

Micah 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

Analysis

Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. This cryptic prophecy bridges judgment and restoration. "He give them up" (יָתַנֵּם, yittenem) describes God delivering Israel to enemies—historical fulfillment in Assyrian and Babylonian conquests. Yet this isn't permanent abandonment but temporary discipline "until" (עַד, ad) a specified time.

"She which travaileth hath brought forth" (יֹלְדָה יָלְדָהּ, yoledâ yāladâ, lit. "the one giving birth has given birth") most naturally refers to the virgin bringing forth Messiah (v. 2 mentions Bethlehem). The birth pangs (הֶבֶל, hebel) represent Israel's suffering during exile and Messiah's advent. Some interpreters see the woman as Israel corporately (Isaiah 66:7-9; Revelation 12:1-6), travailing through exile until Messiah's birth inaugurates restoration.

"Then the remnant of his brethren shall return" (יֵתֵר אֶחָיו יָשׁוּבוּ, yeter eḥāyw yāšûbû) prophesies restoration after Messiah's coming. "The remnant" (יֵתֵר, yeter) refers to preserved, faithful Israel—those who return from exile and ultimately accept Messiah. "His brethren" connects to Messiah; the "children of Israel" are reunited under His reign. This anticipates Messiah gathering scattered Israel (Isaiah 11:11-12; Ezekiel 37:21-22) and Gentiles being grafted in (Romans 11:25-27).

Historical Context

This verse follows Micah 5:2's prophecy of Messiah's birth in Bethlehem. The immediate context addresses Israel's sufferings under foreign domination until Messiah's advent. Historically, Israel endured Assyrian conquest (722 BC), Babylonian exile (586 BC), and continued subjection under Persians, Greeks, and Romans until Christ's first coming. The "remnant" theology runs through prophetic literature—not all ethnic Israel would be saved, but a faithful core preserved by grace (Isaiah 10:20-22; Romans 9:27; 11:5).

"She which travaileth" connects to the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation 12:1-6 who brings forth the male child (Christ) while the dragon (Satan) seeks to devour Him. The imagery spans from Jesus's birth through church history to His second coming. The "remnant of his brethren" returning could refer to post-exilic restoration, first-century Jewish believers accepting Jesus as Messiah, or eschatological conversion of Israel (Romans 11:26: "all Israel shall be saved"). The prophecy's layers reveal God's faithfulness through judgment to restoration.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Israel's 'travail' as both exile suffering and Messiah's birth pains deepen appreciation for God's redemptive timeline?
2. What does the prophecy of Messiah's brethren returning teach about God's faithfulness to ethnic Israel alongside His inclusion of Gentiles?
3. How does the concept of 'the remnant' challenge assumptions about automatic salvation for all who claim covenant relationship with God?

Interlinear Text

לִכְּ	יִתֶּנּוּ ׀	עַד	עַתָּה	יָלַדָהּ
H3651	Therefore will he give them up	H5704	until the time	hath brought forth
	H5414		H6256	H3205
יָלַדָהּ	וְיִתֶּר	אֶחָיו	יָשׁוּבוּ וְ	עַל
hath brought forth	then the remnant	of his brethren	shall return	H5921
H3205	H3499	H251	H7725	
בְּנֵי יִ	יִשְׂרָאֵל:			
unto the children	of Israel			
H1121	H3478			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 1:21 (Parallel theme): And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Micah 4:7 (Parallel theme): And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

Hosea 11:8 (References Israel): How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Hosea 2:9 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.

Hosea 2:14 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

Micah 7:13 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.