו** is only implied in the second line. The subject (they) refers to the **עמים רבים** in Isaiah, or to the **לגוים עצמים** **עז-רחוק** in Micah. The poetic parallelism between the two complements is noteworthy, where different pronominal suffixes are attached to the word **חרבות** (swords) **ם** in Isa 2:4 **חרבותם** and **ם** in Mic 4:3 **חרבותיהם** – are alternative forms of the third person masculine plural pronoun attached to a noun; they are not variant readings. Such morphological variations in Biblical Hebrew may be due to regional usage (dialectal changes) or scribal preference.⁴⁰

The weapons of war (swords // spears) will be transformed into implements of farming (plowshares // pruning hooks). This transformation signifies a clear message: the cessation of war and violence, as people turn their weapons into agricultural tools. In the latter days, the LORD will teach peoples and nations the ways of peace. As stated in 1 Samuel 17:47, “the LORD saves not with a sword and with a spear.” Swords and spears symbolize warfare (see Lev 26:25; 2 Chron 29:9; Jer 14:15; 24:10; Ezek 7:15; 33:2ff., etc.), representing military arsenals. Conversely, “plowshares” and “pruning hooks” are essential farming tools (see Isa 18:5). The transition from weapons to agricultural tools recalls humanity’s original purpose in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, as described in Gen 2:15, to till and keep the land.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 305.

⁴¹ See Alphonso Groenewald, “An Exegetical Analysis of the Vision of Peace in the Book of Isaiah (2:1-5),” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34.2 (2013): 3, accessed 3 March 2024, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i2.866>.

In the paradisaical vision of the prophets, the nations/people will “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (the Targum has “sickles”) to usher in an age of peace. This imagery may depict a process of disarmament. Moreover, it signifies a lasting peace where war will be completely forgotten. This isn’t merely a temporary truce or cessation of hostilities between warring nations but a divinely ordained peace, sustained by God’s presence on the mountain.⁴²

Lines 4-5 depict the arrival of the latter days, when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war anymore.” Refraining from lifting up the sword (Targum: arms) against another nation and ceasing to learn war heralds the realization of true peace for all. War will cease to exist, and peace will permeate all peoples and nations. Hearson observes that this enduring peace can only be attained when peoples and nations have learned and internalized YHWH’s תורה.⁴³

The verb that accompanies the singular subject is singular in Isa 2:4, but plural in Mic 4:3. Collective nouns like גוי can take either a singular or plural verb in Hebrew. Such grammatical variations are frequent in the Bible. Additionally, Mic 4:3 includes a “paragogic nun” (ן) attached to the verb לא-ילמדו (neither shall they learn). This nun serves as a pronunciation aid and is a common feature in Biblical Hebrew. These divergences, though minor, can be easily explained by scribal tendencies.⁴⁴

⁴² Groenewald, “An Exegetical Analysis of the Vision of Peace,” 3.

⁴³ Hearson, “Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5,” 45. See also Abegg, et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 273. It is to be noted that in Micah it is 3rd person imperfect plural. The 8HevXII and LXX (ἀντάγει, aorist active, 3rd person) render it as singular. See also Anderson and Freedman, “The Relationship between Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5,” 421-422.

⁴⁴ See Anderson and Freedman, “The Relationship between Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5,” 421-422.

MICAH 4:4

| BHS | | NRSV |
|---------------------------------------|----|---|
| וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנּוֹ | 4a | but they shall all sit under their own vines |
| וּתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ | 4b | and under their own fig trees, |
| וְאִין מִחְרִיד | 4c | and no one shall make them afraid; |
| כִּי־פִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת דָּבַר | 4d | for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. |

Micah 4:4-5 is not part of the original oracle incorporated into the prophecies of the eighth-century prophet. These verses appear to be expansions made by redactors on Mic 4:1-3 rather than deriving from a common source.⁴⁵

In the idyllic portrayal of the eschatological age, Mic 4:4 provides a rustic scene where the people “shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees.” The prophet Zechariah echoes this depiction of the latter days: “On that day, says the LORD of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree” (Zech 3:10). According to Hans Walter Wolff, “instead of fleeing into the narrow confines of a fortified city, as in times of war, with the coming of the new age, each person will sit peacefully in the open.”⁴⁶

This blissful life in the countryside—of peasants “sitting under their own vines and fig trees”—is a common motif of peacetime in the HB/OT. For instance, it is said that “during Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees” (1 Kgs

⁴⁵ See James Luther Mays, *Micah*, 95.

⁴⁶ Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*, trans. Gary Stansell (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 122.

4:25). Similarly, during the Maccabean period, Simon “established peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy; all the people sat under their own vines and fig trees, and there was none to make them afraid” (1 Mac 14:11-12). The passage in 2 Kgs 18:31 (see Isa 36:16), “you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree,” also describes a time of peace and contentment. Enjoying the shade or fruits of the “vines and fig trees” in Mic 4:4 may be seen as the result of people abandoning war and turning to agriculture in Micah 4:3.

Analyzing the metaphor of “vine and fig trees” in this verse, Walter Brueggemann concludes that Mic 4:4 is a radical reaffirmation of what *תורה* stands for in the preceding verse:

The social implications involve not only disarmament. It also anticipates lowered economic expectations. . . . It implies being ready to settle for one’s own vines and figs without yearning for or coveting the vines and figs which others produce. . . . the vines and figs of others will be safe only when the powerful are content with the grapes and figs they themselves produce. Thus, this radical vision understands that a dismantling of the military machine carries with it a break with consumeristic values.⁴⁷

The textual affinity of 1 Mac 14:12 “All the people sat under their own vines and fig trees, and there was none to make them afraid” with Mic 4:4 “they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid” may suggest that the author of 1 Mac may have borrowed or reused the prophecy of Mic 4:4 and applied it to his situation. The verb *מחריד* in Micah 4:4c is a participle of the Hiphil verb *החריד* which

⁴⁷ Walter Brueggemann, “‘Vine and Fig Tree’: A Case Study in Imagination and Criticism,” *CBQ* 43 (1981): 194.

means “to make somebody or something afraid (tremble).”⁴⁸ The verb echoes Lev 26:6 in which God promised Israel a land so rich with milk and honey that no one will make them tremble as they enter, for the hand of the LORD would guide them. This promise marks the beginning of the formation of a new Israel as the people chosen by God. This passage in Mic 4:4c consoles Israel and the whole nation. Hearson comments that this verse assures everyone that each one will be content. There will be no need to worry because all the possible shocks and agitations of war and violence will be abolished on that day.⁴⁹

The phrase “for the mouth of LORD of hosts has spoken” in Mic 4:4d is a prophetic formula to authenticate the divine origin of the oracle,⁵⁰ which often serves as a conclusion of an oracle in the prophetic literature of the HB/OT.⁵¹

| Mic 4:5 | Isa 2:5 |
|---|--------------------|
| כי כל-העמים ילכו איש בשם אלהיו ואנחנו נלך | בית יעקב לכו ונלכה |
| בשם-יהוה אלהינו לעולם ועד | באור יהוה |

The only shared elements between Mic 4:5 and Isa 2:5 (although imperfectly matched) are: **לכו** // **ילכו** and **בשם אלהיו** // **באור יהוה**. However, these shared vocabularies are not sufficient to posit a common source for Mic 4:5 and Isa 2:5. Both prophets diverge in their directions to conclude the pericope. Let us examine each passage separately.

⁴⁸ See James Luther Mays, *Micah*, 98.

⁴⁹ Hearson, “Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5,” 42. See also Anderson and Freedman, “The Relationship between Micah 4:1-5 and Isaiah 2:1-5,” 409.

⁵⁰ The Targum of Micah writes: “For by the Memra of the LORD of hosts has been decreed so.”

⁵¹ Mays, *Micah*, 98.

Mic 4:5

Micah 4:5 may be arranged according to the A → B → A → B → C pattern signaled by the recurrence of the keywords: “walk” and “name.” The word “walk” is used twice (in vv. 5a and 5c), and “name” also appears twice (in vv. 5b and 5d).

| | BHS | NRSV |
|---|---|--|
| A | Mic 4:5a: כִּי כָל־ הָעַמִּים יֵלְכוּ | For all the peoples <i>walk</i> , |
| | Isa 2:5 | |
| B | Mic 4:5b: אִישׁ בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהָיו | each in the <i>name</i> of its god, |
| | Isa 2:5 | |
| A | Mic 4:5c: וְאִנְחָנוּ נֶלֶךְ | but we will <i>walk</i> |
| | Isa 2:5a: בֵּית יַעֲקֹב לָכוּ וְנִלְכָּה | <i>O house of Jacob, come, let us walk</i> |
| B | Mic 4:5d: בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ | in the <i>name</i> of the LORD our God |
| | Isa 2:5b: בְּאוֹר יְהוָה | <i>in the light of the LORD!</i> |
| C | Mic 4:5e: לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד | forever and ever. |

In Mic 5a, “ילכו” is used as the verb (Qal, imperfect, 3rd person plural) with the subject “all people” (כל-העמים). “To walk” here refers to one’s entire life journey, following one’s own gods, because as the prophecy says, someday all nations will walk under the banner of YHWH.⁵²

⁵² See Helfmeyer, “הלך” in *TDOT*, vol. 3: 395.

Micah acknowledges that “all the peoples” (כל-העמים) will walk with their own gods, while Israel will walk “in the name of the LORD, our God” (בשם-יהוה אלהינו). It seems that Mic 4:5 emphasizes the differences between the gentiles and Israel regarding the god that each will follow. Sweeney suggests that Mic 4:5 “presents a very different scenario in which the Gentiles and Israel will enjoy an era of world peace under YHWH’s worldwide sovereignty, but they will do so by going their separate ways religiously.” James Luther Mays notes that the peoples will soberly recognize that in the present situation, the nations do not seek after the God of Jacob: “They lead their life each in the name of their own god, that is, in the mission by the authority, and with trust in their gods.”⁵³

In the meantime, it is only Israel that follows the proper map for its journey: “but we [Israel] will walk in the name of the Lord, our God forever and ever” (v. 5cde). “In the name of the LORD” is a formula that carries various nuances in the Bible. It can mean “by God’s power and authority” (Deut 18:5, 7, 22; 21:5); “on behalf of God” (Ps 118:26); “with God’s blessing” (1 Sam 17:45; 2 Sam 6:18); “attested by God” (1 Sam 20:42; 1 Kgs 22:16); “consecrated to God” (1 Kgs 18:32), and so on. All these nuances are interconnected. Micah 4:5c, “To walk in the name of the LORD, our God,” here means to live life relying on God.⁵⁴

ISAIAH 2:5

Isaiah 2:5 begins with an exhortation to the “House of Jacob” in verse 5a. This appellation is prominent in Isaiah (see 2:6; 10:20; 14:1; 29:22; 46:3; 48:1) and generally refers to the Israelites,

⁵³ Mays, *Micah*, 98.

⁵⁴ The Targum of Micah says: “Though all the peoples shall be guilty because they worshiped idols, we, however, shall rely on the name of the LORD God, forever and ever.”

the nation descended from Jacob. The invitation “let us walk in the light of the LORD” is unique to this passage.⁵⁵ “Walk” is often used as a figure for life itself, representing a persons’ manner of existence, particularly their religious or moral conduct.⁵⁶ “Light” can be understood here as a metonym for תורה – the “imperishable light of the law” (Wis 18:4).⁵⁷ “To walk in the light of the LORD,” similar to “to walk in his paths,” likely pertains to a manner of life guided by the “instruction” and “word of God” mentioned in Isa 2:3. The expression “walk in the light (or paths/ways/presence) of the LORD” is used in the Bible to express fidelity to God through a life lived with integrity and uprightness. It means acting according to His statutes and ordinances, denoting adherence to His laws and teachings (see Isa 51:4).⁵⁸ Whereas darkness is associated with death (Job 3:5; 10:21; Pss 88:6; 91:6), failure and suffering (Jer 28:12; Amos 5:18, 20; Lam 3:2), folly (Job 37:19; 38:2; Eccl 2:13), and sin (Job 24:16; Ps 74:20; Prov 2:13; Jer 49:9), light is associated with life (Mal 3), salvation and prosperity (Job 29:3; Isa 58:8; Ps 36:10), wisdom (Pss 19:9; 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23; Dan 5:11), and justice (Isa 42:1-3, 6; 49:6; 51:4; Mic 7:8).⁵⁹

While Isa 2:2-4 envisions the idyllic age to come, the focus and scope of the exhortation in Isa 2:5 is the present age. It is an appeal addressed to the author’s contemporaries, namely the Jewish readers of the book of Isaiah, urging them to live their lives in accordance with the LORD’s statutes and precepts. The idyllic future envisaged by the prophets provides a reason for hope, but

⁵⁵ The expression “in the light of your [LORD’s] countenance” found in the Psalms (44:4; 89:15; 98:8) seems to have meaning different from “in the light of the LORD.”

⁵⁶ See Helfmeyer, “הֵלֵךְ,” in *TDOT* 3:400-1.

⁵⁷ See Aalen, “אֹר,” in *TDOT* 1: 147.

⁵⁸ See Helfmeyer, “הֵלֵךְ,” in *TDOT* 3:400-1.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*

the present must be lived in a manner that anticipates the blessings of the age to come.⁶⁰

PEACE IN ISA 2:2-5 AND MIC 4:1-5

After analyzing the texts in Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5, we find that both are nearly identical in content, structure, vocabulary, and form. Their differences are primarily related to grammar, morphology, syntax, etc., which are somewhat trivial. Perhaps the most compelling differences lie in the contexts in which they are placed and the redactional statements added at the end (Isa 2:5 and Mic 4:4-5), which describe their conception of the promise of peace.⁶¹

In our analysis, Mic 4:4 describes how the peoples/nations will experience peace: “they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.” Although Micah and Isaiah suggest that peace will possibly be realized through disarmament (i.e., “nations and people will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war again”), Mic 4:4 explicitly includes material well-being when peoples and nations “all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.” This suggests that when peoples/nations are at peace, they will experience abundance, prosperity, posterity, joy, and even the realization of one’s potentiality.⁶²

John Macquarrie postulates that these are the original concepts of peace when YHWH placed human beings in paradise (Gen 2:5-25). He states: “The original condition of man was to live in paradise. ... It means that human nature is essentially a peaceable

⁶⁰ See Groenewald, “An Exegetical Analysis of the Vision of Peace,” 3.

⁶¹ Sweeney, “Micah’s Debate with Isaiah,” 122.

⁶² See Andrew Chester, “The Concept of Peace in the Old Testament,” *Theology* 92 (1989): 470-472. See also Renée Rogers Jensen, “Micah 4:1-5,” *Int* 52 (1998): 417-420.

nature and fulfills itself in peace; and conversely, that war is not man's natural condition but a corruption of nature."⁶³ The imagery of "sitting under their own vines and fig trees" in Mic 4:4 may therefore be understood as a "paradisiacal return" or a "return to Eden," reminiscent of YHWH's desire for every human being in Gen 2:15: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

Significantly, both passages envision peoples and nations going up to Jerusalem to learn God's ways. In this vision, they will renounce war, transform their weapons into instruments of human service, and only then will they live in peace.⁶⁴ Such vision, in the mind of Pope Francis, requires enduring commitment and patient effort to seek truth and justice.⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the passages from Isa 2:2-5 and Mic 4:1-5 offer hopeful insights into the concept of peace. As Fredrick Holmgren observes, these oracles suggest that the "the rule of God takes place when human society, grasped by God's saving action in the exodus, embraces the divine teaching whose emphasis on righteousness and mercy creates shalom."⁶⁶ This vision can serve as a foundation for fostering peace in our world today, encouraging initiatives such as promoting peace through media, advancing gender equality in peace efforts, and integrating peace education into various spheres of society.

Echoing this sentiment, the wisdom of the Rabbis emphasizes the centrality of peace, alongside acts of loving

⁶³ John Maquarrie, *The Concept of Peace* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 18.

⁶⁴ John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 35.

⁶⁵ See FT, 226.

⁶⁶ See Fredrick Holmgren, "Isaiah 2:1-5," *Int* 51 (1997): 64.

kindness, in sustaining the world.⁶⁷ This underscores the profound significance of peace in nurturing harmony among all peoples. Therefore, it is essential to understand that peace extends beyond the mere absence of war. It requires tireless commitment from those entrusted with greater responsibility to recognize, protect, and concretely restore the dignity of every individual, empowering them to shape the destiny of their nation as principal protagonists.⁶⁸

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⁶⁷See J. Carter Swaim, *War, Peace, and the Bible* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1982), 94.

⁶⁸ See *FT*, 233.