

his teaching less storycentric. In Judaism, the *Seder* is an annual retelling of the story of the Jewish people, reinforced with food, songs, and table fellowship.

The first part of this book (chapters one to three) wonderfully alerts the reader to the importance of relating to a storycentric culture. For seminary teachers, this is an important reminder to be sensitive to the majority-world students in their classes, and to the need to speak, effectively, to post-modern congregations through their students. The first three chapters, in themselves, are worth the price of the book.

Unfortunately, the book seems poorly structured. Chapters four through twelve move into the area of leadership development, with a strong emphasis on character development, with only occasional references back to the storycentric culture that was the focus of the first three chapters.

The bulk of parts two and three contain numerous illustrations, and perhaps this is Sessoms's nod to the importance of story. The author does give appropriate emphasis to the need for culturally appropriate leadership, which is important in our multi-cultural society and multi-cultural churches. A leader or pastor who understands that leadership can be different in different cultures is better prepared for his or her leadership role.

Sessoms gives excellent insight into the need for mentoring, as well as on-the-job training. He also stresses the need to treat people at the level of their potential, enabling and empowering nascent leaders.

One of the strong points of the book is the inclusion of a numbered summary at the end of each chapter. Actually, reading these before the chapter alerts one to the author's major points of emphasis.

In critique, I sometimes found Sessoms's stories and illustrations sufficiently vague to leave me wondering at their authenticity. They seem too "pat" to be genuine. Otherwise, he is very familiar with leadership, leadership training, and the minefields of culture.

The final chapter, "The Garden Project," is a very practical, very helpful recapping of the book. He does this by using his ministry, Freedom to Lead, as a model of what can and should be done. It ends with a very well done "Lessons Learned" section that pulls the rest of the book together.

Who should read this book? Missionaries and professors of missions are a major target of the book. They are on the front lines of cultural differences. However, in our migratory world, with its emphasis on multiculturalism, pastors and professors of leadership will also benefit greatly from this small volume. Homileticians would also receive benefit from this reminder of how important story, poetry, art, and song are in changing people's worldviews and cementing new insights into malleable minds.

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Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *Micab: A Commentary*. OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015. xxxiii + 268 pp. Hardcover. USD 50.00.

Outside of the United Nations building in New York stands a tall bronze sculpture made by the Russian artist Yevgeny Vuchetich that was presented to

the United Nations in 1959. The sculpture depicts the figure of a man holding a hammer aloft in one hand and a sword in the other, which he is making into a plowshare. The sculptor meant it to symbolize humanity's desire to put an end to war, and to convert the means of destruction into creative tools for the benefit of all. The title of the sculpture, "Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares" is based on Micah 4:3. Smith-Christopher, who teaches Theological Studies and directs Peace Studies at Loyola Marymount University, believes that Micah's book contains timely principles and messages that speak to people of all times including our own today.

Among the Twelve Prophets, Micah is placed between an optimistically "universalist message of Jonah, which holds out a hope of transformation for even an enemy city like Nineveh," and Nahum's pessimistic condemnation of Nineveh and Assyria. Taken together, "the book of the Twelve speaks to different times rather than different attitudes" (40). The author accepts B. Zapff's suggestion that "The book of Micah, as it now appears in the canon, features a dialogue with the books that surround it; Jonah and Nahum. For those nations willing to repent as illustrated in Jonah, God is ready to forgive (e.g., Mic 4:1-5). But for those unwilling and intransigent, the fate discussed in Nahum awaits them, as illustrated here in 5:15 (14)!" (187).

Smith-Cristopher calls Micah the "farmer-prophet" (152) who is familiar with village life, just like Isaiah is with the city (218). In Micah's book, he says the reader can sense "the commentator's love of village farming life" (207). The author assumes that Micah was a local elder who grew "weary of the constant military build-up" that exploited the commodities and family members of village farmers whose antiwar sentiments could be summed up in the cry: "Farms, Not Arms!" (25-26). Thus, Micah's book "should be read as the work of an 'elder' from a small agricultural village, whose words were taken as 'prophetic,' but whose actual identity may not have been very similar to those ancient figures known as 'prophets' in ancient Israelite society." In short, Micah preached against "the war policies of the Jerusalem elite" that were economically disastrous for "his fellow villagers, who often bore the brunt of military reprisals" (1). The prophet was "deeply concerned about endless warfare and the human economic costs of these constant battles and preparations for battle" (18).

"Peace is *God's* intended status for humanity" (133). This truth is best portrayed in the famous Vision of World Peace (4:1-5) that is "possibly the most dramatic antiwar sentiment expressed in the entire Hebrew Bible" (139). This "peace vision" (142) begins with the words "In the latter days," which do not mean "this will never happen," but rather as "the ideal of God that will come, we hope, sooner than later" (26). The tendency in commentary literature, says the author, has been to cast this passage safely into the distant future so that it has little ethical force in the present. He agrees with F. Anderson and D. Freedman that the vision "marks the time of fulfilment of the Creator's intentions and purposes for the world." It is a vision of what God intends for the world, "a real hope or even a moral statement that could guide contemporary action" (130).

Smith-Christopher also deals with the contrasting relationship between the former Jerusalem that will be plowed under, according to 3:12, and the new “Zion” that will become “an international (and agrarian!) center for peacemaking” (132). He readily challenges “the widely held view that Mic 3:12 is radically incompatible with ‘streaming to Zion’ and beating swords into plowshares in 4:1–5.” He takes a radically different approach to 3:12 when he says that “Jerusalem will be plowed and we want to pound our swords into the very plowshares that will help do the job!” This is based on the author’s view that Micah was “a populist antiwar lowlander, angry at Jerusalem’s militant nationalist Theology” (96). The author points to the figure of eternal ruler from 5:2 that is modeled on “pre-monarchic David who was a shepherd,” rather than a warrior. This ruler is the only person capable of bringing a lasting peace (the name “Solomon” is related to *shalom* “peace”) to our troubled world (166–167).

The author’s conclusion on the topic is best summarized in the radical proposition found on page 92: To critique political, military, or economic policy, “one begins by critiquing the theological foundation that the policy is built upon. This is certainly an enduring message that too often goes unheeded, especially in Western tradition.” He adds that official war reports often omit the horrendous suffering of soldiers and civilians. “Micah denounces the lies of war in his time and in our own” (94). From the very beginning of the commentary, Smith-Christopher stresses that “Biblical scholarship no longer ignores the social contexts of both readers and texts” and is therefore “justifiably suspicious of allegedly ‘objective’ readings of ancient history” (2).

There is little doubt that, in this commentary, the author uses the text from Micah to make the strongest possible case for peace. Looking at our world today, we cannot dispute the fact that peace is still a rare commodity in our societies and in the world at large. This is the reason why Smith-Christopher’s statements about peace should not be dismissed nor ignored by the believers today. Some readers will feel that the author’s approach is, at times, too humanistic at the exclusion of a direct Divine intervention in history. Peace making is not only an ambition owned by peace-loving believers, but it is also a quality grounded in God’s supernatural initiative. A sound balance between the divine and the human elements in salvation history has always been at the heart of the biblical witness. And it should remain as such!

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Williams, Michael. *The Biblical Hebrew Companion for Bible Software Users: Grammatical Terms Explained for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. 144 pp. Softcover. USD 18.99.

Bible software has greatly facilitated and enhanced the study of Scripture in the original languages. For new users, however, the software itself and its terminology may be a challenge. In addition, without some basic knowledge of biblical Hebrew, the software remains very limited. Michael Williams,