



*An Introduction to the
Old Testament*

*The Nevi'im
(The Prophets)*

The 12 Minor Prophets

- “minor” not in importance but in length
- Unlike the 3 major prophets; read as a unit
- “12” probably used as reference to the 12 tribes
- Most were contemporaneous with one of the major prophets
- Written over a period of 300 years
- Evidence of many redactors/editors

Dates of origin:

Amos, Hosea, Micah

- 8th century B.C.E. before the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel)

Zaphaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk

- 7th century B.C.E. during the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon

Haggai, Zechariah (1-8)

- circa 520 B.C.E. during the rebuilding of the temple

Joel, Jonah, Obadiah, Malachi, Zechariah (9-14)

- difficult to date; postexilic
- 5th century – 330 B.C.E.

The 12 Minor Prophets

Part 1

Amos

Hosea

Micah

Zephaniah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Divided Kingdom



Amos

- Earliest of the prophets who have a book bearing their name
- From the southern kingdom of Judah; a shepherd from Toka
- Ministered in the northern kingdom during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (784-740 B.C.E)
- Oracles against the nations
- Oracles against the cult at Bethel

Amos

- Theme: all people are equal in the sight of God
- Exodus does not guarantee Israel privilege but adds to its responsibility
- Introduces the concept of the “Day of the Lord” as a day of judgment not vindication
- Speaks directly to social justice with a vigor unparalled anywhere in the Bible
- A prophet of divine judgment
- Sovereignty of Yahweh in nature & history dominates his thoughts

Hosea

- From the Northern Kingdom
- Prophesied during the end of Jeroboam II's reign
- During a time of crises in the Northern Kingdom
- Unrivaled for beauty of poetry and emotional power of his oracles
- Called to marry a harlot (Gomer)
- Uses the metaphor of "marriage" to describe the relationship between Israel and God
- Major problem addressed was idolatry; specifically the cult of Baal
- Also addressed Israel's treatment of the poor

Micah

- Contemporary with Amos, Hosea & Isaiah
- Prophesied in the Southern Kingdom (Judah)
- Preoccupied with issues of social justice and the impending war with Assyria
- Like Amos, the appearance of God is for judgment not vindication
- Addressed the issue that the professional prophets were leading the people astray
- “covenant lawsuit”; God indicts the people for not following the Sinai covenant

Zephaniah

- Prophesied during the reign Josiah (640-609)
- A time of religious degradation
- The “day of the Lord” seen in cosmic terms: God will make an end of all who live on earth; a day of doom
- Despite Judah’s infidelities, God will spare a remnant

Nahum

- Concerned with a single event the fall of Nineveh (Assyria) in 612
- Assyria was a bloodthirsty conqueror
- Uses the image of the “warrior God” who tempers justice with mercy

Habakkuk

- Dates from the years 605-597
- Situation in Judah was desperate with political intrigue and religious idolatry
- Concerned with the injustice in Jewish society
- Questions why God allows his people to suffer
- God responds by assuring that the just Israelite will not perish
- Prophecy filled with reminiscences of Israel's past
- Ends with a joyous profession of confidence in God