

with this issue, and Brother Colin develops a thesis which allows them to adopt an appropriate balance in their pilgrimage.

Another philosophical digression readers should enjoy is a discussion of the nature and form of the Deity, under the intriguing heading, "The God who is everywhere and somewhere". Brother Colin's comments here are challenging—he admits that in part they are speculative—but they are well reasoned and presented. His analysis moves beyond just the "anthropomorphic debate" about Scriptural references to the hand or arm of God to an altogether loftier plane. As with his comments on Joseph, some readers will find that they do not agree with all that is written, but they will benefit from reviewing the case the author makes.

As well as being highly spiritual, the book is intensely practical, reflecting the fact that these two things are never antithetical. An excellent example of the book's strength in this regard is its coverage of the importance of friendship in the life of the believer. This vital subject is not often

given the prominence it deserves. Brother Colin's advice, drawn from both personal experience and an appreciation of Scripture, is helpful and challenging, even though some readers may be rather surprised to read his thoughtful analysis of Proverbs 18:24.

*Think on These Things* is a book that would be enjoyed by all, from the newly baptized to advanced Bible students. It may be especially valuable for brothers and sisters who feel downhearted or for whom the way of life seems particularly difficult; those whose pilgrimage has been blighted by negativity and who perhaps have become embittered by the trials of life. It would also be suitable for "interested friends" (as opposed to "visitors"; for the significance of this you will need to read page 140) and unbaptized young people as a means of introducing them to the joys and challenges of discipleship. In short, it is heartily recommended to all who wish to be uplifted and encouraged in their service before Almighty God.

# The tower of the flock

David Green

**T**HE TOWER of the flock, otherwise known as the tower of Edar (Eder) or Migdal Edar, is mentioned twice in Scripture. In Genesis 35:19-21 it is recorded that Jacob, following the death of Rachel, pastured his flocks there. The only other reference is the symbolic one found in Micah 4:8. This study looks at the Jewish and Christian traditions regarding this place, and the underlying meaning of its symbolic use in Micah's prophecy.

## Jacob's visit to the tower of Edar

Jacob was travelling from Bethel to Bethlehem (Ephrath) when Rachel died in childbirth. After burying Rachel in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 48:7) he "journeyed, and spread his tent *beyond* the tower of Edar" (35:21). According to *Ellicott's Commentary* the Hebrew word translated "beyond" includes the idea of 'up to' or 'as far as'. Jacob appears to have stayed in the region of the tower of Edar near Bethlehem to pasture his flocks. This tower would be a watchtower used to protect the flock from wild beasts and thieves. Presumably the tower already existed when Jacob

visited the area, although the place may have been named from a tower that no longer existed in his days. Alternatively the name may have been given to the site at a later date, but before Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

## The location of the tower of Edar

Sometime later Jacob travelled on to Hebron to meet up with Isaac (v. 27). For this reason it has been concluded that the tower of Edar lay between Bethlehem and Hebron. In the fourth century A.D. there was a tower located about a mile from Bethlehem,<sup>1</sup> which was believed to be the tower of Edar. This may have been the case, but if so it would have been a very ancient structure, more than 2,000 years having elapsed since the days of Jacob. Perhaps it had been rebuilt in the intervening period. Eusebius translated the name 'Edar' incorrectly as 'shepherds' rather than 'flock' because this place was the traditional site for the angels appearing to the shepherds at the birth of

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1. Both Eusebius and Jerome refer to it being a thousand paces from Bethlehem.

Table 1	
Benjamin (Gen 35:16-21)	Jesus
Rachel's travail	Travail, with Rachel weeping for her children (Mt. 2:16-18), and then later suffering at the hands of the Romans
Rachel's death	The national death when the Roman armies destroyed the Jewish nation (Lk. 21:22)
Benoni, meaning 'son of my sorrow', born near Ephrath (Bethlehem)	Jesus, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, born at Bethlehem Ephrathah (Mic. 5:2)
Benoni also means 'son of my strength' <sup>2</sup>	"The son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" to overcome sin (Ps. 80:17)
Name changed to Benjamin, meaning 'son of the right hand'	"The man of Thy right hand" (Ps. 80:17), to whom it was said, "Sit thou at My right hand" (110:1)
Jacob pastured his flocks in the vicinity of the tower of Edar	According to tradition the angels appeared to the shepherds in the vicinity of the tower of Edar

Jesus (Lk. 2:8-16), a tradition also mentioned by Jerome (A.D. 347-419). Since the shepherds were close enough to Bethlehem to be able to visit the newborn baby the same night as the angelic visitation, this tradition is probably correct.

Apparently in the days of Jesus this "tower of the flock" was not connected with the keeping of ordinary flocks, which the rabbinic authorities only allowed to be pastured in wilderness areas. Since the tower lay close to Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem it must have been used by shepherds looking after animals that were destined for temple use. So it appears that the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world was born close to the place that provided the lambs for the temple sacrifices (see also the suggestion by Sister Liz Robinson in the [following article](#)).

### Benjamin a type of Jesus

Because Bethlehem is connected with the births of both Benjamin (Gen. 35:16) and Jesus, our attention is drawn to the typical significance of the events related in Genesis 35. The points of comparison are set out in [Table 1](#) above.

### Jewish tradition

There is an interesting tradition found in a Jewish Targum that the Messiah would be manifested at the tower of Edar in the last days: "In this place the king Messiah in the end of the days will be manifested".<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this tradition was derived from the prophecy concerning the "tower

of the flock" in Micah 4:8, which certainly has a Messianic context that is discussed below.

### Allusions to Jacob in Micah

Most of the books of the prophets use the name Israel much more frequently than the name Jacob. The book of Micah stands out among the prophets because of its high proportion of 'Jacob' references, amounting to almost fifty per cent.<sup>4</sup> In four instances the two names appear together in the same verse because of the parallelism so characteristic of Hebrew poetry. These are 1:5; 3:1; 3:8,9. One example reads:

"Now hear this,  
You heads of the house of Jacob  
And rulers of the house of Israel" (Mic. 3:9, NKJV).

The fact that the prophecy of Micah also contains several allusions to Jacob's life is probably connected with this frequent mention of the name Jacob.

These references to Jacob mostly connect with Genesis 35 and are listed in [Table 2](#) overleaf. The

2. ESV margin, Genesis 35:18.

3. The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 35:21, as cited by Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Attributed to Jonathan Ben Uzziel by Alfred Jones in his book *The Proper Names of the Old Testament Scriptures*. Targums are Aramaic translations/interpretations of part of the Old Testament.

4. 'Jacob' ten and 'Israel' twelve.

Table 2	
Jacob in Genesis	Jacob in Micah
Jacob limping (32:31)	The lame (4:6,7)
Tower of Edar (35:21)	Tower of the flock (v. 8)
Rachel in labour (v. 16)	Painful labour (vv. 9,10; 5:3)
Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem) (v. 16)	Bethlehem Ephratah (5:2)
Jacob and his flock	The shepherd and his flock (v. 4)

one reference that concerns us in this study is the reference to Migdal Edar, “the tower of the flock” in Micah 4:8.

### The building of towers

Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (1:1). It has been suggested that Micah’s references to flocks of sheep and the “tower of the flock” was particularly apt since Uzziah, Jotham’s father, was very much concerned with the keeping of livestock and the building of towers (2 Chron. 26:10). Scripture does not specify whether these towers were built for military or agricultural use, but both possibilities seem likely. Jotham also built towers, but here the context suggests that these were for military use and the protection of his people (27:4).

### A Messianic prophecy

We bring this study to a conclusion by looking at the words of the prophet Micah that refer to the tower of the flock: “And you, O tower of the flock,

the stronghold [Ophel, ‘fortress’, ‘tower’] of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem” (4:8, NKJV).

The phrases “daughter of Zion” and “the daughter of Jerusalem” mean the daughter *that is* Zion or Jerusalem, being a description of the

nation of Israel that has Jerusalem (Zion) as its capital. At a literal level it would appear that the description “tower of the flock” is being applied here to the fortress or stronghold of Zion,<sup>5</sup> which is a protection for the people of Israel, God’s flock. Interestingly, the word translated “flock” in this passage is not the one generally used but is the same word as is applied to the flock of God in Micah 2:12.

This fact draws our attention to Micah’s “tower of the flock” being a prophecy of the Messiah, the great Shepherd of the sheep, even the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true protection for the flock of God. Just as the “tower of the flock” was a place of security, green pastures and springs of water to the flock of the shepherd Jacob, so Jesus is our stronghold, and the place of our security (Jno. 10:1-18).

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5. The Jewish commentator Kimchi interpreted it as the tower of David where Israel assembled.

# “A field which the LORD hath blessed”

Liz Robinson

*“And [Jacob] came near, and kissed [Isaac]: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed” (Gen. 27:27).*

**T**HERE HAS ALWAYS been a field. The first field was outside the garden that the first man was set to tend. There was a ‘beast of the field’ who had no place in the garden, who intruded and provoked man to sin. And so Adam

was cast out of Eden, and had to dig and delve in the field, which brought forth thorns and thistles. He could only obtain food by the sweat of his brow, from the cursed earth.

We sons and daughters of Adam are as the grass of the field, flowering but for a moment. Even the lilies amongst us, gorgeously arrayed as they are, wither and die when their season is past. But, while we live, we strive to flourish, like that good earth that receives the seed