

INTRODUCTION

The Central Message of the 12 Prophets – God's in charge.

1. God expects us to put Him first.
2. God can, must and will judge human rebellion¹
3. God causes or uses painful circumstances to motivate change

Tenach Divisions:

Xians call it OT b/c it's concerned with God's relationship to Israel under the terms of several contractual arrangements while Xians relate to God under the terms of a new covenant² Christ said, the night before his death, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Lk. 22:20; c.f. Jer.31:31-33). Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt.26:27-28; 1Cor.11:23-26).*

The Hebrews arranged these 39 books into three collections:³

Not necessarily using chronological criteria but some combination of topic & era.

The Law (a.k.a. Torah)

Genesis - Deuteronomy (Books of Moses; Pentateuch) ± Genesis

Torah → "the law"; from the verb *arah* meaning to throw or to aim at or to shoot.

It came to mean guidance, instruction, commandment & law.

Also, it is a way of life derived from the covenant relationship between God & Israel.

The Sacred Writings (aka Books of Wisdom)

I. **The Book of Truth (Psalms, Proverbs & Job)**

II. **The Megilloth (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes & Esther)**

III. **Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah & Chronicles**

The Prophets

The former prophets - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

The latter prophets

Major prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah & Ezekiel

Minor prophets (aka the dodecapropheton; 12 prophet book)

And may the bones of the Twelve Prophets revive out their place, for they comforted Jacob and delivered them with their confident hope. Ecclesiasticus 49:10 (c.180 BC)

~ 3/5^{ths} of the 12 have been found in fragments dating 200-300 BC.⁴

¹ Although he's deeply concerned about the impact of that judgment; Ez.18:32; 33:11 no pleasure in death of wicked

² This leaves the false impression that God changed his way of interacting with people a couple thousand years ago. God has always insisted that the only way you can begin & maintain a relationship with him is through your dependence upon his love and mercy.

Then what makes it a new covenant? For one thing the covenant was new in its scope (i.e. all humankind, not just Israel) and in its purpose (i.e. to fulfill the promises of the earlier covenants).

The death of Christ was God's secret plan to deal with sin by permitting Christ to act as a substitute - to be punished in our place (c.f. Gal. 3:19-25; 1Tim.2:5f; Heb. 8:6; 9:7-9, 15, 23; 10:5-16; 12:24 for details on the New Covenant)

³ These divisions are not absolute (e.g. Early copies of the Torah have Genesis through Chronicles as the Law. The writings do not always include Daniel or Chronicles.). See Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* for a description of the Torah canon.

Written over the course of 400 years at key periods in the history of Israel & Judah.⁵

- Early 800's to late 700's BC - Obadiah, Joel & Jonah
- 700's BC - Amos, Hosea, Micah & Nahum
- 600's BC - Zephaniah & Habakkuk
- 500's to 400's BC - The postexilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi

HEBREW PROPHECY

What is Prophecy? An oral or written revelation from God through a person.

Oral prophets - Nathan, Gad, Shemaiah, Ahijah, Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Oded and etc.
Recorded by others.⁶

Literary prophets – The major & minor prophets

- **Forth-telling – disclosing/reminding** people about **the will of God**
- **Foretelling** – predicting the future, often to **validate that the disclosure is really from God.**

Are there parallels with Near Eastern cultures? No!

- **Old Babylonian omen texts (2000 BC)**

Books that sought cause and effect relationships between events (e.g. eclipses and disasters).

Reading entrails - a priest would open up a sheep and correlate his necropsy findings with future events.

- **Mari prophecy**

Mari was a city along the Euphrates, not in the Bible but important to biblical studies because of 20,000 clay tablets found there

E.G. Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, etc. are mentioned showing, at least, that such names were common during the period of the biblical accounts.

Their prophets would go into trances and speak...warning of disaster, etc..

However, there is never an ethical or moral basis for a prophecy.

Most of these are also directed toward the royal houses not the common people.

What is a Prophet? One who conveys revelation from God to others.

Sometimes a prophet or their revelation is signified through the use of characteristic terms or expressions.⁷

massa (lit. burden) or n^e'um (lit the declaration of) are translated 'oracle'

massa (Isa.13:1; 14:28; last half of Ezekiel)

n^e'um (Isa.15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6)

A Hebraic oracle is a message from God. It is frequently directed toward humans through the agency of a prophet.

Pagan oracles were usually places and so some translators inappropriately translate the Hebrew word *dabar* as oracle since it is a place designation (Isaiah 14:22; 49:18; 54:17; 56:8).

⁴ Discovered in a repository for worn scrolls (a.k.a. such repositories are known as *genizah*) in an ancient synagogue at Cairo, Egypt around 1896-1900.

⁵ See Table 1

⁶ For instance, in 2 Chronicles 21:12ff Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet that is recorded by the author of 2Chronicles.

⁷ Many times expressions like, "says YHWH" or "says the holy one of Israel" appear in the text without being highlighted with the terms 'vision', 'prophecy' or 'oracle'. At other times the simple act of a prophet speaking or writing is itself tacit indication that they are prophesying. More challenging, however, are descriptive passages that bear an uncanny resemblance to events subsequent to the written revelation but bear absolutely no indicators suggesting that the author intended the text to be predictive (e.g. Psalm 22).

naba/nibba, neba, nebua (lit. to flow forth) are **translated 'to prophesy'; to summon, announce or call** or 'prophecy' respectively (in Isa.30:10; 47:13 the term is also used of pagan prophecy)
This carries that idea of a message from God flowing from the prophet.

is Elohim - translated, 'the one of God'; called, empowered, belonging to and in relationship with God.

hozeh or ro'eh (seer); a recipient of special visions/revelations from God; not necessarily visual visions⁸

"The hazon (vision) concerning Judah and Jerusalem the Isaiah, son of Amoz hazut (saw)..." Isaiah 1:1

"The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he hazut (envisioned) in hazon (visions) concerning Israel..." Amos 1:1a

This does not mean that the experience was primarily visual (e.g. Gen 15:1 the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying...;

1Sam.3:10-15 an auditory experience that Samuel called a vision; Isaiah 2:1 the word that Isaiah...saw) (21:2; 22:1,5; 29:7,11)

Prophets in biblical history

Early humanity - Noah

Early Israel – Abraham, Joseph, Miriam, Moses, etc.

Priesthood - prophets from the Levitical priesthood (i.e. forth-telling).

Deuteronomy 18:15ff suggests the existence of an actual office of prophet that could be distinct from the priesthood.

As the priesthood fell away from God, prophets arose within Levi (Jeremiah/Ezekiel) and other tribes to warn Israel away from her apostasy.

What is the Purpose of Prophecy?

(concerning biblical predictive prophecy) "...*the future is revealed for its practical effects not to satisfy curiosity*" Feinberg, *Zechariah*, p.105

- 1.** To call for dependence on God rather than self or alliances
- 2.** To remind of conditional aspects of the covenants - blessing depended upon their fidelity and submission to God.
- 3.** To remind them of unconditional aspects of the covenant - he would make the nation an agent of blessing to the whole world and that the nation would survive any and all trials.
- 4.** To reveal how much they needed God's redemption (1Ki.8:46; Ps.14:2-3; 130:3; Prov.20:9; Isa.53:6; 59:4, 12-16; 64:6; Hab.2:4 & Mic.7:2) and a godly walk.
- 5.** To authenticate the divine source of the prophecy through prediction (Deut.18; Isa.42:9; 44:7-8)(e.g. 2Ki.7).

The penalties for false prophets were a little steep (Deut.18:20) and the effects of false prophecy on people could be very severe, so a definitive test of authenticity was needed.

How is Prophecy Interpreted?

Eisegesis

Modernistic

1. supernatural elements are redactions to the original text or
2. supernatural parts are fiction or
3. supernatural sections are allegories

Postmodernistic

It is impossible to ever really know what an author intended + it is propaganda anyway.

Exegesis

Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting text that intends to get as close as possible to the meaning of the original text. This approach requires knowledge of the culture,

⁸ *hazah* or *haszon* is the verb form of seer and is often translated 'vision'.

language and context for the written material⁹ as well as the use of techniques that clarify the meaning of statements.¹⁰

Application exegesis is the distillation of principles from the interpreted text that apply universally (e.g. Paul's use of the Law, 'do not muzzle the ox' to argue that teachers ought to be paid.)

Kinds of foretelling prophecies

Unambiguous prediction

Developmental or Gap Prophecies

Partially fulfilled in the near term but only completely fulfilled later (e.g. Daniel 9's 70 'weeks' prophecy).

Double-reference Prophecies

Predictions with meaning in their time & the future (Isaiah 7-8 Immanuel)

Type Prophecies

People, events or objects with meaning in their time & the future.

The first event/person is referred to as the **type**. The second event/person is termed the **anti-type**.¹¹

Examples:

OT law and religious practices foreshadowed Christ – the law is a type of Christ

Abraham and Isaac foreshadowed God offering Christ as a sacrifice – Isaac is a type of Christ

The bronze serpent anticipated the crucifixion of Christ according to Christ – the serpent is a type of Christ

Melchisedeck is a type of Christ

Motif Prophecies¹²

The Bible contains certain themes or motifs that appear to repeat and that anticipate some sort of final fulfillment.

This differs from type because it's predictive whereas type prophecies are interpretable only in retrospect (i.e. after the anti-type is revealed; one could not have known that the brass serpent was a type of Christ until Christ revealed that he was).

The clearest example of this is the Exodus – God's redemption of Israel from Egyptian slavery.¹³

This seems to be reiterated in the Joshua-led exodus from the wilderness; the return from Babylonian captivity; Christ's return from Egypt; Israel's regathering near the time of the end and the return of Christ.

Matthew 2:15 seems to believe that Hosea is making this sort of point when he points to Hosea 11:1 (i.e. redemption from Egypt is the beginning of an extended recollection of the exodus motif that continues to 14:5 → redemption from sin).

Hosea, looking at the repeated exodus motifs, anticipates a day when Israel will be finally redeemed from slavery to sin itself.

⁹ You have been provided an extensive appendix to aid you with interpretation.

¹⁰ See the handouts related to interpretation.

¹¹ τυπος - *tupos*, type, a word used of a mold; αντιτυπος - *antitupos*, antitype, a word used of a die which presses metal into the mold. The *tupos* and *antitupos* are images of the same thing, one convex (the die or *antitupos*) and the other concave (the mold or *tupos*).

¹² This is not a standard prophetic category.

¹³ Other motifs might include atonement, God dwelling with and ruling His people, judgment of the wicked, etc.

The Day of Yaweh

The expression, “**the day of Yahweh,**”¹⁴ and “the day of the wrath of Yahweh,”¹⁵ or **various related expressions**¹⁶ appear frequently in prophetic writing.

New Testament authors pick up the expression but here it is correlated with the return of Christ.¹⁷

This does not refer to a specific time but to a specific activity of God:

Some passages may emphasize one of these activities more than the others (e.g. Obadiah emphasizes judgment).

The prophecies could be **contemporary to the prophet**¹⁸ or

To the end of human history (Isa.7:21-25; 59:16 - 65:25).

Features of the final Day of YHWH:

- Elijah will herald the day (**Mal.3:1; 4:5; c.f. Mt. 11:10; 17:10-13; Mk.1:2; 9:11-13; Lk.1:17, 76; 7:27**)
- It is a time of terror for all because of the terrific destruction that accompanies it. This includes devastation of Israel (**Dan.11:41; Zech.12-14;14:1-2; Joel 3:9-12; Amos 5:18; 6:14; Ezek.38:16; Zeph.1:14-15; Isa.22; Jer.30:1-17; Joel 2:28; Amos 5; Zeph.1**) as well as unrepentant humans (**Obed.15; Ezek.38-39; Zech.14; see also Rev.5-18**).
- But it is ultimately a time of joy because of the national conversion of Israel and its restoration (**Isa.10:27; 11:10, 11; 61:2; Dan.12:1f; Lk.4:18f; Jer.30:19-31:40; Joel 2:28, 32; Micah 4; Zech.13; Mal.3:2; 4:1f; Rev.19-22**).
- Human arrogance will be brought down (**Isa.2:17**).
- The day of Yahweh will bring in a new age of theocracy on earth (**Amos 9:11f, Acts 15:16f, Isa.2:2-4**).

GOD IN HUMAN HISTORY

The History of the Divided Monarchy

Israel was divided c. 931-930 BC

Solomon conscripted labor and taxed heavily.

Rehoboam's blunder

When he died, Rehoboam was asked to cool it...

10 tribes of the north (Israel or Ephraim) - Jeroboam

2 tribes of the south (Judah) - Rehoboam

The deeper spiritual cause of the division.¹⁹

Actually, God had previously decided that the nation would be split along these lines as a punishment for the spiritual compromise of the house of Solomon.

Pressure from surrounding nations²⁰

¹⁴ Joel 1:15; 2:1,11 (against Israel); 3:4; 4:14 (against nations); Amos 5:18,20; Zech.1:7, 14; Mal.3:23; 4:5; Ezek.13:5 (past tense); Isa.13:6,9 (against the nations); Ob.15 (against Edom).

¹⁵ Zeph.1:15,18; 2:2,3; Lam.1:12; 2:1,21,22; Ezek.7:19;

¹⁶ *that day* Ob.8, Am.9:11; *day for Yahweh* Ez.30:3; *day for Yahweh of hosts* Is.2:12; *day of tumult for the Lord Yahweh of hosts* Is.22:5; *day of Yahweh's vengeance* Is.34:8; Jer.46:10; Isa.61:2; *day of Yahweh's sacrifice* Zeph.1:8; *day of clouds and thick darkness* Zeph.1:15; Ez.34:12; Joel 2:2; *day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom* Zeph.1:15; *a day of trumpet blast and battle cry* Zeph.1:16; *day of which I have spoken* Ezek.39:8; *a day for Yahweh is coming* Zech.14:1; *a day when he fights on a day of battle* Zech.14:3.

¹⁷ Mt.24; 25; Mk.13; Lk.17:22-31; 21; 1Cor.1:8; 5:5; 2Cor.1:14; Phil.1:6, 10; 2:16; 1Thes.5:2; 2Thes.2:2

¹⁸ Isa.7:18-19 Israel's destruction by Assyria; Lam.1:12; 2:1,21,22 & Ez.34:12 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians; Ez.30:3, Joel 3:19 against Egypt; Jer.46:10, Isa.34:8, Ob.8, Joel 3:19 against Edom

¹⁹ See Appendix A - Religion

There were some bright spots along the way but overall the moral status of the Hebrew people got worse and worse over the next three centuries until, first Israel and later Judah were utterly destroyed.

There were tremendous pressures. The Assyrian and then the Babylonian empires pressured smaller nations leading to alliances with the empires or with one another.

Many wars broke out. Israel and Judah were often battered by these conflicts. Sometimes the various shifting alliances put Israel and Judah at odds with each other. At other times pressures allied them to one another.

During this period prophetic activity was very high; most of the Prophets wrote and spoke out during this period.

The exile & return of Judah.²¹

The reasons for the exile were manifold but the duration of the exile was directly related to an ecological sin committed by the Hebrew people.²²

God's Promises

The Abrahamic, the Mosaic and the Davidic covenants.²³

Abrahamic - centuries past at this point

Mosaic - very complex and extraordinarily detailed. The actual details of the covenant extend from Exodus 20-23 and further elaboration constitutes the entire book of Leviticus. Consequences were detailed if Israel failed to keep their end of the bargain (c.f. Ex.20:5-6, 12; 23:20-33; Lev. 26 and see Deuteronomy 27-28).

Davidic

- Unilateral features
 - ⇒ David will be a very successful leader of Israel and will finally have peace
 - ⇒ David's son will be the next in an eternal dynasty of Israeli kings (2Sam.7:13,16; Ps.89:4,29,36; Ps.132:12)
 - ⇒ Israel will have a land of its own (2Sam.7:10)
- Bilateral features - Any Davidic king that disobeys God will be disciplined by God (2Sam.7:14; Ps.89:30-33) even to the extent that a particular Davidic lineage may be disallowed from the dynastic covenant (Ps.132:12)

The Clash of Promises

God would prosecute Israel/Judah for violations of the Mosaic covenant - resulting in the complete destruction of the nation.

How could God then fulfill the conditions of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants through a nation that ceased to exist?

How could a dead-end lineage produce an eternal king?²⁴

- **The Destroyed Nation will be Resurrected by God**

²⁰ See Appendix B - The Nations

²¹ Under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, they were obliged to let their arable land lay fallow every seventh year and they had not done so for nearly 500 years. God indicated that he would remove them from the land so that it could rest for the 70 years they had failed to let it lay fallow.

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²³ The Noaic (Gen.6:18; 8:20-9:17) and, according to some interpretations, the Palestinian (Deut.29-30) covenants are additional covenants but they will not be considered here. Additionally, some identify theological covenants between God and all people: of works; of grace and of redemption. Each covenant is related to the one that precedes it.

²⁴ Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin); see 2Ki.24:8-17 and 2Chron.36:9-10 a Davidic king arose whose sins were so repugnant that God declared none of his descendants would sit on the throne (Jeremiah 22:30)

Isaiah 46:4 and even to your old age...I will sustain you...I will carry you...I will rescue you (c.f. **Isa.49; 54; 60; 66; Jer.25, 30, 33; Ez.20, 37, Dan.9; Hosea 2; Amos 9; Micah 7; Zeph.3**).

- **An Eternal “Anointed One” Will Fulfill the Davidic Covenant.**

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born...And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... **He will reign on David’s throne** and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Isaiah 11:1-10 Then a shoot will spring from **the stem of Jesse**, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit...And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist....They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. Then it will come about in that day That the **nations will resort to the root of Jesse**, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

Micah 5:1-5 but for you **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come...one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old from ancient times....

- **A Servant of God Will Fulfill the Abrahamic & Mosaic Covenants (c.f. Gen.12:1-3)**

Isaiah 42:1, 6 “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations....(6) I will keep you and will make you to be **a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles**, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 49:5-8 [see this passage]

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 ...His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men. **Thus He will sprinkle many nations**...He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth...He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

We’ll see a lot about the messiah in the following weeks:

Week 2 **Joel** - righteous teacher (+Obadiah & Jonah)

Week 3 **Amos** - the resurrected house of David & **Hosea** - a Davidic King

Week 4 **Micah** - releasing the sheep and ruling the world (Nahum, Zephaniah & Habbakuk)

Week 5 **Haggai** - messiah as the desire of the nations & God’s signet ring; **Zechariah** - messiah as priest & king; the wounded shepherd; **Malachi** - messiah as the messenger of the covenant

Between the major & minor prophets we have a rich description of how God intended to accomplish...to hold up his end of the bargain

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read 2Chronicles 17-25 and 1Kings 16:29 - 2Kings 14:29.²⁵ Make sure you have out the history & chronology materials as well as some good maps while you are reading. Refer to other appendix materials as needed.
- Read and annotate²⁶ Obadiah, Joel & Jonah; use the appendix material as needed.
- Memorize the following verses: Joel 2:13; Jonah 2:8
- As you read through these three prophets, identify the principles that could apply to you. Which of these are the hardest to believe at this point in your life?
- **Prepare answers for the following based on your study:**
 1. Differentiate between Judah and Israel.
 2. Who were the kings of Judah and Israel **during** Obadiah, Joel & Jonah's ministries? Were kings any commended by God? Were any condemned?
 3. What nations posed a threat to Israel & Judah **during** Obadiah, Joel & Jonah's ministries?
 4. Identify a **main theme** for each of the following books: Obadiah, Joel & Jonah.

²⁵ If you have time, read through the entire books of II Chronicles, I and II Kings.

²⁶ Annotation involves underlining passages and making notes in the margins of your Bible. What themes do you notice? What issues are prominent? What words, phrases or concepts are repeated? Jot down appropriate cross-references. If you find a passage confusing and the appendices do not help, jot a question mark (in light pencil) in the margin next to the passage.