

Jonah and Micah

Ep 180: CFM Jonah; Micah

Jonah

Ways to read the text: PARDES¹

I have chosen to discuss the book of Jonah from a *remez*, *derash*, and *sod* reading rather than a *peshat*² approach for several reasons.³ Mainly for the reasons David Seely lays out, that “the props are not the play, neither is the medium the message.”⁴ I believe if we approach the text looking for ways that it can be read as an allegory (*remez*)⁵, or ways that we can apply it in our lives (a *derash* approach⁶), as well as how it relates to our ascent unto God (*sod*)⁷, we can have a much richer experience with the text.

Overview⁸

It is ironic that the profound message of the book of Jonah is often swallowed up in the speculations about the great fish, dwarfed by the debates about the size of Nineveh, ignored because of the image of fasting beasts draped in sackcloth, or diminished by the dramatic growth of a gourd plant. The book of Jonah contains a compelling story of Jonah, an Israelite, and his encounter with foreign men and foreign place replete with all of these wonders. ***The medium of the message is most often irony***—that is, a constant incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. ***But just as the props are not the play, neither is the medium the message; it is only a means to the end.*** The book of Jonah teaches

¹ PARDES is an acronym that is used to explain the four levels of interpretation of scripture. The four levels of interpretation are called: *Peshat*, *Remez*, *Derash* & *Sod*. The first letter of each word P-R-D-S is taken, and vowels are added for pronunciation, giving the word PARDES (meaning "garden" or "orchard"). Each layer is deeper and more intense than the last, like the layers of an onion.

² The *Peshat* approach to reading the Bible is the literal reading of the text. Jonah has many issues with this sort of reading, therefore I avoided the discussion entirely for several for the reasons laid out by David Seely.

³ See: [Pardes, or exegesis](#), accessed 10.21.22.

⁴ David R. Seely, “The Book of Amos,” [Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi](#), Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.

⁵ Remez (רמז) – "hints" or the deep (allegoric: hidden or symbolic) meaning beyond just the literal sense.

⁶ Derash (דרש) – from Hebrew *darash*: "inquire" ("seek") – the comparative approach which seeks to find ways the text applies in our lives. Sometimes this is explained as the sermonizing of the text. Derash lends itself to be seen as a way to "seek, seek with great attention, enquire, require", ideas of which appear frequently in the Hebrew Bible. Jewish interpreters work to "discern value in texts, words, and letters, as potential revelatory spaces... that open up the possibility to reimagine dominant narratival readings while crafting new ones to stand alongside—not replace—former readings. This approach asks questions of the text; sometimes it provides answers, sometimes it leaves the reader to answer the questions. I use this approach throughout the podcast. The main question I focus on in this approach to Jonah is the final question the Lord asks in Jonah 4.11.

⁷ The *sod* approach is a way of seeing the mystical behind the text. It can also be a coded temple rendering of a meaning behind the meaning of the actual words. It is for this reason that I am of the opinion that much of scripture is encoded with these ideas, “that those with eyes to see may see” (Matt. 13.9-16). Hugh Nibley writes about this when he says “The words used on the higher level could only be understood in their true sense by the initiated. Everything was in code, the nature of the gods concealed ‘by a cloud of epithets,’ ... which only the instructed understood.” Hugh Nibley, [The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment](#), Deseret Book, 2005, p. 126.

⁸ Much of this overview comes from David R. Seely, “The Book of Amos,” [Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi](#), Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.

in its four short chapters much about the nature of God and man and ultimately has something profound to say about relationships, specifically that the relationship between a man and his Maker has profound implications for a man's relationship with his fellow humans. Because we recognize ourselves in Jonah, we initially smile at his humanness—but by the end we are sobered, as we, like Jonah, are humbled by the grace of God and come to recognize our own hidden duplicities.

Jonah, son of Amittai, was a northerner from the village of Gathhepher⁹ and is known elsewhere in scripture as a prophet of the Lord who during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-46 B.C.) accurately prophesied Israel's territorial restoration (2 Kgs. 14:25). The Lord God called Jonah on a mission but, as portrayed in chapters 1 and 2 and then 3 and 4, Jonah ended up going on two missions—one on the sea and the other on the dry land. The call was the same in both cases. As recorded in Jonah 1:1-2, "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise [Hebrew *qum*], go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." And as recorded in Jonah 3:1-2, "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise [*qum*], go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Jonah's response was prompt, and to each call he "rose up" [*wayyaqam*]*—only in different directions*. The first time he rose up to disobey, "to flee unto Tarshish [presumably a port in Spain which in the ancient world was approximately the opposite end of the earth from Nineveh] from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). The second time, after less-than-subtle persuasion, he finally did obey when he "arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord" (Jonah 3:3).

There is an inconsistency between what Jonah said he believed and what he did. Although none of us could sufficiently justify it, we all can—from experience—understand his flight. Jonah was finally identified by a casting of lots as the cause of the great storm on the sea (*yam*) that threatened the lives of his fellows. The frightened sailors unleashed a panicked barrage of questions: "For whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" (Jonah 1:8)—all of which could be answered by Jonah's simple statement, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea [*yam*] and the dry land [*yabasa*]" (Jonah 1:9). The label of Hebrew identifies him as one of the chosen people—a member of the covenant community of Israel bound to the Lord and thus to each other by sacred obligations. His "fear" of the Lord God who hath made the "sea and the dry land" (a merism that is tantamount to saying "everything") is a statement of belief—in opposition to the polytheism of his day—in one universal God, who created and thus controls all of creation. The disobedience of a simple Hebrew is enough to bring about this calamity, even in "international waters." How could one professing such a belief ever hope to escape from the presence of such an omnipresent Being? Yet Jonah fled, and on his two missions he would meet this Being on and in the sea and on the dry land.

Jonah demonstrated his selfless charity to his fellowmen by urging them to toss him overboard, while the sailors demonstrated their own charity and fear of shedding innocent blood in attempting to preserve him. In the end the Lord had his way and Jonah was cast overboard, presumably to perish in the sea. The net result of Jonah's first mission was that the sailors, pious Gentiles, feared Jehovah, the Israelite God, and offered sacrifices to him (Jonah 1:16). Jonah, a disobedient Israelite, by the grace of

⁹ Josh. 19:13 Gath-hepher is identified as a border town in the territory of Zebulun that today is identified with Khirbet ez-Zurra, a site three miles northeast of Nazareth; G. W. Van Beek, "Gath-Hepher," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols., ed. G. A. Buttrick, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962-76), 2:356.

God, was preserved in the belly of a great fish which the Lord had prepared. In the belly of the fish a humbled Jonah prayed for deliverance. The words from his own mouth are "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Through his mercy the Lord did deliver Jonah, and the fish "vomited out Jonah upon the dry land [*yabasa*]" (Jonah 2:10)—also the arena of God's creation and power—where the next scene would take place.

After Jonah's second mission call, he arrived at the great city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, which in the day of Jonah was the intellectual, cultural, artistic, and technological center of the ancient civilized world ([Map 9, "The World of the Old Testament," LDS Bible](#)). At last Jonah bravely began to proclaim the word of the Lord: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Much to his surprise—and chagrin—all of Nineveh repented, "from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). From the king to the lowliest of beasts, they all humbly repented and fasted in sackcloth and ashes to see "if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not" (Jonah 3:9). The merciful God of heaven heard the repentant cries from Nineveh and turned away his anger, as he had preserved his children on the sea. The net result of Jonah's second mission was that the entire city of Nineveh—a "great city of three days' journey" (Jonah 3:4)—repented and turned to God.

Jonah, who on his first mission in time of crisis was willing to give up his own life to save his fellow sailors, now was displeased and very angry at the demonstration of the Lord's mercy to preserve a penitent Nineveh. Whereas Jonah had prayed to the Lord for mercy to be delivered from drowning and praised the Lord with a psalm of thanksgiving that he was delivered (Jonah 2:1-9), now he prayed that the Lord would rescind his mercy from the Ninevites. At last Jonah offered his excuse for not wanting to go to Nineveh in the first place: "Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2).¹⁰ The problem is now finally clear. Jonah didn't like Assyrians, a not uncommon position held by many of the Northern Kingdom in the time of Jonah, for they were his enemies. And Israelites were not alone in their resentment of the often cruel and uncompromising rule of the mighty Assyrian empire. While not eager to preach to them in the first place, he found solace in preaching his message only when he could anticipate their ultimate destruction. Though he was eager to proclaim the Lord God of heaven as the Creator of all things and reluctantly admitted that the Lord can control all things on the sea and the earth, he would not allow for a universal application of God's mercy to all of his creatures.

The prophetic calling in Israel often entailed the office of Mediator—even pleading for mercy for the unrighteous.¹¹ Jonah did the opposite, pleading for judgment against the repentant. Jonah is described as the antithesis of his great northern Israelite predecessor Elijah: Elijah sought the Lord in sorrow over

¹⁰ Note the JST changes at Jonah 3.9-10. Joseph changes this idea to "we will repent, and turn unto God, but he will turn away from us his fierce anger..." The KJV has God doing the "repenting." It is worth noting that this idea can be seen another way. The Hebrew of Jonah 3.10 reads as follows:

וַיֵּרָא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כִּי־שָׁבוּ מִדְרָכָם הַרְעָה וַיִּנָּחֵם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת־לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה – "And Elohim saw their deeds, that they turned from their way of evil, and Elohim had compassion, thus taking back the punishment which he counseled to create for them, thus he did not carry out his intentions" (my translation).

¹¹ For example, recall Abraham mediating for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18), Moses mediating for the children of Israel after the incident of the golden calf (Ex. 32), Samuel intervening for repentant Israel against the Philistines (1 Sam. 7), and Amos for "tiny Jacob" (Amos 7:1-6)—all of which, of course, are a shadow and type of Jesus Christ as Mediator before God for all humankind.

the hardness of the hearts of the people (1 Kgs. 19:4-18); Jonah, in anger at their penitence. Both declared to the Lord that it would be better to die than to live—Elijah out of discouragement and Jonah out of self-righteous despair. On his first mission, in his disobedience, Jonah had prayed for his life; now, in his obedience, he prayed for death. Jonah would rather have died than live to see his enemies receive the mercy of the Lord.

As so often in missionary work, the final convert must be the missionary himself. It was the Lord's turn to preach repentance to his servant. He asked Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4) and then proceeded to teach him a powerful object lesson. While Jonah nurtured his bruised ego with the slight hope that perhaps the Lord would still destroy Nineveh (Jonah 4:5), the Lord prepared a gourd plant that provided shade for him "to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd" (Jonah 4:6). At last Jonah was comforted, or at least comfortable, in his grief, and thus he cared about one of God's creations, which so conveniently offered him relief.

But the Lord sent a worm to eat the plant so that it withered. The loss of the shade once again made Jonah angry "even unto death" (Jonah 4:9). Then the Lord said, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand;¹² and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:10-11). Thus the Lord's message ended with a rhetorical question, to which the answer is obvious but missing.

The message is clear to the children of Israel, both ancient and modern. As demonstrated by Zenos' allegory of the olive tree, the branches of the wild olives can be grafted into the tree and can bear good fruit (Jacob 5). From the Old Testament we can cite the souls who followed Abraham (Gen. 12:5), the mixed multitude that came out from Egypt with Israel (Ex. 12:38), Rahab (Josh. 2), Naaman (2 Kgs. 5), Ruth (Ruth), and undoubtedly many others who are unmentioned. The gospel net continues to gather of every kind (Matt. 13:47) for the God of heaven who created us all loves us all. "Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God" (1 Ne. 17:35). Speaking of the doctrine of adoption, John the Baptist warned the children of Israel in his day: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9).¹³

Near the end of chapter 4 the Lord responded to Jonah with a question: "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" (Jonah 4:9), to which Jonah would have answered in the affirmative. The final statement by the Lord is also phrased in an unanswered question addressed to Jonah as well as to us: "Should not I spare Nineveh?" (Jonah 4:11). For the children of the covenant who profess to "fear the Lord, the God of

¹² Some have interpreted this phrase to refer to those of lesser intelligence or religious knowledge or understanding. More likely, however, the image of one not being able "to discern between their right hand and their left hand" *refers to innocent children*, who like the cattle are to be reckoned in addition to the rest of the population. See a similar phrase in Deut. 1:39 and Isa. 7:16.

¹³ Joseph Smith interpreted this passage as referring to the Gentiles, "of these stony Gentiles—these dogs—to raise up children unto Abraham"; [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#), sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book, 1938, p. 319. The Prophet further explained the process by which Gentiles are adopted: "As the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost"; *Teachings*, pp. 149-50

heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land," it echoes other such provocative questions posed throughout the scriptures. A certain lawyer once asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). King Benjamin queried, "For behold, are we not all beggars?" (Mosiah 4:19). And from the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the Lord responded to him that would begrudge the latecomer to the covenant a full reward: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matt. 20:15).

The Geography of the Story of Jonah

The city of Nineveh was on the eastern bank of the Tigris River.¹⁴ It was the capital city of Assyria and one of the oldest cities in the world.¹⁵

Joppa was a seaport on the Mediterranean coast. It was part of the northern kingdom of Israel at the time of Jonah.¹⁶

Tarshish was far across the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Its location hasn't been precisely identified, but it could have been a seaport in southwest Spain, or may refer to distant Mediterranean coastlands in general, or possibly just "the open sea."¹⁷

The main idea presented here is that Jonah was leaving for the ends of the known world, in precisely the opposite direction of Nineveh. We are not told of his motives at the beginning of the story, it seems to have been intentionally withheld to build tension as the story unfolds.

Jonah 1-2.3: The Descent

Jonah descends "from the presence of the Lord"¹⁸ (Jonah 1.3), down to Joppa, and then down into the sides of the ship (Jonah 1.5). From here Jonah proceeds down into the sea (v. 12-15), and then down into the "great fish"¹⁹ (v. 17), and then into the "belly of hell"²⁰ (Jonah 2.2) and "into the deep"²¹ (Jonah 2.3).²²

¹⁴ See #7 on [this map](#).

¹⁵ Nineveh is first mentioned in Genesis 10:11, before the time of Abraham. Archeological digs have found evidence that the area was settled as early as 6000 B.C. and, by 3000 B.C., had become an important religious center for the worship of the goddess Ishtar.

¹⁶ Today, Joppa is known as [Jaffa](#), and is part of the city of Tel-Aviv in Israel.

¹⁷ Often thought of as modern Spain, [many locations have been suggested for Tarshish](#).

¹⁸ מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה literally, "from before the face of Yahweh" (Jonah 1.3).

¹⁹ דָּג גָּדוֹל "great fish" (Jonah 1.17). The fish (never called a whale) rescues Jonah from the sea.

²⁰ מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל "from the belly/womb of Sheol/hell" (Jonah 2.2). Berlin and Brettler explain: "Sheol, the Pit or the netherworld. It is the utter bottom of the world (in this case the depths of the sea) and also the land of the dead." *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 1201.

²¹ וַתִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִצִּלְבַּי לְבֶרֶךְ יָמִים "And you hurled me into the deep into the heart of the seas!" (Jonah 2.3).

²² These early verses in Jonah 1-2 are illustrations of the idea of **catabasis** (Greek: "going down"), which is characterized by a lowering of the sense, from one level to another, with each succeeding idea. In this example, it is as if Jonah is leaving the presence of God, going down, down, into the abyss represented by the fish that swallows him in the depths of the sea – to where Jonah states that he was in "the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2). *This is reminiscent of Adam leaving the presence of the Lord going into a fallen world, or like Jesus going into the world of spirits during the three days that his body was in the tomb.* We see this as Jonah leaves the presence of God, to eventually find himself "in the belly of hell" (בֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל - Jonah 2.2).

Jonah as a Type

The book of Jonah serves as a **type** for several ideas taught in scripture. **A type is a symbol that looks forward towards a future fulfillment.** It can be defined as a “preordained representative relationship with certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions occurring at a later time in history.”²³

Compare the story of Jonah and his descent to Matthew 12.38-41:

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign²⁴; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Jonah 2.2-9: The Poetry of Jonah

This prayer of Jonah is drenched in imagery from the Psalms. In this way, Jonah is portrayed as one who is quite capable of using the Psalms to communicate his ideas.²⁵

I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple (Jonah 2.4).²⁶

²³ Henry A. Virkler, [Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation](#), Baker Book House, 1981, p. 184.

²⁴ Γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign/token/miracle” (Matt 12.39).

²⁵ For comparison, see: see Jonah 2.2 “I cried and he heard me” with Ps. 18.7, 30.3, 118.5; 120.1, 130.1. Compare Jonah 2.4 “you cast me into the depths” with Ps. 42.7 “deep calleth unto deep... all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” Jonah 2.4 “I am cast out of thy sight” with Ps. 31.22 “I am cut off from before thine eyes.” Jonah 2.5 “The waters compassed me about” with Ps. 18.4-5 “The sorrows of death compassed me... the sorrows of hell compassed me about” and 69.2 “I sink in deep mire... I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me!” Compare Jonah 2.6 “I went down to the bottoms of the mountains... yet hast thou brought up my life” with Ps. 30.3 “O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave” and 71.20 “Thou ... shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” Jonah 2.8 “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy” Ps. 31.6 “I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord.” Jonah 2.9 “I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving” and Ps. 50.14 “offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High” and Ps. 66.13 “I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows.”

²⁶ וַאֲנִי אִמְרָתִי נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגְד עֵינֶיךָ אַךְ אוֹסִיף לְהִבִּיט אֶל־הַיְכָל קֹדֶשְׁךָ “And I then said, ‘I have been **driven out from the presence of your eyes**, yet surely **I will again** look to your holy *hēkāl*/temple!’” (my translation). Robert Alter gives the following commentary: “Death is the ultimate separation from God in the biblical worldview. But the psalm also provides a geographical orientation for Jonah’s story: fleeing God’s presence, which has its territorial focus in the Jerusalem Temple on Mount Zion, Jonah finds himself in the watery depths, at the antipodes from God’s holy place. He has manifestly “gone down” (compare verse 7, “to the roots of the mountains I went down”) from Jerusalem. Yet again will I look / on Your holy temple. The speaker expresses faith against odds that he will live and return to worship God in His temple. Jonah, who has fled from the divine presence, now affirms the desire to return and enjoy it.” Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary](#), Vol. 2, W.W. Norton & Co., 2019, p. 1293.

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God (Jonah 2.6).²⁷

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple (Jonah 2.7).²⁸

It was God's Design to Bring Jonah Happiness

Bryce talked about one of the lessons of the text is that God works to bring about our happiness. He wants what is best for us. He read the following letter from the Prophet Joseph Smith:

Happiness is the object and design of our existence, and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God; but we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know, unless we comply with or keep those we have already received!²⁹

Jonah 3: His Message to Nineveh

Nineveh, that great city... three days journey (Jonah 3.3).³⁰

Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown! (עוֹד אַרְבַּעִים יוֹם וְיִנְיָה נִהְפָּקֶת) (Jonah 3.4).³²

Everyone ~~believed~~ trust God, "from the greatest of them even to the least" (Jonah 3.5).³³

²⁷ Because the sea as a site of drowning is the metaphorical equivalent of death, the poem naturally moves from the watery abyss to the underworld, just as it began by placing the speaker in "the belly of Sheol." Alter, p. 1293.

²⁸ The Temple is where prayer is most readily heard by God. We have here a cosmic reach from the roots of the mountains, the bottom of the sea, to the Temple on Mount Zion. Alter, p. 1293.

²⁹ [The Joseph Smith Papers, August 27, 1842.](#)

³⁰ According to NJPS, and many scholars, the text states that the city was a three-day walk across, an impossibly large distance for an ancient city. The text may be stating that the city was at a distance of three days' journey from Jonah's place. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1202.

³¹ The number is formulaic, as in the forty days of the Flood, the forty days Moses spends on the mountain, and the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Unless we are to construe Jonah's prophecy as a highly elliptical report, it is unconditional: in forty days, Nineveh is to be utterly devastated (and Jonah uses the participial form (נִהְפָּקֶת), not the future, to heighten the immediacy), with the verb "overthrown" the same one that is applied to Sodom. But, as the next verse makes clear, the people of Nineveh understand this dire prediction as implying a reversal of the disaster if they change their ways. Alter, p. 1295. Genesis 19.25 starts וַיִּהְפֹּךְ אֶת-הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּּ (And he overthrew (הִפְּךָ) those cities..."

³² What Jonah means and what he is saying are not exactly the same. Jonah means to say, "Forty days more, and Nineveh is undone" but the readers notice that he is actually saying, "Forty days more, and Nineveh is overturned." Jonah chooses language that is reminiscent of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. But the careful readers of the book notice the irony of the situation: Jonah's words potentially carry two, opposite meanings: (a) "Nineveh is undone," and (b) "Nineveh turns over (i.e., reforms itself)." One feature of his proclamation is unambiguous: Jonah's proclamation is extremely short and includes no call to repentance, unlike many other prophetic proclamations. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1202.

³³ **Believed... or trusted?** Robert Alter explains: That is, they trust God's word delivered by Jonah that they will be annihilated unless they turn back from their evil ways. This translation avoids the use of "believe" for the Hebrew term because the general meaning of this word in the Bible—as opposed to the postbiblical usage of *he'emin*—**suggests an act of trust, not belief. One should not imagine that the Ninevites have become monotheists**, but

The king proclaims a fast, and even the animals obey. Everyone turns from their evil ways (Jonah 3.5-8).³⁴

God “repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them” (Jonah 3.10).³⁵

Jonah 4: Jonah’s Reaction to the Repentance of Nineveh

Jonah was “very angry” when they repented (Jonah 4.1).

“... Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger³⁶, and of great kindness³⁷, and repentest thee of the evil”³⁸ (Jonah 4.2b).

It is better for me to die than to live (Jonah 4.3, 8).

Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city? (Jonah 4.11).

This question is the final challenge of the book. The story ends with the Lord’s challenge to Jonah; we aren’t told what Jonah’s reply was. This is done on purpose: It is up *us*, the readers, to examine ourselves how we feel about the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness toward *our* enemies. The Primary song

rather that they have taken seriously the word of YHWH that He is prepared to destroy the city. The claim of some scholars that this verb when followed by the preposition *be* means “believe” does not stand up under analysis. The few cases where it occurs with this preposition are at best ambiguous, and in Micah 7:5, the usage is unambiguously a statement about trust, not belief: “Do not trust in evil,” and then in the poetic parallelism, “nor place confidence (*tivtehu*) in a leader.” Alter, p. 1295. Other translators render Jonah 3.5 as “the Ninevites believed God.” See for example, the Berean Standard Bible, The Tyndale Bible, NIV, RSV, Wycliffe’s Bible, all of which use “believe” in this verse. The LXX of Jonah 3.5 uses ἐνεπίστευσαν, the third person plural aorist active indicative form of the Greek verb πίστευσι, a verb generally used interchangeably with trust, faith, or belief. My friend Brent Schmidt argues that *pistis* is an “active, relational, covenantal” notion requiring “reciprocal obligations” as it was understood in the first-century Mediterranean world. This idea was changed over time into a “vague, emotional, and passive agent” due to neo-Platonic philosophy. Brent Schmidt, *Relational Faith: Pistis’ Theological and Linguistic History from a Restoration Perspective*, unpublished manuscript, p. 2-3.

³⁴ Jonah does not wish to be a prophetic voice calling for repentance, and does not ask for the divine judgment to be turned into mercy (contrast Abraham in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18.16-32), but **he is still the most successful prophet in the Bible who achieves both in an unparalleled, complete, and immediate way—even the animals repent!** The message is that the success of the prophet is not dependent on his attributes or rhetorical power, but on the will of God. And yet, there is a second reading. Jonah’s message “Nineveh is undone” was fulfilled in history, as the readers of the book know well. If so, Jonah’s understanding of his prophecy was fulfilled too. The problem was then that Jonah erred by believing that his prophecy must be fulfilled in his own days. The latter may well be an important message for readers of prophetic books in the Persian period. Prophetic words, especially those concerning the ideal status of the restored Israel, will be fulfilled, but even prophets do not know when. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1202-1203.

³⁵ וַיִּרְא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כִּי־שָׁבוּ מִדְרָכָם הַרְעָה וַיִּנָּחֵם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַר לַעֲשׂוֹת־לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה – “And Elohim saw their deeds, that they turned from their way of evil, and Elohim had compassion, thus taking back the punishment which he counseled to create for them, thus he did not carry out his intentions” (my translation).

³⁶ Jonah’s confession that the Lord is “slow to anger” (4:2) is an interesting Hebrew idiom: In Hebrew: *’ârêk ’aphpayim* (אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם)—literally “long of nostrils.” The word for “anger” in Hebrew refers to the nostrils, which flare when one is angry. So being “long of nostrils” means to be slow to anger. See: Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, [Does God have a Long Nose?](#) Accessed 10.19.22.

³⁷ וְרַב־חֶסֶד “and of great *hesed*/lovingkindess,” Jonah 4.2.

³⁸ וַיִּנָּחֵם עַל־הַרְעָה can be translated as “and you have pity/compassion/feeling regarding the evil/trouble you intend to put upon Nineveh” (my translation).

“Follow the Prophet” teaches that “what Jonah learned deep down inside the whale” was “when we really try, the Lord won’t let us fail.” That is, however, not the point of the book at all! This satirical take on the song gets closer to the truth:

*Jonah was a prophet, swallowed by a whale.
When he was on board, the ship just couldn't sail.
So they tossed him over; next thing that he knew,
Nineveh repented, Jonah had to, too!
Swallow the prophet, swallow the prophet, swallow the prophet, won't get away;
swallow the prophet, swallow the prophet, swallow the prophet; he'll find the way!³⁹*

Jonah 4 shows that the problem that Jesus sought to address was already apparent even before the return from exile. Jonah is an excellent type for the Jewish community in Jesus’ day. He boasts in his relationship with Jehovah. He sees himself as loyal to the God of the temple. He even sings Psalms (see Jonah 2) regarding the Lord’s wonderful deliverance and mercy. Yet he *refuses* to announce to a brutal and ungodly world that the Lord is a loving God of mercy and grace for *all people*.

Latter-day Saints can fall into this trap of Jonah. We too sing hymns praising the Lord. We attend the temple. We consider ourselves loyal to God. Yet there are times when the Assyrians of our lives get the better of us and we feel justified in withholding forgiveness because “reason” tells us that we are right, or because we feel “justified” in our judgment of another person. Just because someone is different than us, we should be wary of placing a final judgement on that individual.

God’s Paternal Love

Joseph Smith discussed God’s very love for his children when he taught:

While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, **the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard**. . . . He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men . . . , “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law.⁴⁰

On Jonah’s Judgmental Approach to the Ninevites

Dallin H. Oaks gave this counsel regarding judging others:

Since mortals cannot suppose that they will be acting as final judges at that future, sacred time, why did the Savior command that we not judge final judgments? I believe this commandment was given because we presume to make final judgments whenever we proclaim that any particular person is going to hell (or to heaven) for a particular act or as of a particular time. When we do this—and there is great temptation to do so—we hurt ourselves and the person we pretend to judge. The effect of one mortal’s attempting to pass final judgment on another mortal is analogous to the effect on athletes and observers if we could proclaim the outcome of

³⁹ Kristine Haglund, [“The Times and Seasons Song Contest” March 2004](#).

⁴⁰ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 218.

an athletic contest with certainty while it was still underway. Similar reasoning forbids our presuming to make final judgments on the outcome of any person's lifelong mortal contest.⁴¹

Themes in Jonah

1. This is the only prophet of the 12 to rebel against God, yet he is the most successful!
2. This is a meta-prophetic book, that is, a book that probes the role of a prophet.
3. This contrasts God's justice with his mercy.
4. This contrasts God's universalistic message with Jonah's nationalistic tendencies.
5. It tries to understand God's character. Rules? Are all God's words contingent?
6. This text unpacks the role of prophets and their frailties.

Corrie Ten Boom on Forgiveness

In Holland during World War II, the Casper ten Boom family used their home as a hiding place for those hunted by the Nazis. This was their way of living out their Christian faith. Four members of the family lost their lives for providing this refuge. Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsie spent horrific months in the infamous Ravensbrück concentration camp. Betsie died there—Corrie survived.



In Ravensbrück, Corrie and Betsie learned that God helps us to forgive. Following the war, Corrie was determined to share this message. On one occasion, she had just spoken to a group of people in Germany suffering from the ravages of war. Her message was "God forgives." It was then that Corrie ten Boom's faithfulness brought forth its blessing.

A man approached her. She recognized him as one of the cruelest guards in the camp. "You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk," he said. "I was a guard there. ... But since that time, ... I have become a Christian." He explained that he had sought God's forgiveness for the cruel things he had done. He extended his hand and asked, "Will you forgive me?"

Corrie ten Boom then said:

"It could not have been many seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

"... The message that God forgives has a ... condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. ...

"... 'Help me!' I prayed silently. 'I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.'

"... Woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. As I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

"'I forgive you, brother!' I cried. 'With all my heart.'

⁴¹ Dallin H. Oaks, Judge Not and Judging, *BYU Speeches*, March 1, 1998.

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely, as I did then.”⁴²

Micah

Overview⁴³

Old Testament prophets are frequently categorized as "Major" or "Minor," according to the size of their writings rather than their quality. Though the book of Micah is relatively short, the prophet's words should not to be relegated to the status of minor importance. Some of his teachings are of major concern and value to us.

The name Micah (Hebrew, *mika* מִיכָה) is an abbreviated form of Micaiah (Hebrew, *mikayah* or *mikayahu*), meaning, "Who is like Jehovah?" He was a Morasthite (Micah 1:1; Jer. 26:18), one who came from Moreshethgath, about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem in the Judahite Shephelah, near the border between Judah and Philistia (near Mareshah; see Map 9, LDS Bible). His ministry was during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and especially Hezekiah, as corroborated in Jeremiah 26:18-19. He was, therefore, a contemporary of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea and somewhat later than Amos. All of their ministries reflect the same social and political backgrounds, and their messages necessarily depict the same social ills in the Israelite kingdoms. Micah's message concerned the capital cities Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah). He prophesied the captivity of northern and southern Israelites, their ultimate restoration to the land, and the coming of the Messiah.

The book of Micah is written in polished Hebrew poetry with particular use of parallelism and word-play, a typical form and style for the prophets of Israel and Judah. Bible scholars have proposed various ways to describe the organization of the book.⁴⁴ The following outline can be considered an excellent example of how to structure the text.

Three prophetic addresses:

Micah 1 through 3 — denunciations and punishments

Micah 4 through 5 — hope

Micah 6 through 7 — combination of doom and hope

⁴² Keith McMullin, [Our Path of Duty, Ensign, April 2010](#). See also Corrie ten Boom, *Tramp for the Lord* (1974), 54–55.

⁴³ Much of this overview comes from D. Kelly Ogden, “The Book of Amos,” [Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi](#), Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.

⁴⁴ See Paul J. Achtemeier, gen. ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 633; John Merlin Powis Smith, *International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), pp. 8-9; Henry McKeating, *Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah* (London: Cambridge University, 1971), pp. 10-11; W. S. LaSor, D. A. Hubbard, F. W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 359-64.

Unlike some scholars,⁴⁵ Ogden asserts that the prophets pronounced both doom and hope — that condemnation and devastation were necessarily followed by consolation and restoration.⁴⁶

Condemnation of Samaria and Jerusalem

The first three chapters of Micah contain a catalogue of the crimes of Samaria and Jerusalem. Though the two capital cities were supposed to be spiritual centers, Micah denounced them as sin centers, accusing them of countenancing and even inviting the worship of graven images and idols (Micah 1:7). There could be no greater affront to the God of Israel. The first two of the Ten Commandments that were thundered from Sinai were "No other gods" and "No graven images," yet Jeroboam had set up his golden bulls, and Ahab and Jezebel had erected a house of Baal right in Samaria. Ahab's sister (or daughter⁴⁷) Athaliah married the king in Jerusalem, where the same worship was instituted. Micah continued: Israelites were working evil on their beds (Micah 2:1), coveting and violently taking family properties (Micah 2:2), and forbidding true prophets to prophesy (Micah 2:6). Leaders were stripping and devouring the temporal and spiritual possessions of their people: "Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces" (Micah 3:1-3).

Micah accused the Israelites of encouraging false prophets to deceive and misguide the people (Micah 3:5), and he condemned the leaders who abhorred justice and who perverted equity, judging and teaching for money, and prophets who divined for money (Micah 3:9-11). Because of all these spiritual crimes, Micah pronounced specific catastrophes to overtake the two capital cities: "Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover [i.e., lay bare] the foundations thereof" (Micah 1:6). "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps" (Micah 3:12).

One needs only to visit the site of ancient Samaria to view the literal fulfillment of the prophet's words. The foundations of Samaria were laid bare by the Assyrian conquerors in 721 B.C. — during Micah's ministry — and Jerusalem, though spared for another century, was eventually desolated by the armies of Babylon (and centuries later, the Temple Mount was literally plowed by the Roman soldiers of Titus).

⁴⁵ Brettler and Berlin cite reasons why some scholars attribute Micah to a time after the exile. One reason is that Micah makes an explicit reference to the Exile (Micah 4.10). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1205.

⁴⁶ It must not be overlooked that **there is a pattern visible in Hebrew literature of pronouncing curses, judgments, and destruction followed by a message of hope**. See D. Kelly Ogden's analysis of this idea as he discusses the book of Amos in "The Book of Amos," *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, Deseret Book, (ed. Kent Jackson), 2004.

⁴⁷ 2 Kgs. 8:18 and 2 Chron. 21:6 seem to have Athaliah as the daughter of Ahab, though the passages may refer to someone else. But 2 Kgs. 8:26 and 2 Chron. 22:2 explicitly identify her as the daughter of Omri and thus a sister or half-sister of Ahab. John Bright points out: "Since her son was born ca. 864 (2 Kgs. 8:26), she could not have been the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who could scarcely have been married over ten years at the time. She may have been Ahab's daughter by an earlier marriage, or . . . a daughter of Omri who was raised by Ahab and Jezebel after the former's death." John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), p. 242, n. 38.

In the predicted destruction of both cities, Micah used the word heap, which in Hebrew means "ruin." Both Samaria and Jerusalem were left a pile of ruins, the latter several times over.

Promise of Restoration

According to the prophetic pattern, Micah then shifted from doom and devastation to a message of hope. Though Zion, or Jerusalem, would certainly become a heap of ruins, yet just beyond that dark cloud that would hang heavy over the city, a ray of hope would shine forth. Zion would "go even to Babylon [but] there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" (Micah 4:10).

Zion had to return from Babylon; she could not remain in the strange land. Before other great prophecies could be fulfilled she had to be reestablished in her own land. Micah now projected his vision into the latter-day future when the mountain of the house of the Lord (the temple) would be established in the top of the mountains, and many people and nations would flow to it to be taught of the ways of the God of Jacob, when the law would go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Micah 4:1-2). Micah went on to preview the millennial era, when instruments of war will be turned into implements of agriculture, and nations will not "learn war any more" (Micah 4:3), when "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Micah 4:4), a figurative and formulaic expression of living comfortably, safely, and securely. We know that almost identical predictions of an era of peace and prosperity were voiced by Isaiah (Isa. 2:1-3). Indeed, the prophets Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries and likely knew each other's writings, but whether one prophet originally gave utterance to this millennial scenario and the other prophet borrowed from those teachings is not known.

Prophecy of the Messiah

Micah again turned his prophetic eye to the future, this time somewhat closer to his own day. The Messiah, God's own Son, would come to earth, and it was Micah who specified the location of his birth. All of the prophets wrote and prophesied of the Messiah (Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33), but in the biblical writings of none but Micah do we have preserved the specific prediction of his birthplace: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). There can be no mistaking: there is only one Bethlehem in Judah and there is only one ruler in Israel whose origins are from eternity. Even the chief priests and scribes understood clearly the prophecy when they quoted it upon Herod's inquiring where the Messiah should be born, and Herod was obviously convinced of the possibility, because he proceeded to issue his infamous order to exterminate the children around Bethlehem: "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule [Greek, "shepherd," "tend," "nurture"] my people Israel" (Matt. 2:4-6).

Micah Quoted Elsewhere

We may judge some of the most valued parts of Micah's teachings by what was later quoted by others. Besides the possible quotation in Isaiah 2:1-3 and the one in Matthew just cited, we have a note in the book of Jeremiah, a century after Micah's time, affirming that Micah's ministry was effective in deterring

the people from their predicted fate: "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and beseech the Lord and repent? and the Lord turned away the evil which he had pronounced against them" (JST Jer. 26:18-19).

Two passages from Micah were referred to by the Savior when he appeared to the Nephites and Lamanites. The first is from Micah 4.12-13 (cited in 3 Ne. 20.18-19), wherein the Lord, finding other nations gathering against Jerusalem and eyeing her as prey, declared: "But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for **he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.** Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."

The Lord was assuring his people that his purposes would be fulfilled. They will return from exile; they will be planted again in their land; they will exert their strength (as iron, brass, "beating in pieces," etc.) with the protection of the Lord, because his people must persist in the land in order to realize the promises to the fathers—for instance, that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and would minister to his people in their land. This bringing of the *sheaves into the floor* has temple connotations. This floor is the *goren* (גֶּרֶן) or the threshing floor. You can see this connected to Ruth 3.1-4, 2 Samuel 24.16-17, 1 Kings 6.19, 8.1-9, 2 Chron. 3.1. The "Jebusite" who "sold" this threshing floor to David has a name that is related to the Ark of the Covenant. His name is *Ornan* – אֹרְנָן (H771), similar to *Arown* – אֲרוֹן (H727), the name for the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant will eventually find its way on the *goren* when the temple is constructed in Solomon's day. It is placed on the threshing floor, the place where the sheaves are gathered and the seeds are separated from the rest of the plant material. This is all about seeds and life, and this is all related to and coming out of ancient Egypt.⁴⁸ Indeed, **the threshing floor was the origin of theatre, which was all connected to the temple and the New Year's festival.** As Aranov explains:

In the process of time, 'theatre' became entirely secularized utilizing non-sacred scripts directed towards entertainment of 'the masses.' Hence, what had originated as a cultic reenactment of the mythology of vegetation ritual performed with the intention of promoting crop fertility eventually proceeded to provide a visual enactment of the dramatic experiences of the gods which afforded a rationale for the seasonal calendar.⁴⁹

The other passage that the Savior Jesus Christ quotes to the Nephite nation is from Micah 5:8-15 (cited in 3 Ne. 20:16-17; 21:12-21, also quoted by Mormon as well – [Mormon 5.24](#))⁵⁰, similar in tone to the

⁴⁸ Maurice Moshe Aranov, [The Biblical Threshing-floor in the light of the Ancient Near Eastern evidence: Evolution of an Institution](#). Dissertation New York University, 1977. See also: Noegel, *The Egyptian Origin of the Ark of the Covenant*, in *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective: Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience*, Springer International Publishing, 2015, p. 223-242.

⁴⁹ Aranov, p. 204-205.

⁵⁰ Mormon writes, "Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you—**lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver**" ([Mormon 5.24](#)).

previous one: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off."

In contrast to the threatening, forceful imagery of these verses, the previous verse in Micah states that "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass" (Micah 5:7). In biblical imagery, dew and showers always suggest nourishment, peace, relief, and blessing. Apparently the remnant of Jacob in the latter days will also be a blessing to the Gentiles and promote the righteous life. But in ancient America, the Savior focused on the might and terror which he through the remnant of Jacob (now another branch of the house of Jacob) would strike in the hearts of their adversaries among the Gentiles (see 3 Ne. 20:16-19; 21:12-21).⁵¹

Great Teachings from Micah

Possibly the most sublime counsel the prophet Micah penned for the benefit of all generations was his rhetorical question of the Lord's expectation for his children, and the prophet's answer: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? . . . He 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?" (Micah 6:7-8).

Man was expected to emulate his God. Were the people of Judah and Israel just and merciful and walking humbly with God? Another catalogue of crimes suggests that they were not: they used wicked balances and deceitful weights (Micah 6:11), rich men were full of violence and lies (Micah 6:12), and they followed the statutes of Omri and the works of the house of Ahab (Micah 6:16).⁵ These crimes bring on the punishment of desolation, hissing, and reproach (Micah 6:16).

Notwithstanding the crime and the punishment, God would show his people how to be just and also how to be merciful. Perhaps it is at this point where the name of the prophet Micah figures in his message: "Who is like Jehovah?"—for greatness and mercy and compassion? In the end he will fulfill all the Abrahamic covenants, he will bestow all the promised blessings upon Israel. Micah concluded: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:18-20).

⁵¹ Many of the predictions of such ancient prophets of Israel as Micah, Isaiah, and others have multiple fulfillment or multiple adaptation. Prophetic utterances are sometimes used in different contexts in different dispensations. Micah's words about the remnant of Israel could very well apply both to antiquity and to futurity. For further discussion of the context of Micah's words in the Book of Mormon, see Joseph F. McConkie, "The Final Gathering to Christ," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Eight: Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), pp. 185-87.