



*An Introduction to the
Old Testament*

*The Nevi'im
(The Prophets)*

Books of the Nebi'im/Nevi'im (Prophets)

“Former Prophets”: Joshua, Judges, Samuel,
Kings

“Latter Prophets”: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel,
the Twelve Minor Prophets

Attained final form in 1st-2nd c. AD.

Deuteronomistic History

- Book of Deuteronomy key
 - Sets forth the requirements of the law (Dt 4, 44-26,19)
 - Obedience brings covenant blessings (28, 1-14)
 - Disobedience brings curse (28, 15-68)
 - Most important commandment was the first (Dt. 5, 6-7)
 - Exclusive worship critical
- Worship centralized in Jerusalem
- The word of the Lord defines and determines the history of Israel
- Expressed in the deuteronomic law
- Reiterated by the prophets

What is prophecy?

Dt. 18, 9-20:

- **NOT** a “fortune teller; soothsayer; charmer; diviner; caster of spells; does not consult ghosts or oracles from the dead”

- “I (the Lord) shall raise up for them a prophet like you (Moses)...and will put my words in his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command.”

- Prophet announces word of God and in process puts it into motion (e.g. Jer. 7: 27)

- Prophet compelled by God to deliver message even if unpopular (e.g. Jer. 20: 9)

- Prophets as advisors to kings

Nature of OT Prophecy

1. Prophet

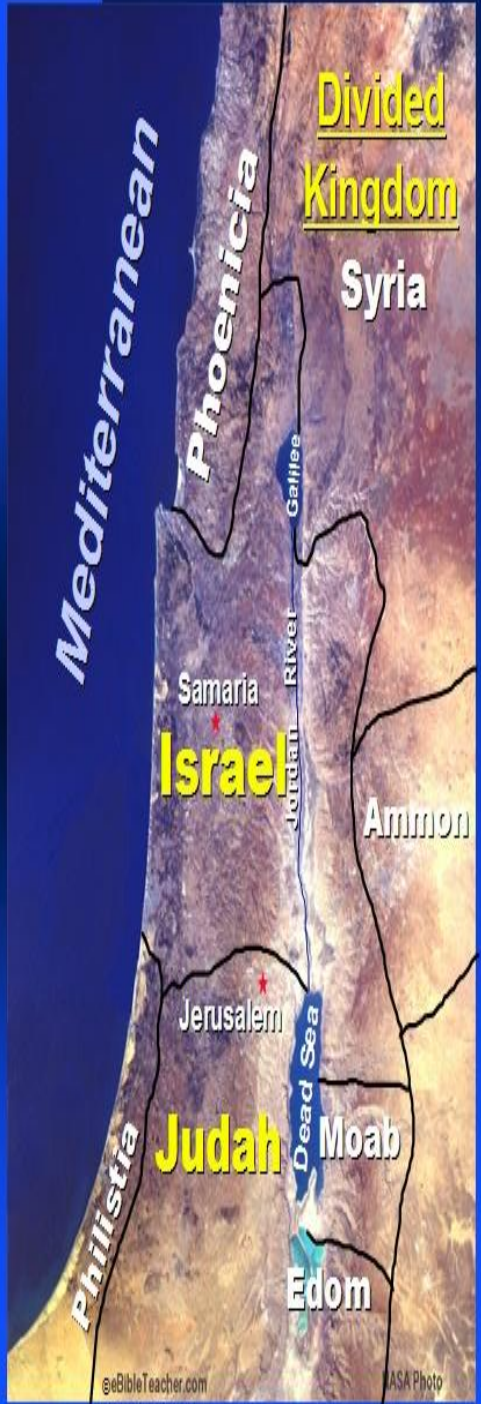
- Primarily a “spokesperson for God”: prophet delivers a message from God in and for a particular situation.
- Messenger formula: “Thus says the Lord, ...” – often precedes prophetic speech; claims to speak in God’s name.

2. Prophets and the future

- Prediction is not essence of prophecy – many prophetic speeches have nothing to do with predicting future.
- Prophets’ predictions are related to past and present.
 - Prophets do not typically make long-range predictions for benefit of future generations.
 - Usually make near-term predictions for benefit of immediate audience:
 - » Warn of impending disaster as judgment for sins of nation.
 - » Promise God’s deliverance to give hope in time of oppression.

3. Prophetic literature

- Prophets were not primarily writers but preachers.
- Messages were preserved, recorded later; prophetic books are sometimes a bit disorganized.



Divided Kingdom

*The Latter
Prophets
The Major
Prophets
Isaiah, Jeremiah
Ezekiel*

Books of Major Prophets

Spanning history

from before Assyrian conquest in 721 BC
to after Persian restoration in 538 BC

Isaiah (c. 742-701): Decline and fall of Israel

Jeremiah (c. 627-587): Decline and fall of
Judah

Ezekiel (c. 592-570): In exile

Book of Isaiah – longest prophetic book; not all of it goes back to 8th-century prophet Isaiah; 3 mains sections

- (1) ch. 1-39 – Isaiah of Jerusalem – pre-Exilic (742-01)
- (2) ch. 40-55 – Deutero-Isaiah – Exile (587-39)
- (3) ch. 56-66 – Trito-Isaiah – post-Exilic (539-)

Isaiah (742-01 BC)

- Advisor to Judean kings during Assyrian crisis
- Call: vision of God in holiness (Isa. 6).
- Denounces sins; warns of judgment.
- Warns kings to trust God (not armies/alliances) for security.
- “Immanuel” sign (7:10-17) – impending royal birth is assurance for King Ahaz during military crisis; reinterpreted in Mt. 1:23 as fulfilled in virgin birth of Jesus (doubtful this is what Isaiah had in mind).
- Poems promising “ideal king” (9:2-7; 11:1-9) – his reign of peace will be based on justice/righteousness



Deutero-Isaiah (587-39 BC)

- Announces end of Exile – new Exodus (Isa. 40).
- King Cyrus of Persia will be liberator (Isa. 45) – Cyrus is even called “messiah” (God’s “anointed”).
- Depicts universal God – strong monotheism.
- Servant Songs – poems about a mysterious “Suffering Servant,” (42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12).
 - 1) Charged with bringing light, redemption to the nations.
 - 2) Suffers innocently for the healing of others.
 - 3) Is the Servant Israel, a remnant of Israel, or an individual?

Third Isaiah (539 -)

- Oracles oriented toward impoverished colony of exiles resettled in Judah which is now under Persian rule
- Offers further comfort of better times ahead
- God is not limited to the temple. Not focused on rebuilding Israel's physical glory as a nation
- 66:1
*What house could you build for me,
what place could you make for my rest?"*

Jeremiah (627-585 BC)

1. Prophet to Judah during fall to Babylonia.
2. Called for repentance – warned of judgment.
3. “Temple Sermon” (Jer. 7) – warns against “temple superstition;” people thought temple would keep them safe regardless of how they lived; Jeremiah warns that apart from repentance even the temple would be destroyed; authorities took offense, nearly executed Jeremiah.
4. Saw Babylonia as instrument of God’s judgment – advised surrender.
5. Was viewed as traitor and persecuted.
6. Hope for “New Covenant” (31:31-34).

Jeremiah

- Jeremiah's message through all of this was that Babylon's victory couldn't be avoided since it was Yahweh's judgment and that the people should submit to it.
- Suffered as a traitor
- Prepare for exile and pray for your captors
 - 597-first deportation from Judah to Babylon (Ezekiel goes with them)
 - 587-burning of temple and city and second deportation
 - 582-third deportation

Ezekiel (593-70 BC)

- Preached judgment until 587 – afterwards, hope for restoration.
- Vision of throne-chariot of God (Ezek. 1).
- Vision of valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37).
- Was contemporaneous with Jeremiah.
- Younger than Jeremiah
- Went into captivity in Babylonia

