

this respect: "Two other commodities were close runners-up to grain in ancient international trade: wine and olive oil. Wine was far more important than now: for Greeks and Romans it took the place of coffee, tea, soft drinks, juices and so on, as well as serving as an accompaniment to food . . . The cargoes could run to great size, at times many thousands of jars."<sup>4</sup>

### How big?

Many vessels in ancient times were shipwrecked, and from time to time the remains of some of them are discovered. In these days of underwater archaeology and advanced recovery techniques, therefore, it may be that some new discovery may shed fresh light on a coaster or a grain freighter from Roman times. In the meantime, we still have the famous description of an Alexandrian vessel (called *Isis*) by Lucian of Samosata in his dialogue *The Ship*, which he saw in the port of Piraeus (Athens), where it had been blown off course. Although we have previously made use of this description,<sup>5</sup> it is instructive to linger over the ship's dimensions, as furnished by Lucian. The *Isis* is described as being 120 ells in length and thirty in breadth. If we take an ell as being eighteen inches, then we calculate that the ship

was sixty yards long by fifteen yards wide—certainly impressive dimensions.<sup>6</sup>

However, when we reflect on the fact that in the case of the ship that carried Josephus and his companions to Rome there were about 600 people on board,<sup>7</sup> we will come to appreciate that it means there must have been sufficient deck space for that many people to move about, in addition to whatever cabins were provided—all in all a considerable amount of space. Moreover, the same reflection applies when we recall that the corn ship which left Malta, carrying Paul and Luke, was able to accommodate the 276 from the wrecked vessel in addition to its own existing complement. Everything, therefore, that we learn about the vessels travelling between Alexandria and Puteoli provides evidence of their impressive size.

(To be continued)

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

5. [Testimony, May 2007, p. 150.](#)

6. 60 × 15 yards approximates to 54.86 × 13.72 metres, which would make the ship almost as long as three cricket pitches.

7. See Whiston's *Life of Flavius Josephus*, quoted in the [Testimony, May 2007, p. 149.](#)

## Review

# Who is like God?

John Nicholls



**Micah Study Guide.**

**Reg Carr (2010).**

**Published by the  
Christadelphian,  
404 Shaftmoor  
Lane, Hall Green,  
Birmingham,  
B28 8SZ, UK.**

**ISBN 978 0 85189 189 7.**

**Price: £7.00 plus p&p.**

IT IS GOOD to see another book in the Study Guide series published by the Christadelphian Office, to add to the others on the tabernacle, Song of Solomon, Daniel, Philippians and Revelation. This one is produced in the same format and has similar aims: to emphasise first principles of doctrines and their practical outcomes. An over-

view of Micah is provided, and more detailed comments on the text are included later. There are plenty of panels, which follow up some of the more difficult or unusual aspects of the book, and there are maps and illustrations to assist further in the understanding of Scripture. In this guide there are questions arranged in panels at the end of each major section of study, as well as questions which we can ask ourselves. At the end of the book, answers to the questions are provided, which therefore makes the book a 'distance-learning package' with self-assessment that should stimulate further study.

### What's in a name?

This study is the first full-length exposition of Micah in the Brotherhood; Brother Thomas makes short but pertinent comments on the book in his

section "The Apocalypse rooted in the prophets" in *Eureka*,<sup>1</sup> and Brother Fred Pearce wrote extensively on Micah in his valuable book *Minor Prophets Before the Exile*.<sup>2</sup> Brother Reg Carr's book is therefore a welcome addition to the Truth's literature, and is one that will, in the reviewer's opinion, stand the test of time, and be used for many years to come.

In the introductory chapter, the author highlights the importance of the meaning of Micah's name ('Who is like Yah?') for the understanding of the work of the prophet: "Just on its own, Micah's name was a reminder to all who heard his message that there was no God like the God of Israel, and that they were all guilty of failing to follow God's ways properly." He points out the importance of Micah's ministry: "Micah may be thought of as a 'minor prophet' . . . but his contemporary influence was very great indeed. It was Micah's words (rather than Isaiah's) which brought about the repentance and reformation under Hezekiah . . ." (pp. 1-2). There follows a useful summary of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the second half of the eighth century B.C., and a chronological chart summarising the key events in this period. Chapters 3 and 4 contain an overview of the whole book, breaking it down into three distinct sections, and also a useful structure with subheadings.

It is in chapter 5 that the detailed analysis begins. It is not a verse-by-verse exposition but rather the giving of the sense and context, with close attention to the meaning of the text. The first words of Micah in the prophecy ("Hear, all ye people") are in fact the last words of his namesake Micaiah, who lived in the time of King Ahab, 150 years earlier. The author develops some interesting parallels between the two times. Micah acted out his sorrow at the impending judgements that God was going to bring upon Samaria and Judah by going "stripped and naked" (1:8), and he then delivered a prophecy in the form of a lament over the towns that would suffer the Assyrian invasion and destruction. The author shows that this lament uses puns and plays on words to make it more memorable to those who heard it. God did these things to His people because, as Micah said, "this time is evil" (2:3).

### Restoration after punishment

Most of Micah 2 is about how the laws of God were being broken in every conceivable way. But in the last two verses of this chapter there is a change of theme, and a note of hope is introduced

by the prophet. This is the first of the three 'restoration' passages in the prophecy. The regathering of God's people Israel, like a flock of sheep, is foreseen, and their leader is a representative of the LORD Himself, called the "breaker." The author develops the theme of the "breaker" in a panel, and it is a lovely theme, which can be traced from the time of Eden, when the grave closed over Adam and his descendants, to the time when the Lord Jesus broke open the prison bars of sin and death in his glorious resurrection, and beyond to the time of the Kingdom. This chapter has another excellent panel on the parallels between Hezekiah and Jesus, and concludes with some thought-provoking questions, the outline answers being given later.

### Jerusalem's desolation foreseen

The second section of Micah's prophecy is considered in chapter 6 of Brother Carr's book, and it commences in a similar way to the opening of the prophecy. There was no justice from the rulers; so God would "hide His face" (3:4) from the nation (another panel here, showing the Scriptural use of this expression). A condemnation of the false prophets follows; but, in contrast, Micah could truly claim that he was "full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (v. 8). For these things Zion would be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem would become heaps. The fulfilment of this stretched over the centuries, beginning with the Babylonian invasion, and then the Romans (through the emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135).

Following the pattern in Micah, this sad prediction is followed by one of restoration and release. The prophecy of the LORD'S reign in Zion (4:1-5), most of which is the same as Isaiah 2:2-4, is thought to have been first delivered by Micah. Brother Carr discusses this. He also has a most useful panel on the 'latter days,' a small panel on the use of the quotation on the plaque in the United Nations building in New York, a panel on "Quotations made from the prophecy of Micah" and another on "Sheep and shepherd imagery in Micah."

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1. *Eureka: an exposition of the Apocalypse*, John Thomas, The Christadelphian, Birmingham.
  2. *From Hosea to Zephaniah: Studies in the Minor Prophets before the Exile*, Fred Pearce (1979), The Christadelphian, Birmingham.

## **Messiah foreseen**

The restoration section continues with the prophecy of the regathering of the Jews, to whom the “former dominion” would return, and the saving of the nation out of Babylon. These prophecies, as Brother Carr rightly points out, had their first fulfilment under the Babylonian invasion, which was then a long time in the future. The author goes on to say: “Micah 5 is based firmly in the eighth-century context of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians and the destruction of Sennacherib’s army” (p. 39).

The ruler in Israel is both Hezekiah and Christ. There is a primary and a Messianic fulfilment of much in this chapter. A panel on “Parallels between Hezekiah and the Lord Jesus in Micah 5” brings out this point powerfully. Further useful panels follow: “‘Thousands’ in Micah 5:2;” “The ‘Ruler . . . whose goings forth are seen from of old, from everlasting;” “‘Jesus as ‘the peace’” and finally “Seven shepherds.” The reviewer wonders whether we should also see the end-time fulfilment of Micah 5:10-15 as being the cleansing of modern Israel’s idols, such as their trust in their defence forces and their scientific and agricultural achievements. The chapter ends with more questions.

## **The nation before the judge**

Chapter 7 of Brother Carr’s book gives details on the third part of Micah, which is a courtroom scene. God speaks first (6:1-5), and the spokesman for the defence, who is Micah, speaks next. He makes no defence, but accepts the justice of God’s complaint. It is at this point that perhaps the most memorable words of Micah are uttered: “[God] hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (v. 8)

How similar are these words to those Moses wrote down 500 years before: “And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good” (Deut. 10:12,13)! Hezekiah had tried his hardest to encourage the nation to follow these guiding principles of behaviour.

God continued His complaint in Micah 6:9-12 before passing sentence. Micah 7 records the defendant’s lament and confession, but it is not

readily apparent whose lament it is. Brother Carr suggests, with good reasons, that it is that of Hezekiah himself.

## **God faithful to His promises**

The final section of the prophecy of Micah has, like the other two sections, a picture of restoration and redemption (7:11-20). Jerusalem is to be rebuilt. The prophet prays that God will send His Shepherd to rule over His flock and feed them with the good things of His promises. He is assured that the nations will be humbled, and that sins and transgressions will be forgiven. He praises God for His mercy and goodness, and, in a play on his own name, says: “Who is a God like unto Thee, That pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression . . . ?” (v. 18).

The prophecy ends with his expression of faith in the great and precious promises that have sustained the faithful throughout the ages: “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.” A panel of questions ends this chapter, together with supplementary questions that are designed to stimulate further Bible study.

## **Benefits for today’s readers**

There are more good things to come in this book. Brother Carr calls chapter 8 “Micah for today,” and in it he poses thirty questions based on Micah which we are asked to answer to ourselves as honestly as possible. Try them on yourself—they are a real challenge! The title of chapter 9 is “Micah for tomorrow.” Here we can transport ourselves to the (not-so-distant?) future and think about the great things that the Lord through His prophets has told us will surely come to pass.

After the answers section, chapter 11 is called “Learning more: Micah and Isaiah: common language and subjects.” There is a good-length list of subjects that are common to these two contemporary prophets. Finally Brother Carr gives us “Further reading”—those books that he has found of help in his study of Micah.

This book is highly commended to all. For those not used to Bible study it is easy to follow and has useful maps and lists. For those more familiar with Micah it pulls everything together and expounds things in the context of the times of the prophet, whilst not neglecting the latter-day applications of the prophet’s words. Our thanks are due to Brother Carr for the research he has done and the excellent book that has been published.