

## EZRA/NEHEMIAH

### Title

In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book, called "The Book of Ezra." Modern Hebrew Bibles divide them into Ezra and Nehemiah as in our English versions. Further, Josephus (Against Apion 1. 8) and Jerome (Preface to the Commentary on Galatians) also considered the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as one. But not all agree.

### Author

The text is silent; Jewish tradition (the Talmud) ascribes it to Ezra along with Chronicles and Nehemiah. Most scholarship accepts Ezra as the author and that he wrote these using various documents (e.g., 4:7-16), genealogies (e.g., 2:1-70), and personal memoirs (e.g., 7:27-9:15) as his sources. Ezra is the principal character of the major sections. He takes part in the events described in chapters 1-10 and also in chapters 8-10 of Nehemiah. In the Vulgate (Latin Bible), Ezra and Nehemiah are titled 1 and 2 Esdras, while the apocryphal book called 1 Esdras in the English text is 3 Esdras in the Vulgate.

### Date

Ezra wrote between 457 B.C. and 444 B.C.; though some date the book around 330 B.C. The linguistic similarities with the fifth-century Aramaic papyri from the Jewish community at Elephantine, Egypt, contend for an earlier date during the lifetime of Ezra (who lived to the time of Nehemiah, Neh. 8:1-9; 12:36).

From **an historical standpoint**, Ezra continues the narrative where 2 Chronicles ends and traces the history of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple. From **a spiritual and doctrinal standpoint**, Ezra demonstrates how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the land of promise after seventy years of exile as announced by the prophets. Ezra, as a priest, shows the centrality of the temple and its worship to the life of the nation as God's people. The book begins with the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, which allowed a remnant of the people to return and ends with the return of the priest Ezra who taught the people the law and reformed the nation's spiritual life.

**Chronology of Return**- several groups went back to Judah.

- 1) Sheshbazzar-- he was probably the fourth son of Jehoiachin (I Chr. 3.18), but the different spellings due to corruption of Babylonian by the Hebrew. He started the return (Ezra 1-8), designated as governor (5-14), and laid the foundation of the temple (5.16). He may have died and thus, replaced by Zerubbabel who may have come with him or come with another group of exiles ca. 520 B.C.

2) Zerubbabel: he was the nephew of Sheshbazzar (1 Chr. 3:19). He continued the work of Sheshbazzar (Ezra 3:1ff). With the support of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel and the people continued the work on the temple until its completion. Zerubbabel disappears, perhaps, called back to Persia because of the Messianic aspirations of the prophets--Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. 2:20-23; Zech. 3:1ff.).

#### IMPORTANT DATES (all BC)

539 Overthrow of Babylonians\*\* Nabonidus (556-539). He is the last king of the Babylonian Empire. He created dissension among the people by attempting to make Sin (the moon god) the supreme god, rather than, Marduk. He moved his capital to Teima, S. of Edom and left Belshazzar in charge.

Cyrus (539-530). Cyrus took Babylon with little trouble. The decisive battle was on the Tigris at Opis in 539. The people of Babylon welcomed him into the city.

538 Decree of Cyrus (Jews can return home) the famous "Edict of Cyrus" allowed the Jews to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4). The reason for this was Cyrus's foreign policy. He fostered the national identity and cults of different peoples, but maintained a firm grip on the bureaucracy. This policy built loyalty to the Persians.

536 1st return under Zerubbabel

534 Construction began on the temple

520 Restarted construction on the temple; (Haggai and Zechariah were between 534 and 520)

516 temple finished

458 Ezra came to Jerusalem

445 Nehemiah came to Jerusalem

(other than a few marginal notes, Ezra doesn't mention Nehemiah and vice versa)

#### The role of Ezra and Nehemiah:

Ezra- (Ezra 7:11-26). His purpose or role was to reorganize the Jewish community around obedience to the law. Some scholars believe that his title "scribe of the law of the God of heaven" was an official title of the Persian gov. and thus, Ezra worked for them. Two items topped his agenda- 1) issue of foreign wives (Ezra 9:1-10:44) and 2) renewal of covenant (Neh. 8:1-9; 38). Nehemiah: Nehemiah during his two terms as governor (445-433 B.C./430 B.C.) provided physical and economic safety and reorganization. Nehemiah, who was a cupbearer to the Persian king, a position of great honor, undertook the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. After many threats by: 1) Sanballat, gov. of Samaria; 2) Tobiah, gov. of Ammon; 3) Geshem, an Arab king, the wall was completed in 52 days (Neh.6:15).

In his second term (Neh. 13:1ff.), he had to deal with Tobiah living in the temple (he was thrown out and the room cleansed because of Deut. 23:3-5), the failure of the people to support the priests with tithes, the failure to observe the Sabbath, and mixed marriages (13:23-31).

## The Restoration of God's people:

A • Law: after the exile the people became a people of the book (Pentateuch). Ezra organized the people along these lines. Although his methods were harsh (putting away of foreign wives) it was meant to be extreme because of the circumstances (Ezra 10:3). The people realized that survival depended upon obedience to the law.

B • Temple: the temple was completed in 516 B.C. No longer was there divided loyalty to God and monarch, now the people's lives revolved around the temple and the law. Sociologically, the people were no longer a political and national entity, but a cultural and religious entity. They were again the people of God, not a state.

C • Walls- the walls provided physical security for the Jews. In a reduced sense, Jerusalem was complete--law, temple, and walls. The problem with Judaism was that it kept building walls to protect itself from outside influence. For example, the scribes built a hedge (wall) about the law because it was holy so that no one would consciously or unconsciously disobey it. They became legalists.

### **Nehemiah--the wall builder: principles for a building program**

1) pray a lot 1:4-11

2) the leader must be sold on the project himself 2:1-5

3) careful survey of what is needed 2:11-16

4) effort to enlist people for the project 2:17

5) must deal with opposition; 5 kinds of opposition

❶ misunderstanding: so give the correct information 2:20

❷ ridicule: keep working and don't worry about it 4:3

❸ internal problems: he righted the wrongs 5:1-5

❹ distractions: became more committed to the work 6:1-7

❺ external problems: others tried to instill fear, but he refused to run 6:10-12 we must let the Holy Spirit guide us to stay and work through problems

## ESTHER

### TITLE:

from the heroine of the book, Esther (this is her throne name; Ishtar or Stara = Babylonian goddess or "star"); her Hebrew name is Hadasseh (myrtle)

### DATE AND AUTHORSHIP:

the author is unknown; Esther was perhaps written sometime between 470 and 465, during the latter years of Xerxes' reign (485-464), or in the reign of his son Artaxerxes (464-424) though some would say about 125 BC, during the time of the Macabbees.

### CANONICITY OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER: several points of trouble

- 1) there is no mention of any religious practice
- 2) the vindictive nature of several actions of the book
- 3) Absence of God's name- the book of Esther was almost excluded from the canon because of no reference to God. Why was the name left out? I believe it was to put more emphasis upon the subtle, yet strong movements of God behind the scenes (4:14).
- 4) Question of historicity: there is no record of Queens Vashti or Esther, nor of Mordecai. Some scholars suggest it is a historical novel (Michner). Others maintain that the accuracy of the story suggests real events. Either way the message is the same.

### Message:

there are several characters in this story: 1) Esther the Queen, 2) Ahaserus the King, 3) Mordecai, Esther's cousin (2:7), and 4) Haman, high Persian official. The plot of the story is how Haman's plot to kill the Jews backfires and he is killed. The story illustrates to the Jews their uniqueness in the eyes of God. The Jews are able to defend themselves (an order extended for two days).

THE FEAST OF PURIM: "Purim" is the Persian word that means "lots," the lots cast by Haman ( Esther 3:7) it is a non-religious feast, a secular party to celebrate the deliverance from Haman, the Talmud said to celebrate and drink until drunk (Drink wine until you can no longer distinguish between "Blessed be Mordecai" and "Cursed be Haman." - Megillah 7b)

THEME: deliverance of the Jews through the faith and actions of Esther

### OUTLINE: (chapters)

- 1-2 Setting and characters
- 3-9 Development of the plot
- 10 Conclusion

### 3 MAIN TEACHINGS:

- 1) God's providential care for His people
- 2) unfailing trust in the rule of God
- 3) law of sin and retribution (those who plotted the destruction of the Jews were themselves brutally destroyed in chapter 9).

# JOB

Job - the man

Title of the book - from central character - Job

Name - Uncertain as to meaning. Some say the name is from an Arabic root meaning "to repent; thus "Penitent One." Others say the meaning can be "Persistent Foe" from word meaning "hostility, enemy"; thus "One whom Yahweh treated as an enemy." W. F. Albright proposed "Where is Father?" The name is found in Execration Texts in Egypt (2000 B.C.) to designate a Palestinian prince. In the Amarna letters (1350 B.C.) -tribal chief from Ashtereth named Job. Nonetheless the name is known, which gives credence as historical figure.

## Date

- a. Scholars do not agree as to the date written
- b. Dates range from 1000 B.C. to the Exilic period - prose sections possibly around 1000 B.C. (time of David) while the poetic sections (dialogue) may date around the 7th cent. B.C. LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush say 700-600 B.C.; Hill and Walton say probably during the divided monarchy (931-722BC)
- c. The value of Job does not hinge on when the book was written -the value is in its theological meaning
- d. The setting of Job is evidenced within patriarchal times (2000-1300 B.C.)
  - ① Job made sacrifices for his children
  - ② Job's wealth was measured by sheep, camels, and servants
  - ③ Job's land was raided by pillaging tribes
  - ④ Job's life span of 140 years matches the patriarchs

## Place within the Canon

- a. In English Bibles, precedes Psalms - follows order of LXX
- b. In the Hebrew Bible, located in Writings, usually followed Psalms, but sometimes followed Psalms and Proverbs

## Authorship

- a. Job was not the author because of regular 3rd person speeches
- b. Anonymous, though we can know something about the author:
  - i. Fellow sufferer - suffered calamity like Job
  - ii. Struggled with restrictive theology
    - (1) Restraint of popular theology did not allow for his personal experiences
    - (2) Traditional views not broad enough to include his experiences - e.g., Deuteronomic Formula

## Outline

The Prologue: the Disasters (Afflictions) of Job (1-2)

His Circumstances and Character (1:1-5)

His Calamities and their Source—Satan (1:6-2:10)

His Comforters (2:11-13)

The Dialogues or False Comfort of the Three Friends (3:1-31:40)  
 Job's lament (3:1-26)  
 Eliphaz' reply Bildad's reply Zophar's reply  
 Second cycle of debate (15:1-21:34)  
 Eliphaz' reply Bildad's reply Zophar's reply  
 Third cycle of debate (22:1-31:40)  
 Eliphaz' reply Bildad's reply  
 The Words of Elihu (32:1-37:24)  
 First speech: God's instruction to man through affliction (32:1-33:33)  
 Second speech: God's justice and prudence vindicated (34:1-37)  
 Third speech: the advantages of pure and consistent piety (35:1-16)  
 Fourth speech: God's greatness and Job's guilt (36:1-37:24)  
 God's Revelation from the Whirlwind (38:1-42:6)  
 The Epilogue: God's rebuke of false comforters; Job's restoration (42:7-17)

### Types of Literature in Job

- a. Prose Prologue (ch. 1-2) and Epilogue (42:7ff)
- b. Poetic (main portion)- interpreted differently than prose
- c. Subtypes
  - i. Wisdom
  - ii. Lamentations
  - iii. Narrative
  - iv. Dialogue
  - v. Drama
  - vi. Prayer
  - vii. Oath
  - viii. Oracle

### Purpose of Book - no consensus

- a. Main problem is man's relationship to God in suffering
- b. Challenge hyper-Deuteronomic Formula
- c. Theodicy - to justify the ways of God to man
- d. Drama on two planes - Prologue
  - i. Starts with earthly (1:1-5, 1:13ff), goes to heavenly (1:6-12, 2:1ff)
  - ii. God allows hedges to be taken away to see Job's reaction
    - (1) Hedge of Possessions
    - (2) Hedge of Family
    - (3) Hedge of Reputation
    - (4) Heart of Job

### Character of Satan

- a. Satan means "the Adversary" - i.e., accuser - more properly a title than a name
  - b. Delights in his work
  - c. Universal patroller of earth
  - d. Skeptical about any innate human ability to seek good
  - e. Satan is limited in power and knowledge
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## **"Satan" in the Old Testament**

Verb - "to oppose as an adversary"

Psalm 71:13

Psalm 109:4, 20, 29

Psalm 38:20

Zechariah 3:1

Noun - Human Beings (adversary)

1 Samuel 29:4 (David to the Philistines)

2 Samuel 19:23 (Abishai to David)

1 Kings 5:4

1 Kings 11:14 (Hadad to Solomon)

1 Kings 11:23 (Rezon to Solomon)

1 Kings 11:25 (Rezon to Solomon)

Psalm 109:6

Supernatural Beings

With the definite article suggests a function rather than a personal name, i.e. "The adversary" rather than "Satan."

14 times in Job 1-2

3 times in Zechariah 3:1-2

Without the definite article can indicate a personal name or an adversary not specifically identified:

Numbers 22:22, 32 (Angel of the Lord to Balaam)

1 Chronicles 21:1

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## **Idea of Sheol**

- a. Grave, death - *Sheol*, "the Great Asker"
- b. Shadowy existence, at best - no developed theology on the afterlife
- c. No place for a "final judgment" - thus author calls for distinction in Sheol
- d. If not rewarded for righteousness in this life, maybe in Sheol

## **Yahweh Speeches** - ch. 38-42:6

- a. Problem of suffering - Faith is answer to unexplained suffering
- b. Whirlwind - 38:1 - theophany
- c. God questions Job with the intent to show Job how little Job knew - God implies that Job trusted Him in creation, but not with life (WOW)
- d. ch. 40 - Job responds (or lack of response) - v. 2-5 - when given the opportunity, Job could not present his case to God
- e. 42:1-6 - Job was humbled before the majesty of God
  - (1) v. 5 - he had second-hand knowledge before - now saw for self - repents
  - (2) God never told Job why calamity came
  - (3) To demonstrate Job's righteousness was the end result

### Views of Suffering

- a. Friends - "Suffering result of sin" - Deuteronomic Formula - sometimes true
- b. Elihu - "Suffering used to teach and chastise men" - again sometimes true
- c. Yahweh - "Suffering should instruct man of his own insufficiency and teach him greater faith"

### **5 Truths from the Elihu speeches (Chs. 32-37)**

- (1) 33:12      God is greater than man
- (2) 33:29,30   God seeks man's salvation
- (3) 34:10      God does no wickedness
- (4) 36:15      God uses suffering to help the sufferer
- (5) 37:24      God regards those who are not wise in their own eyes

### **PHASES OF THE GROWTH OF JOB'S FAITH**

- ① 1:1 — The reputation Job had earned was based upon external acts, to the best of his knowledge and ability (from a NT perspective, Job was the best "Christian" he knew how to be according to man's standards)  
    \*The Book of Job shows us that there is more to being godly than reputation or material goods or external acts: namely our relationship to God. Once we are saved, our witness/testimony/reputation is the only part of our life that Satan can get to and harm
- ② 7:21 — Job sees God as a seeker; Job asks "why pick on me since I am such a good guy?" Job is moving toward an active reality of God; He is not just passive; We must ask the question: Can I praise God when things are going badly, when I am suffering?
- ③ 9:32-35 — Job believes that humanity needs an umpire or arbitrator who will be fair to both God and man
- ④ 14:14 — If a man dies, will he go on living? (This is a better translation than "again") Job is asking: Could I know that I will be vindicated after death? Is there life beyond the grave?
- ⑤ 16:19 — God has become Job's witness; Job is no longer looking for neutrality but someone to be his witness notice; that he is still looking for vindication!
- ⑥ 19:25 — God is the Living Redeemer; Job knows that he will see God when his suffering is over
- ⑦ 42:5 — Now my eye sees you; Job now has a relationship, not just a reputation. He even becomes an intercessor for his three friends.

### **Attributes of Job** (from Job 1:1 — the author's words & reinforced by God in 1:8)

- ① BLAMELESS (Hebrew = *tarn*) — complete, whole, a man of integrity, being exhausted (Job wore himself out being an honest man)
- ② UPRIGHT (*yashar*) — to be straight, smooth, or right, i.e., without moral deviation; does not equal sinless. The Bible does not say that Job was a sinless man; if someone was looking for a good man in the OT, Job, Enoch, and Joseph would be the best examples. . . the Deuteronomic Formula upholds that he would be blessed.

- ③ FEARED GOD (*yare'*) — tremble, be afraid; we must fear God in the sense that we tremble in His presence. This is a religious lifestyle: he sacrificed for himself and his children (do we care for our families because we fear God?).
- ④ TURNED AWAY FROM EVIL (*sar*) — turn aside or depart from, also used in Proverbs with the young man turning away from the harlot. This is the exact corollary of fearing God: we abandon sin as a lifestyle and walk cautiously in the world.

### Theological Implications from Job

- a. Suffering can visit an innocent person!
- b. Disinterested piety is a reality - people will serve God even if they do not get anything out of it - "Will a man serve God for nothing?"
- c. God is just - reward/judgment does come in life and/or in the afterlife
- d. God is a friend of doubters - honest doubt is never condemned in scripture, but unbelief is judged
- e. The true meaning of patience/longsuffering is **endurance** 😊

# Psalms

## Introductory Materials

### 1) Name

- A. Closest Hebrew word to "psalm" is *mizmôr*.
- B. Hebrew title - "*T<sup>e</sup>hillim*," - meaning praises or "hymns of praise."
  - 1. Misleading since most are not hymns of praise.
  - 2. Only Ps. 145 is called a *T<sup>e</sup>hillah*.
  - 3. *Hallelu-jah* means Praise Yahweh or Praise the Lord.
- C. The English title - "Psalms" - derived from the Greek (LXX), "*psalmoi*."
  - 1. signifies a song accompanied by a musical instrument-- "Psalter".
  - 2. Greek title comes from the Hebrew *mizmôr*.

### 2) Usage of the book

- A. Prayer book or hymn book of Israel.
- B. The Levites sang songs every week - songs formed part of the liturgy of the annual feasts.
- C. The Psalter used for singing and praying but never for the teaching lesson - lessons were confined to the Law and the Prophets.

### 3) Canonicity

- A. The Psalms found in the Jewish division called or "Writings."
- B. English version--Job appears first--Psalms first in the Jewish canon (Writings).
- C. The Writings considered to be Scripture but of lesser importance than the Law (#1 in importance) and the Prophets.
- D. Jesus spoke of the "Law, Prophets, and Psalms" as bearing witness to him-- The Psalms represented the entire collection of Writings.

### 4) Date of the Psalms

- A. Uncertain--under much discussion today--hot topic in Psalms studies
  - 1. The earliest psalms probably came into being when Israel first came into contact with Canaanite religious poetry (period of conquest & settlement).
  - 2. Formation of the Psalter was a gradual process.
  - 3. Certain factors are important regarding the end of the Psalter's formulation:
    - (a) The Chronicler quoted the doxology which closed Book IV (1 Chr. 16:36 = Ps. 106:48).
    - (b) Certain apocryphal books quote some of the psalms.
    - (c) similarity of order & number Between MT & LXX versions to such a degree that the 151<sup>st</sup> psalm of the LXX was referred to as "outside the counting."
  - 4. Final collection of the psalms was probably completed by ca. 3rd century CE.

### Authorship of the Psalms

|           |      |                                                               |
|-----------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| David     | (73) | Book 1 (41), Book 2 (18), Book 3 (1), Book 4 (2); Book 5 (15) |
| Asaph     | 12   | Ps. 50, 73-83                                                 |
| Korahites | 12   | Ps. 42-49; 84; 86; 87; 88                                     |
| Jeduthum  | 3    | Ps. 39, 62, 77                                                |
| Solomon   | 2    | Ps. 72, 127                                                   |
| Moses     | 1    | Ps. 90                                                        |
| Ethan     | 1    | Ps. 89                                                        |
| Heman     | 1    | Ps. 88                                                        |
| Anonymous | --   | 49                                                            |

#### 5) Superscriptions

- A. Introductions to some of the Psalms
- B. Added after their writing
- C. Exact meaning and value of superscriptions are debated
- D. Problem not a modern one - the Greek translators of the LXX did not understand the superscriptions.
- E. Uses of superscriptions
  - 1. May indicate a setting for the psalm, either cultic or historical.
  - 2. May indicate the psalm to be sung to a certain tune or by certain members of the temple choir.
  - 3. May indicate the psalm was associated with a certain collection, e.g. "To David"
- F. Some may represent a tradition not preserved in the Old Testament.
  - 1. E.g., David came to Gath on his own initiative according to 1 Samuel 21:10.
  - 2. The Psalm 56 superscription recorded that David was captured by the Philistines.
  - 3. Historical value has been contested by the majority of scholars.

#### 6) Five divisions of the book

- A. Five collections with each collection ending with a doxology.
- B. The collections and doxologies are
  - 1. Book I - Psalm 1-41 (41:13) doxology
  - 2. Book II Psalm 42-72 (72:18f) doxology
  - 3. Book III Psalm 73-89 (89:52) doxology
  - 4. Book IV Psalm 90-106 (106:48) doxology
  - 5. Book V Psalm 107-150 (150) doxology

#### 7) Number of the Psalms (150) follows closely the number of sections of the Pentateuch

- A. Divided for reading in the synagogue

B. Synagogue practice may have included the reading of a Psalm with each reading from the Pentateuch.

## 8) Classification of the Psalms

A. Hermann Gunkel classified the Psalms according to their in the cult.

1. Hymns of Praise
2. Enthronement Psalms--enthronement of the earthly king commemorating the heavenly king.
3. Laments of the Community
4. Royal Psalms
5. Laments of the Individual
6. Individual Psalms of Thanksgiving

B. **Walter Brueggemann**: the Psalms are treasures dug deep from the mines of human life; they mirror a broad spectrum of human experience; three phases of life and in particular life in relation to God: orientation to the world around, disorientation, and reorientation.

1. Psalms of Orientation: detected by a motto that runs through several different form--types (104:5; 93:1,2; 46:5; 21:7; 15:5; 121:3; 112:6; 16:8--stability); the fine life is due to God, not to any self-sufficiency on the part of people; stability, not stagnation (orientation in the steady progress of a God-ordered direction).
2. Psalms of Disorientation: the psalms of individual and corporate lament are reactions to dire crises, the times when one's beatings are lost and one cannot cope. This can account for the extremes of language and logic in some psalms. Traditional crises are persecution and serious illness. The latter still deeply affects us; the former shows itself in the loss of a job, bereavement, or the breakdown of the marriage/family (Ps. 37, 38).
3. Psalms of reorientation: follows disorientation just as thanksgiving follows lament; the change for the better calls for an expression of gratitude to the God who picks up the broken pieces and puts them back together again. Consider the permanent and temporary qualities of the song of thanksgiving. Allen used the analogy of a love letter written during an impassioned courtship which eventually matures into satisfying marriage and parenthood. (ALLEN, 39).

## 9) Terms found in the Psalms

A. within the titles:

1. *mizmôr*--a psalm sung to instrumental accompaniment--50x (Ps. 100).
2. *shirr*--a song probably done a cappella--30x (Ps. 46).
3. *miktam* --the meaning is uncertain--6x (Pss. 56-60), possibly refers to "golden" (Preciousness of contents).
4. *tephilla*--"prayer," a psalm of complaint--5x (Ps. 102).
5. *shiggaiôn*--unknown (Ps. 7), possibly meaning "to wander."
6. *maskil*--contemplative/didactic/skillful psalm--13x (Ps. 42).
7. Song of Ascents--processional ascent to the Temple (Pss. 120-136).

8. *shir yedidoth*—love song (Ps. 45).
9. praise *t'hilla* (Ps. 145).

B. referring to a musical setting

1. "to the chief musician"-- a note to the director of the Temple choir.
2. *selah* possibly a musical direction meaning either
  - (a) to elevate (crescendo)
  - (b) a pause (instrumental interlude) or "think about this"
3. *higgaion* refers to meditative music

C. referring to the liturgical use or time when a psalm was to be used

1. psalm for the Sabbath day
2. psalm of thanksgiving
3. song at the dedication of the Temple
4. song of ascents (pilgrimages)

10) Unique Psalms

A. Psalm 117

1. shortest psalm
2. shortest chapter in Bible

B. Psalm 119

1. longest psalm
2. longest chapter in Bible
3. the psalm (119) is an acrostic
  - (a) its stanzas are 8 lines long.
  - (b) stanzas use successive letters in Hebrew alphabet as their beginning consonants.
  - (c) each line in the stanza begins with that successive letter.
  - (d) almost every line contains the word "law" or a synonym.
  - (e) probably a literary masterpiece honoring the law.

11) Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls

- A) many texts found in caves 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11.
- B) four commentary texts found containing portions of psalms.
- C) most dramatic find from cave 11:
  1. Made of 5 sheets of sewn leather.
  2. Length of almost 13 feet by 6-7 inches wide (originally 9-10 inches wide).
  3. Contains all or parts of 41 psalms beginning with Ps. 101.
- D) more copies of psalms exist in the Qumran Library than any other biblical writing.

## Psalm 1

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|                               |                                                                |                              |                             |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) <i>Blessed</i> is the man: |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | <u>Who walks not</u>                                           | <u>in the counsel of</u>     | <u>wicked ones</u>          |
|                               | <u>Nor stands</u>                                              | <u>in the way of</u>         | <u>sinners</u>              |
|                               | <u>Nor sits (dwells)</u>                                       | <u>in the seat of</u>        | <u>scorners</u>             |
|                               |                                                                |                              | Righteous does not do . . . |
|                               |                                                                |                              | <b>A</b>                    |
| 2) For rather                 |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | <u>His pleasure is</u>                                         | <u>in the law of Yahweh</u>  | Righteous man does . . .    |
|                               | <u>And on his law</u>                                          | <u>he meditates</u>          | <b>B</b>                    |
|                               |                                                                | <b>day and night</b>         |                             |
| 3) And he will be             |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | Like a <b>tree</b> transplanted by streams of water            |                              |                             |
|                               | Who gives its <b>fruit</b> in its time                         | it does                      | Righteous man is like . . . |
|                               | And its <b>leaf</b> does not wither                            | it does not                  | <b>C</b>                    |
|                               |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | And all which he does will <i>prosper</i> (advance)            |                              | <b>D</b>                    |
| <hr/>                         |                                                                |                              |                             |
| 4)                            | Not so with the wicked:                                        |                              | <b>D'</b>                   |
|                               | <b>For</b> like the chaff which the wind drives about          | Wicked man is like           | <b>C'</b>                   |
| 5) For                        |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | The <u>wicked</u> will not arise in the judgement              | The wicked will not do . . . | <b>A'</b>                   |
|                               | Nor <u>sinners</u> in the congregation of the <b>righteous</b> |                              |                             |
| <hr/>                         |                                                                |                              |                             |
| 6) <b>For</b>                 |                                                                |                              |                             |
|                               | <u>Yahweh</u> knows the way of the <b>righteous</b>            | Summary of the               |                             |
|                               | But the way of the <b>wicked</b> will perish                   | righteous and wicked         |                             |

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Righteous--verses 1-3 ➡ A  
Wicked--verses 4-5 ➡ B  
verse 6 is a contrast ➡ A'B'

A = actions--what we do not do

B = law--salvation

C = position--position in God

D = result--final result

D'= result--final result

C'= position--no stability

A'= action--what they will not do--no position in God nor among the people of God

### Order of importance for the Israelite:

#1 law (**B**) = salvation

#2 position (**C**) = position in God

#3 actions (**A**) = what we do not

**A B C D**

**D' C' A'**

Where is **B'** ????

**B'** is missing because the most important aspect of the righteous man is given even less information--none!

**A'** has two cola and **C'** has one colon--less time and space is given to the wicked. Notice the order of importance--#3 (actions) receives two lines, #2 receives one line, and #1 receives nothing. The wicked is compared to chaff while the righteous is compared to the much more substantial tree. The main key to a good life is the **Torah**. The wicked have no part in the good life but may try to "fake" position and action. Salvation is the (#1-Law) first and most important step--Torah!

Thus, the key to the psalm is verse 2

BIG PICTURE: Chiastic pattern

V. 1 bodily motion

V. 2 **Torah**

V. 3a-c simile

V. 3d summation

V. 4a summation

V. 4b simile

V. 5 bodily motion

6a > **A-D**

6b **D'-A'**

### Notes:

\*Psalm 1 is understood as the introduction to the entire Psalter.

\*The godliness reflected in the psalm is a faithful response to God's directives for life.

\*True happiness involves negatives:

Being free to everything can bring slavery to anything!

### Verse 1

The tricola demonstrates a downward progression

walk--to order life according to . . .

stand--to station oneself with, or among . . .

sit or dwell--to be an active part of . . . *yashav*

\*the verbs are all perfect, all places of "space," showing progression downward

counsel--suggests deliberations and advice . . .

way of--bent toward a type or way of life, it refers to a path worn by constant walking . . .

seat of--suggests a place of prominence or teaching . . .

wicked ones--general term for those that commit sin . . .

sinner--term used for those characterized by sin . . .

scorners--to show arrogant condemnation and disrespect to others views

\*\*a move from the general to the specific, all terms are plurals.

### Verse 2--the Torah

pleasure or delight--focus, concentration, surprise. Delight is reflected in meditation

meditate--let it work in, soak up, turn over . . . a lion before its prey has the all consuming look, licking the lips. The Word of God takes time to digest!

\*the righteous man takes action by studying the scriptures in order to practice them. A righteous man is righteous more by what he does (#1 Law = salvation) rather than what he does not do (#3--action) or what he is like (#2--position).

\*\*\*People want to know what we are for, not so much what we are against--Disney. The early church did something about abortion--they opened an "adoption agency." We can be labeled as weird or moral by what we don't do. . . .

Our position in Christ is secure and unchangeable. What we abstain from must be mixed with a healthy dose of what we do. "Faith without works is dead."

\*Notice that "his pleasure" is expanded by "he meditates day and night." Day and night is a word pair signifying the fullness of time, or continuing action.

### Verse 3

the result of not giving in to evil will be positive bringing:

1) stability, 2) appropriate productivity, & 3) success in the best sense  
transplanted--not just "planted," we have been transplanted from the dry and barren places of death into the thriving habitation of God's provision and the newness of life.

tree--the firm symbol of strength (the totality of a person)

fruit--the intended purpose of the tree (function of the person)

leaf--outward sign of inward strength (health of the person)

\*the fruit helped to sustain life in the ANE, where the shade of the tree promoted health by way of offering shade from the sun and protection from the rain. A leafy tree was held in high esteem by people in general, especially the foreign cults (Ez. 20:28). Baal was the god of nature, so a healthy tree seemed to be a good place for a worship or sacrificial spot.

\*our position in God is like the sure foundation of a tree planted by an active stream of water.

\*\* "And all which he does will prosper" is the logical summary of the righteous man. Notice the last word of v.3 and the first word of v.1 are very similar in meaning forming a type of *inclusio*--blessed and prosper.

### Verse 4

**D'** is a negation of **D**--antithetical parallelism in a loose sense.

\*the wicked is thrown about by the uncontrollable and unpredictable force of the wind. Chaff has no stable or lasting qualities. The chaff was considered to be unwanted and useless.

## Verse 5

The wicked will not “rise to the top” in the judgement. The judgement is an issue that all need to keep a healthy respect for, all will stand before God.

\*Ones bent on sin will not have a place in the congregation of the saints. Note:

Many refer to Christians as “still” sinners. We are not to be referred to as sinners, but those that have been redeemed from sin (though we still sin). Phrases such as “I’m only human” and ‘I’m not perfect” tend to be used as excuses.

\*word pair in the same colon of sinners and righteous.

\*notice in **A’** the movement is “rising up” while in **A** the movement is going down. Ironical contrast because the righteous will rise and the wicked will go down.

## Verse 6

\*\*Yahweh--God is the one in control, he is the judge and jury for the righteous and the wicked.

*yada* has a connotation of intimacy and closeness.

*derek* means way, road, or journey--it refers to a path worn by constant walking.

*avad*--perish, be destroyed, a common word for “to die.”

\*\*first phrase has 5 words while the second has three--more space given to the righteous.

\*\*the Lord will be the force determining the wicked’s destruction--subject gapping.

## Theology of the Psalms

The psalms provide us with a message of hope and comfort with the idea of worship as a proper response. Some scholars see the covenant relationship between God and His people as the major theme of the OT. For the Book of Psalms, it is difficult to make any generalizations about a theme or purpose, but it is safe to say that all the psalms embody a personal response on the part of the believer toward the goodness and grace of God. From this perspective, the covenant relationship underlies Psalms and forms the basis for its theology.

The psalms exhibit a mirror of the heart of God’s people recording the simple, universal human experiences of man in the light of God’s person, promises, plan, and presence. They are, in essence, an antidote to fear and complaining; through a personal response to the person and work of God.

The Psalms are an expression of the worship, faith, and spiritual life of Israel. They naturally cover a great variety of feelings, circumstances, and themes. Often they include a record of the psalmist’s own inner emotions of discouragement, anxiety, or thankfulness even when faced with the opposition of God’s enemies or in view of God’s varied providences. But whether the psalmist is occupied with a mournful or a joyous theme, he is always expressing himself as in the presence of the living God.

A question to ask is, “What do these psalms say about God, God and people, and God and the universe?” What follows then is an incomplete, suggested list of theological themes:

**Characteristics of God**

Personal, transcendent (beyond comprehension), Creator, almighty or all-powerful, Shepherd, refuge, strength, etc.

**Manifestation of God's Grace = His Torah (law)**

The wisdom of the Psalms contrast the righteous and the wicked; the way to live a righteous life is to keep God's law and walk in His ways which He has revealed in the Torah.

**Humanity**

The Psalms teach us how to live and how to worship. They inform our intellect so we may know God better. They identify our emotional responses to God. Some of them include: praise, lament, confidence, reverence, shame, fear, sadness, anger, doubt (of God's goodness or justice, not His existence), and love.

**Sin**

The result of disobedience to God's covenant (the law, His commandments and statutes)... the need for forgiveness.

## Introduction to Wisdom Literature

### The Origin of the Wisdom Movement:

A. Ancient Near East: Oddly enough the wisdom movement in the ancient Near East grew out of a mundane need for government officials. The kingdoms of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Egypt needed young men to take care of correspondence among the empires and their allies. In order to train younger men for the task, the governmental leaders would have the young bureaucrats learn to write by using the old wisdom texts of their peoples (old English primers were heavy on Bible passages). This resulted in three things:

- ① The ability to write
- ② The inculcation of a moral code based on the wisdom of the people, and
- ③ the continuation of the wisdom traditions in the ancient Near East

This mundane beginning is basic for all the empires of the Ancient Near East.

B. Israel: (Jer. 18:18) When one considers the beginning of the wisdom movement in Israel, it is not clear as to where or how it began. Three basic opinions have been given by scholars: 1<sup>st</sup> The Wisdom movement began in the clan. The family setting would be a natural place for wisdom. The father and mother had the responsibility to teach the children how to live (e.g. , notice the number of times father/mother/son is used in the book of Proverbs)

2<sup>nd</sup> The wisdom movement developed in the royal court. This parallels what happened in the countries around Israel. In addition, one should take into account the biblical tradition that Solomon was the wisest of all men and probable founder of the movement (1 Kings 4:29-34; Proverbs 1:1).

3<sup>rd</sup> The wisdom movement had a school setting. While there are parallels in the Ancient Near East, there is no physical or literary evidence of schools in Israel until the time of Ben Sira (ca. 180 B.C. {cf. Eccles. 51:23}). As one considers the above options, it may be best to see a chronological and sociological development in the wisdom movement. In terms of origin, surely the home was the beginning point of the wisdom movement; however, as the monarchies of David and Solomon were established, the movement became more professional, eventually finding a home in the schools of the inter-testamental time period.

### A Definition of Wisdom

A) Word: The term *hokmah* is the Hebrew word translated “wisdom” in the English translations of scripture. *Hokmah* is used approx. 153x in the OT . The term has a secular meaning as well as a sacred meaning. The term can be used in some contexts to simply mean the skill of a laborer (cf. Exod. 28:3; 31:6). It can also denote mental ability to see the end results of a situation (cf. Solomon, 1 Kgs. 3). However, it also has a theological/moral connotation.

**B) Concept: (Definition of wisdom)** “The ability to find, maintain, and cultivate balance/harmony, on the basis of man’s skill and through one's relationship with God. Wisdom celebrates the ability of humanity, but also ties that ability to the “fear of the Lord.” (Prov. 1:7)

### The Scope of Wisdom Literature

#### A. Criteria:

1) Broad: One's definition of wisdom will determine how one evaluates scriptures and whether they are or are not part of the wisdom corpus. For example, Gerhard Von Rad argues that wisdom is “the practical knowledge of the laws of life and the world.” This definition is so broad it allows Von Rad to discover wisdom in a variety of places. This came out in Von Rad's article “The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom.” In the article, Von Rad argues that Joseph is portrayed as a typical wise man. However, Von Rad’s definition is so broad, any piece of literature in the bible could qualify as wisdom literature.

2) Restrictive: It’s probably better to agree with other scholars (Crenshaw and Murphy) that one should not call a piece of literature wisdom unless it meets the requirements both in terms of form (proverbs, disputation, instructions, and reflection) and content (self-evident intuitions, and serious quests for truth). When one marries form and content, then Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament must be restricted to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Two books also qualify in the Apocrypha (Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon). Some psalms might also qualify, though there is no unanimity on which fit that particular category (Ps. 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 112, & 128).

#### B. Characteristics:

1) Form: Since the sage made up a distinct class in Israel, it seems likely that he also had a characteristic form of speech. The following are the different types of speech devices used by the sage:

a. **Proverb**: since the term will be discussed in depth within the Introduction to Proverbs, only the functions of the proverb will be given. ① Sentence Proverb: the function of/ this type of proverb is to present information. It reports conclusions about the environment around the world and man (cf. Prov. 10:1-22:16; 24:23-34; 25-29). ② Instructional Proverb: The purpose is didactic in nature. It was attempting to warn the young against straying into sin. This warning was validated in three ways: tradition, God, self-validation (power of the spoken word).

b. **Riddle**: A riddle is a question or statement that conceals the answer. The sage would have used the riddle in the educative process because life is sometimes a riddle (Prov. 1:6). An example is found in Judg. 14:14 ( “out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet”) and a broken ex. Prov. 30:15ff.

c. **Allegory**: This is the use of pregnant language which has more than one level of meaning. Two examples of this kind of literature is found in Eccles. 12:1-8 (old age) and Prov. 5:15-16 (marital fidelity).

d. **Hymn**: The hymn is designed to praise "wisdom" as a gift from God. The hymn extols wisdom as the point of contact between God and creation. Ex. of wisdom hymns are Prov.8:12-31 & Job 28.

e. **Dialogue**: dialogue was a tool used by the sage to state a problem and then find its solution. This type of genre is used effectively in the book of Job. It generally includes an introduction, dialogue, and resolution.

f. **Autobiographical Narrative**: The master teacher would share his insights on experiences in an effort to teach his pupils (Eccl. 1:12-2:26). This is normal since experience is that which wisdom is in part built on.

g. **Lists**: the lists are encyclopedic listings of phenomenon in nature that serves as a method of gathering and remembering information. Though no noun lists exist in the OT explicitly, perhaps Job 38 is built off of such a list. It may have been an attempt at ordering reality.

h. **Didactic-Narrative**: this is clear cut, no nonsense approaches to teaching. It tells the story to communicate an essential idea (Prov. 7:6-23).

**\*\*** It should be noted that the genre of the sage was not particularly limited to the sage. Rather the sage used the common stock of expressions within Israel. However, these expressions became wisdom genre when the primary purpose is related to teaching, observation, and the praise of wisdom.

2) Content: As one reads the literature of the wisdom books, it becomes apparent that wisdom has some distinctive elements as they relate to content. These include: a) **non-historical**: it does not deal with God's great acts in the past, present, or future. It is more practical and conceptual, b) **anthropocentric**: The emphasis is in part on man's abilities, choices, and purposes, c) **cautious**: It also recognizes that man has a problem with pride (Prov. 1:7). Therefore, it sets some boundaries for man (Job and Qoheleth) . By doing so, God's sovereignty is protected (Job 38-42; Eccles. 3).

## Theology of the Wisdom Movement

In approaching the writings, one may gain a handle on the overall thought of the corpus by using a conceptual grid. This grid is based on three words: **orientation**, **disorientation**, and **reorientation**. This same concept is applied to the Psalms by W. Brueggemann:

A. **Orientation:** suggests a sense of security or well-being. This might capture the overall mood of Proverbs. The book gives one the assurance that if the rules are followed, then an inevitable result will occur. This spirit of optimism was based on the assumption that the universe is basically a place of harmony and order. If one wants to flourish, then simply obey the laws of harmony (i.e. , *hokmah*).

B. **Disorientation:** suggests a state of insecurity. A time when the props and supports have been taken away. When nothing makes sense. This could define the mood of Job. Job had built his life on the assumption that God blessed the obedient and cursed the wicked (Deuteronomic Formula). However, Job learned the hard way that one could be obedient and still experience tragedy. Even the innocent suffer.

C. **Reorientation:** suggests a time of renewal. A time when one finds himself. Security is found, but the person is forever changed as the result of what he has experienced. This is the mood of Ecclesiastes. The Preacher finds his faith again after becoming disillusioned with his own wisdom movement. He suggests that reorientation can be found by a glad surrender to the God who is sovereign and blesses, in simple ways, His people (Eccles. 2:24-26; Eccles. 3:14-16, etc.).

# PROVERBS

Definition \*\* The term *masal* or "proverb" has been connected with two different etymological ideas:

A. "To be Like" or "to be comparable to": A. R. Johnson, VTS 3 (1955) : 162-69. Johnson argues that the "proverb" is designed to draw analogy from life in order to provide man with lessons to order life by. (Prov. 16:24). "Comparable to" can be seen in Isa. 46:5 and Job 30:19.

B. "To Rule": the word also is connected with a root that means "to rule." The proverb, because it is a spoken word, had inherent power that could guide and dominate a man's life if allowed.

The proverb was intended to create and sustain order in a man's life, as well as to provide examples to that end. The term "proverb" can refer to short pithy sayings, larger compositions (Prov. 1-9), as well as public presentations ex. (Ps. 44:13f. and Ps. 69:11f).

## Authorship and Date

### A. Authorship:

1) Traditional: the traditional view is that Solomon wrote or compiled the book. The traditional viewpoint is based on such texts as (1 Kgs. 4:29-34; 10:1-13). Solomon is also given credit in the title of the entire work (Prov. 1:1).

2) Community: this view virtually ignores the contribution of Solomon. The emphasis of this view is that the work is a composite of the community written over hundreds of years by various writers. Solomonic authorship is simply attributed to Solomon as law is to Moses and psalms are to David.

3) Biblical/Critical: Solomon undoubtedly composed or influenced sections of the book (10:1; 25:1). However, it was not until much later that the book received its final editing (Prov. 25:1). The reign of Hezekiah was from 715-686 B.C.

### B. **Date**: to determine dating several questions must be answered:

① Question of Section: various sections of Proverbs are dated at different times. For example, Proverbs 1-9 is dated late because of personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8 and the union of wisdom and fear of the Lord in Prov. 1:7. Whereas, Prov. 10:1-22:16 is dated early because of its apparent dependence on the Egyptian work: "Instruction of Amenope" which Albright dates to the period of the Judges (1200-1020 B.C.)/ and because of the Solomonic title in Prov. 10:1.

② Question of Form: Proverbs 1-9 are well developed instructions with longer sentences - probably late. Whereas Proverbs 10- are predominately short sentences - probably early.

③ Question of Tradition: many proverbs may have a long prehistory before they are ever committed to writing. This is especially true if their setting is primarily in the clan.

④ Question of Redaction: on the basis of Prov. 25:1, it is evident that in the day of Hezekiah there was some redaction going on. Therefore, the majority of the book was probably collected from the time of Solomon to Hezekiah with the final editing occurring during the reign of Hezekiah.

## Cultural Influence

A. Egypt: there is the possibility of an Egyptian connection because of Israel's sojourn in Egypt (Exod. 12:40-41), as well as Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kgs. 3:1). Some scholars conjecture that Israel was influenced by Egyptian diplomats at Israel's royal court. Some even suggest that Solomon modeled his gov. organization on the Egyptian model. With all this connection with Egypt, undoubtedly there was some influence on the wisdom traditions of Israel.

1) Instructions: literature used by Egyptian sage to train young men for places in the royal court. Parallels between Egyptian and Israelite wisdom traditions can be found in: 1) and emphasis on speaking at the right time (Prov. 15:23), as well as 2) the amazing parallels between the "Instruction of Amen-em-ope" and Prov. 22:17-23:11. (See ANET).

2) Onomasticon: these are encyclopedic lists of natural phenomenon. It was designed to facilitate the memorization of factual data. This could have influenced Prov. 30:15-16, 18-20, 24-31.

B. **Mesopotamia**: twenty-four collections of proverbs have survived from Mesopotamia. However, scholars are still unsure as to their purpose in that culture. The important item to remember is that Israel migrated from that region, thus Mesopotamian wisdom sayings must have survived in the oral tradition of the patriarchs.

\* One cannot prove dependence of one culture upon another. Instead one should understand these factors:

- ① common background of each culture.
- ② universality of proverbial literature.
- ③ people movements in patriarchal times.
- ④ uniqueness of Israel's God. Israel may have borrowed, but they also baptized the ideas into the Yahwistic faith.

## Purpose of Proverbs (1:2-7)

A. **Education:** (vv. 2-6) The education provided by the proverbial material is balanced. That is one learns: 1) discipline which comes from the word "instruction" involving sternness. Wisdom does not come by laxity. 2) discernment: has the idea of insight, and 3) deliberation: "wise behavior" which includes righteousness, justice, and equity. It is education that is available. It is available to the: 1) naive: peti: mentally lazy and morally lax. 2) youth, & 3) wise: the ones already wise continue to learn.

B. **Foundation:** (v. 7) 1) relational: Fear is an action (Job 1:1; Ecc. 8:13), as; well as an attitude (realizing God's sovereignty and man's sinfulness). Fear denotes association, which is the first step in relationship with God. Knowledge comes by walking the path with God.

2) rejected: it is rejected by "fools." Fools are those people without moral sense. They laugh at sin. They "despise" wisdom and knowledge. Despise is to treat with contempt; it is an antonym to honor.

## Perspective of Proverbs (1:8-9:18)

One should understand that Prov. 1-9 teaches about the way of life and death. It emphasizes the qualitative living of life. It also emphasizes the responsibility of a person to choose life and death,

### A. Death

1) Sexual Sin: (5:1-23; 6:24-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18).

a. her person: there are three views about the type of woman mentioned in these sections: ❶ the woman who is unfaithful (*issa zara*), ❷ the foreign woman: foreign women were thought to be sensual and alluring, ❸ temple prostitute: (2:17). Bostrom connects this person with the cult prostitute of Ishtar/Astarte (looks out the window in some Babylonian myths [7:6]). Probably depends upon the context of proverb.

b. her method: ❶ deceptive: notice emphasis upon speech (2:16; 5:3-4; 6:24; 7:13-18; 9:13-18). In 7:13-18 she is only looking for him, but the contrast in 5:3-4, ❷ devious: there is no loyalty with her (2:17). Notice in 7:9 the piling up of synonyms concerning darkness, ❸ deadly (2:18; 5:5; 6:27-35; 7:26-27; 9:18). The old idea that the dead went through the mouth of the god of death to the grave. With poetic flair this is the case with sexual sin. In 7:26-27 she is compared to a murderer.

c. her avoidance: ❶ saturate mind with wisdom (2:1-5, 16; 6:23-24; 7:25), ❷ stay away (5:8), ❸ satisfy your needs in marriage (5:15-19).

## 2. Violence. (1:10-19; 4:14-19)

a. Persuasiveness: (1:10-14) They are persuasive because they promise:  
a) power: comparing their power to that of death,  
b) riches: thought they had found an easy way to make money,  
c) community: they spoke of belonging to their group. Wanting to belong can lead into temptation and sin.

b. Peril: (1:17-19; 4:19) Greed is a trap. They cannot see what would be plain to a bird. This type of life leads to difficulty.

3) Laziness (6:6-11) Notice the cure: observe the ant (LXX/bee), the continuance: "How long?" the sluggard replies "a little." the crisis: the sage interrupts by stating the brutal facts.

4) immaturity (1:30-33). Notice that immaturity is the result of a) **choice**: v. 30. Every attempt to be taught was rebuffed, Their rejection was also because of b) **complacency**: (v. 32). They thought they had it all figured out. This resulted in two types of judgment: ❶ sick of life: (v. 31) "satiated." means that their lifestyle made them sick, and ❷ sick in mind: (vv. 32-33).

## B. **Life**.

1) attractive: (1:8-9; 3:3-4, 22; 4:8-9). This attractive feature of wisdom will be external (1:8-9) because of the metaphor of a crown or necklace -- and internal (3:3-4, 22): the internal feature can be seen with the words "bind" and "write." These are figurative ways to express loyalty and commitment (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Cor. 2:15-16).

2) protective: (2:1-22) Protection comes to those who pursue wisdom (vv. 1-5). Notice the verbs: "receive, treasure, make attentive, incline, lift voice, seek, search." This person is obsessed with knowing wisdom and God. The protection is from the evil man and woman (vv. 12-/ 22). The rest of the chapter is divided by the infinitive "to deliver you." Notice both attack through words. These are people that want you to do the exact opposite of what God wants.

3) peaceful: (3:17-26). Notice the metaphor the "tree of life." (cf. Gen. 2; Rev. 2:7; 22:1-2). Wisdom is identified as that tree. The continuation of the creation story follows in these verses. The way back to Eden is through wisdom.

Proverbs 9 describing wisdom as the house builder:

Think of an ancient building with 7 tall pillars across the front, supporting the weight of the roof from the foundation...

## 7 pillars on which wisdom built her house

1. understanding = specific application of wisdom to meet the need of the moment, paired with wisdom
2. prudence (paired with discipline) = ability to strip away the facade to get to the real issue
3. discipline = forced conformity to a given standard, i.e., sticking to the real issue; in Proverbs, force myself to conform to God's word
4. tradition (paired with common sense) = whole set of values and morays which the younger generation receives from their parents; traditions are fine until they contradict the Bible
5. common sense = knowing the ropes
6. skill (paired with discretion) = ability to plan work and perceive what needs to be done; analytical skill
7. discretion = ability to get the job done by being able to see what is being planned against you

## Structure

- A. Introduction (Prov. 1:1-6).
- B. Importance of Wisdom (1:7-9:18).
- C. Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16).
- D. Words of the Wise (22:17-24:22).
- E. Additional Sayings (24:23-34).
- F. Proverbs of Solomon (25:1-29:27).
- G. Words of Agur (30:1-33).
- H. Words of Lemuel (31:1-9).
- I. Virtuous Woman (31:10-31).

## Theology of the Book of Proverbs:

A) It affirms creation. The universe has order that can be discovered and influential in man's life.

B) It affirms man. It is positive about man's ability grounded in God. It accentuates the potential of man when committed to God (Prov. 1:7).

C) It affirms stability within change. Don't make the proverbs into absolute maxims. They are intended by nature to provide insight according to the situation. They give the man the wisdom to cope with changing situations.

D) It affirms choice. Man must decide for himself either to be righteous/wicked. Depending on his choice so goes his life. The sage saw a cause/effect relationship within the world. This was particularly true here because of an undeveloped view of the afterlife.

# Ecclesiastes

## Canonicity

A. Jewish- one major reason for Eccl. acceptance into the canon was the understanding that Solomon wrote the book. However, not everyone was convinced. The school of Shammai rejected the book as canonical, but the more liberal Hillel school won the day. Documents from the eleventh cent. A.D. tell us that Eccl. was part of the Megilloth (five scrolls) that was read at the feast of Tabernacles celebrated in the synagogues.

B. Christian" ca. 190 A.D. Melito of Sardis had included Eccl. as part of the OT canon. This demonstrates that the book was considered to be canonical by the early church. Objection was raised by Theodore of Mopsuestia in the fifth cent. A.D.

## Date

A. Tenth Century- very few scholars hold to this date any longer. Gleason Archer is an exception. This date of course is built on the assumption that Solomon wrote the work.

B. Post-Exilic- (400-200 B.C.). a majority of conservative (Young, Harrison), as well as liberal scholars have suggested a post-exilic date. There are several reasons for this:

- 1) Serious questioning of the wisdom movement implies a firmly established movement.
- 2) Vocabulary and Syntax is closer to Mishnaic Hebrew a) preference for participle, b) use of *sheen* as a relative pronoun affixed to words.
- 3) Extremely high concentration of Aramaic. 29 of the 122 Aramaisms in the OT are found here, roughly 24% of Aramaisms in the OT.
- 4) The days of misery and trouble probably can refer to the exile (1:2-11).

C. 931 B.C. According to Jewish tradition, Solomon wrote the Song in his early years, expressing a young man's love. He wrote the Proverbs in his mature years, manifesting a middle-aged man's wisdom. He reportedly wrote Ecclesiastes in his declining years, revealing an old man's sorrow (cf. 12:1). Perhaps Ecclesiastes is the record of Solomon's regret for and repentance from his grave moral lapses recorded in 1 Kings 11. The Book of Ecclesiastes, then, would have been written just before Solomon's death and subsequent division of his kingdom that occurred in 931 B.C.

## **Authorship**

### A. Solomonic

- 1) Eccl 1:1 implies Solomon
- 2) Eccl. 1:16 refers to the author's unrivaled wisdom
- 3) Eccl 2:1-11 parallels Solomon's life (pleasure experiences & his extensive building activities)

B. Anonymous--A sage in Jerusalem named Qoheleth:

1) Qoheleth is a feminine participle which lit. means- "one who convenes a congregation." It is used in 1:1f., 12; 7:27; 12:8-10. This word denotes both a title, as well as a proper name. Often titles were eventually used as proper names.

2) The author used the implied Solomonic authorship as a literary device; He wanted to portray his views as Solomon's to gain a hearing among the wisdom school.

3) Eaton (Tyndale) understands the work to be that of a disciple of Qoheleth who is presenting the words of Qoheleth. This is apparent when one observes the switch from first to third person in 1:2; 7:27; 12:8.

## Structure

A. Question of Structure. One of the major questions concerning Eccl is whether there is a unity in the structure of the book or is it a hodge-podge of collected thought.

B. Answer to Structural Question. Many scholars see no overarching or inner coherence in the book. A. G. Wright has provided the sketch of inner coherence within the book ("The Riddle of the Sphinx- The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth." Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (1968): 313-34; CBQ 42 (1980): 35-51).

## Genre

1) Proverbs: a) instruction (7:9), sentence (7:1ff); b) "better-proverb" --composed of 2 forms of conduct (4:6,9,13); c) "anti-proverb" --to challenge conclusions (1:18).

2) Reflection: characterized by observation of thought. . . "I said in my heart" (1:16-17). . . "I know" (3:12,14) . . . and "I gave my heart to know" (8:16).

\*\*\*the sage saw order & made it into a rigid system while Qoheleth saw sovereignty & limitation and thus attacked the system!

3) Rhetorical Questions: usually negative (2:22)

4) Allegory: 12:2-7

## Outline

Introduction: The Problem Stated (1:1-3)

The Problem Demonstrated (1:4-2:26)

1. The Futility of the Cycles of Life (1:4-11)
2. The Futility of Human Wisdom (1:12-18)
3. The Futility of Pleasure and Wealth (2:1-11)
4. The Futility of Materialism (2:12-23)
5. Conclusion: Enjoy and Be Content with the Providences of God (2:24-26)

God's Immutable Plan for Life (3:1-22)

1. He Predetermines the Events of Life (3:1-11)
2. He Predetermines the Conditions of Life (3:12-13)
3. He Judges All (3:14-21)
4. Conclusion (3:22)

## The Futility of the Circumstances of Life (4:1-5:20)

1. Evil Oppression (4:1-3)
2. The Emptiness of Hard Work (4:4-12)
3. The Emptiness of Political Success (4:13-16)
4. The Emptiness of Human Religion (5:1-7)
5. The Emptiness of Human Riches (5:8-17)
6. Conclusion (5:18-20)

## The Futility of Life as a Whole (6:1-1)

1. Wealth Cannot Satisfy (6:1-2)
2. Children Cannot Satisfy (6:3-6)
3. Labor Cannot Satisfy (6:7-12)

## Counsel for Living With Vanity (7:1-12:8)

1. Counsel in View of Man's Wickedness (7:1-29)
2. Counsel in View of God's Inscrutable Providences (8:1-9:18)
3. Counsel in View of the Uncertainties of Life (10:1-20)
4. Counsel in View of the Aging Processes of Life (11:1-12:8)

## Conclusion (12:9-14)

## **Purpose of the book**

### **A. To Refute Wisdom Abuses.**

1) Wisdom had degenerated into: a) generalizations about life, b) oversimplifications, c) oblivious to injustice, toil, and death.

2) Vanity of vanities is a rebuttal to human pride and its accomplishments. The expression is grammatically intense, emphatic, and inclusive. (1:2; 12:8).

### **B. To Reassert God's Rule.**

1) God cannot be ultimately understood (Eccl. 3:11, 11:5). The box we put God in is usually a coffin. If we think we can understand God and manipulate him, then we destroy the biblical concept of who God is.

2) Zimmerli maintains that the overall purpose of the book was Qoheleth's attempt to show the wisdom school that they were not all-powerful especially in light of time and death. Neither one of these elements could man ultimately understand. They are in the hand of God.

### **C. To Reassure Troubled Man.**

Qoheleth's many questions about life drove him back to God. It is possible to live and even flourish apart from some of the answers we are born to crave. Ecclesiastes is a book about living in tension and trust. The advice of Qoheleth is to enjoy the simple gifts given to all men by God. His warning to the overachiever and success oriented is that ultimately man's accomplishments are "vanity and striving after the wind."

# Song of Solomon

Title: "The Song of Songs," used to say -- this is the best and grandest of all the songs. Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The book is also called "Canticles," which comes from the Latin Vulgate (V).

Canonicity: While there are several reasons given for the book being included into the Hebrew canon, (allegorical interpretation or liturgical interpretation, neither of which took hold until after Jamnia), it is more likely that the Song of Solomon reached canonical status for other reasons:

- ① Solomonic authorship,
- ② Popularity,
- ③ Desacradizes sexuality and thus a polemic against the fertility cults, and
- ④ Corrective to asceticism

Authorship and Date:

A. **Authorship:** besides the title of the work, there is no indication of authorship. Most scholars admit that the title could be understood in a variety of ways. The collection perhaps began with Solomon, but was continually edited until after the Exile. Yet the text states in 1:1 that the book is "the song of songs, which is by Solomon." Many scholars say the titles and superscriptions were added later.

B. **Date:** While in times past scholars have looked upon various pieces of evidence which reflect a late date (relative pronoun, Aramaic words, Greek and Persian loanwords/3:9; 4:13), it is perhaps best to set the date back to the time of Solomon based on commonalities between the Song and Egyptian love poetry which flourished ca. 1300-1100 B.C.; single word parallelisms (2:15; 6:8); an emphasis on Tirzah in parallel with Jerusalem in 6:4 would not be the case after the time of Omri. Actual date in conjunction with Solomon, about 965 B.C.

Interpretations:

A. **Allegorical:** "to speak of another." It is an extended metaphor. However, though this was the approach of Jewish and early Christian interpreters, there is no evidence that the book was meant as an allegory. It has factual sites, people, and events.

B. **Dramatic:** in two Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus, AD 400), the names of the characters are written in the margin, this suggests the idea that the writing is a drama between Solomon and the Shunamite maiden. Others such as Pope argues that it reflects the rituals of Canaanite religion. \* However, this argument is weak because we have no drama to compare it with, it does not have a sequential plot (no resolution of tension).

C. **Love Songs:** most commentators agree that the book is a collection of love poetry that glorifies the beauty of sexual love.

**Outline:**

The Union

1<sup>st</sup> cycle 1:2-17

2<sup>nd</sup> cycle 2:1-17

3<sup>rd</sup> cycle 3:1-4:7

4<sup>th</sup> cycle 4:8-5:1

The Reunion

5<sup>th</sup> cycle 5:2-6:10

6<sup>th</sup> cycle 6:11-8:4

Conclusion 8:5-14

**Theological Implications:**

A) Sexuality is a gift of God. The united love of the man and woman in Song of Songs is, as Barth perceived, a fulfillment of the creation covenant and a reenactment of the love of the first man and the first woman. It is not a parable; but it is, for the believer, a part of the testimony of the power of grace over sin and the flesh. The man and woman of God should no more be slaves to sensuality than they should be gluttons, but the enjoyment of creation and the fulfillment of the drive toward one another is no sin.

B) Sex is legitimate between two people who are married. The Song presents sexuality as a good thing protected by marriage and not as an evil thing made permissible by marriage. The latter attitude has been all too common in Christendom. As H. Gollwitzer has written, "No one church has done better than another; all have operated under the prejudice of a Neoplatonic hostility to the body and to sex."

C) To be enjoyed. A neglected point in the study of Song of Songs is that it is not only the similarities but also the *differences* between the Song and ancient Egyptian, Canaanite, and Mesopotamian texts that bring out its meaning. The Song of Songs contains no aphrodisiac prayers for success in love. Also, contrary to the cultic and funerary interpretations, it has no allusions to love play among the gods. It never implies that the sexuality of the couple has any cultic or ritual significance or that their joining promotes the mythical powers of fertility in the renewal of nature. Simply put, **the act of sex is not a religious act**. Ancient pagans would have by no means shared this view. The cults of the ancient world, from India to the Mediterranean, promoted sexuality as a ritual of religious devotion. Some medieval Jews also considered marital relations a duty on Sabbath eve.

# Hebrew Prophecy

## A. Definition

1) prophecy- Prophecy is the proclamation of God's Word which includes judgment and hope to mankind.

2) prophet- A prophet is an individual chosen by God to deliver His message to men.

## B . Designations

1) seer- two words are used in Hebrew- *roeh* and *hozeh*. Both of the terms mean- "to see, perceive, or understand." This is not so much ascribing the manner in which God's word was received as it does the ability of the prophet to discern God's message for man. What comes to the prophet in a vision? The word of God (Gen. 15:1; Lam. 2:14; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1). *roeh* is the word for "shepherd."

2) prophet- comes from a word in Hebrew- *nabi*. There is some debate as to the meaning of the word. There are two basic theories- 1) Passive sense- "one who is called" or 2) Active sense- "one who is speaking." Two texts favor the active sense- Ex. 6:28-7:2; Deut. 18:18-22. There is no essential difference between seer and prophet (1 Sam. 9:9) .

## C. Interpretation

1) extremes to avoid- there are two- 1) that the prophet only spoke of the future, and 2) that they were nothing more than rational predictors with no supernatural insight.

2) types to expect- a) literal fulfillment: this is where the prophecy is given and fulfilled down to the detail (ex. of Jezebel 1 Kgs. 21:23; 2 Kgs. 9:31-37) ; b) conditional fulfillment- based upon whether or not the people will respond (Jer. 18:7-9; Ex. of Jonah); c) dynamic fulfillment- multiple fulfillments, better to understand this foretelling as promise, rather than prediction since promise emphasizes relation of God and people. The promise includes several fulfillments that will lead to the ultimate fulfillment: Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.

Biblical Prophecy was distinctive to the prophecy in the ANE in 4 ways:

- ① addressed the whole nation
- ② focused on attitude, not ritual
- ③ contained a moral imperative
- ④ had far reaching implications of the actions called for

Things the prophets had in common:

- ① hearts were devoted to God
- ② strong sense of calling
- ③ messengers
- ④ forth-tellers
- ⑤ fore-tellers
- ⑥ Creative individuals

# ISAIAH

In many ways the book of Isaiah is a book of superlatives. Of all the books of the OT, Isaiah is perhaps the richest. Its literary grandeur is unequalled. Its scope is unparalleled. The breath of its view of God is unmatched. So Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the NT. It is not merely a monument to Hebrew religion but a word from God for us of 21st century.

## Title

The title, "The Book of Isaiah," is dictated by the opening words (1:1), "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz." No other author is mentioned in the book, Isaiah is specifically named again in 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2; 37:6,21; 38:1,4,21; 39:3,5,.

## Authorship

☞ Talmud credited Isaiah as author and Hezekiah's scribes as compilers (Prov. 25:1). Traditional rabbinic and Christian interpretation had viewed the book as the work of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz (1:1) who lived in Jerusalem in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.

☞ Modern critical view began with Doderlein (1775) who felt two works are involved. Eichhorn said 40-66 is some other author than Isaiah. Duhm and Marti held that 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah composed 40-55 in Babylon prior to 538 B.C. and 3<sup>rd</sup> Isaiah was 56-66 in Palestine after 538 B.C. For a time interest in Isaiah was seemingly less in the book's message than its unity and compositional history.

☞ Arguments for division of authorship:

1) Settings points to close of Babylon captivity as the time of the composition of 40-66. Isaiah 40-66 does not predict the exile as something future; rather, it is already assumed. In 40-66 the prophet speaks to the exiles (40:1), but Jerusalem is in ruins (44:26). This is not the case in 1-39.

2) Stylistic consideration: 1<sup>st</sup> half terse and compact, 2<sup>nd</sup> half much more lyrical, flowing, and impassioned.

3) Theological difference: Messianic king of 1-39 replaced by the concept of the Servant in 40-66. Other gods acknowledged in 1-39 (Henotheism) while the Yahweh is the most powerful, but existence of other gods is denied in 40-66 (monotheism - no God but Yahweh). Isaiah 1-39 is said to emphasize God's majesty, whereas Isaiah 40-66 emphasizes His universal dominion and infinitude. The Remnant is dominant in 1-39, but in 40-66 few instances of a remnant mentioned.

4) Prediction: generally assumed that prophets did not predict the names of specific people. Therefore the naming of Cyrus in 44:28 & 45:1 suggests a post exilic date.

**Conservatively** -- The two belong together, since the former is the preparation for the latter, and the latter is the completion of the former. **Arguments for one Isaiah:**

1) Style is questionable: who is to say that Isaiah did not have new visions of God that demanded a difference in style? If one were to compare, the gospel of John and Revelation, one would think that there were different writers. Style is now considered a weak argument.

2) Prediction: the prophets did get specific at times (1 Kgs. 13:1ff. Mic. 5:2). There's nothing to rule out this ability; however, some scholars believe that 45:1 is an interpolation.

3) Unity: No ancient manuscript gives any indication that the book of Isaiah existed in two or more parts. The complete Isaiah manuscript found among the Dead Sea scrolls (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>) makes no break at the end of ch. 39. There is a three-line gap between chapters 33 and 34. Based on this gap Brownlee suggested that there is a deliberate effort to arrange the book as a two-volume work in which chapters 1-33 (volume 1) are parallel to chapters 34-66 (volume 2). His suggestions have been followed by R. K. Harrison. Others suggest that Isaiah was thought to be a unified work by the 2nd. cent. BC because of the apparent break in the middle.

### **First / Second / Third Isaiah**

The reason many scholars have become convinced that there was a second Isaiah is not because of certain alleged stylistic variations, nor because they do not believe in genuine predictions (such a suggestion is most unfair to C. R. North, to name but one scholar), nor even because Cyrus is mentioned in plain language, but simply because they can see the point of Is. 40-55 if addressed to Jewish exiles in Babylonia, but find it hard to imagine what the message of these chapters could have been to Isaiah's contemporaries, two centuries earlier.

### **Structure**

A. The first part of the book addresses issues of the immediate present and impending judgment on Israel (1-12). This portion is followed by an extended series of oracles focusing on judgment against foreign nations (13-35). Chapters 36-39 provide a narrative transition from the time of the Assyrian crisis to the concerns of later times (historical relating to the times of Hezekiah) and the exilic period. The remainder of the book describes future blessing for the people of God (40-66).

**Isaiah the man:** 1. name: means: "**Yahweh is Salvation.**"

2. occupation: besides the fact that he was a prophet, there are other roles that some scholars have suggested for Isaiah:

a. sage: this occupation was suggested because of Isaiah's use of words that were common among the wise such as: "wisdom," "understanding," "knowledge," as well as proverbs (1:3). However, using words does not automatically make Isaiah a sage.

b. priest: some suggest that Isaiah was a priest because of his vision in the temple; however, men of Israel were not strictly kept out of the temple -- only the holy of holies.

3. family: its generally accepted that Isaiah was from the upper class because of the ease of movement within the royal setting (7:3; 8:2; 36:1-38:8). He was married to a prophetess (8:3) and had two sons: A) Shear-jashub; "a remnant will return" and B) Maher-shalal-hash-baz: "speed spoil, hasten prey" The sons' names mirror the emphases of Isaiah's preaching: judgment and hope.

**Date -- 743-686 B.C..** This is the time period between the death of Uzziah and the death of Hezekiah. Therefore, Isaiah was in ministry for 57 yrs. Tradition states that Isaiah was martyred by Manasseh.

Politically: Isaiah prophesied during the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (733-32), the destruction of Israel (722) and the two invasions of Sennacherib (701/688 B.C.). These were dark days politically. (Pekah {Israel}, Rezin {Syria}, Ahaz {Judah})

Religiously: it was a time of terrible syncretism with foreign cults (Ahaz {Judah}) and major religious reform (Hezekiah). Isaiah rode the roller-coaster of Judah's religious life.

### **The Call of Isaiah** (6:1-13)

A. Perception of God: (vv. 1-4). The vision of God in the temple could have occurred during the coronation of the king - Jotham. While there, Isaiah had a vision of God's sovereignty (throne, Lord, lofty and exalted) and holiness (holy, holy, holy). The use of the three adjectives is the strongest form of the superlative in the OT. Perhaps, this gave Isaiah hope for the future.

B. Perception of Self (vv. 5-7) Seen in his confession: "woe -is me." The unclean lips could represent the idea that the lips betray the heart. The cleansing comes from a burning coal -- the cleansing of sin can really hurt!

### **Theological Message**

#### 1) God as the Holy One of Israel

A. When Isaiah received his call to prophetic ministry in the year that King Uzziah died, he saw the Lord seated, high and exalted, on his throne, surrounded by seraphs calling out "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Throughout the book, Isaiah's favorite designation for God is "the Holy One of Israel" (25 times in the book, 6 times in other books).

B. Isaiah is the one who actually points to the moral nature of holiness, citing “uncleanness” rather than “profaneness” (heathen, pagan practices) as the characteristic of sinfulness. Isaiah’s own experience, the recognition of his own sin and the acceptance of God’s cleansing, became the basis of Isaiah’s message to Israel (1:18).

C. From the outset of Israel’s national election, God’s command to His people was “Be holy as I am holy.” Isaiah recognized from the first moments of his call that this national mandate had not been realized in the life of Israel. The prophet lived among an unclean people who were without understanding, a people whose refusal to heed the prophetic message would bring destruction and deportation. Yahweh’s moral perfection would not be ignored by the nation with impunity.

## 2) God as Savior and Redeemer

A. Isaiah’s own name (Yahweh will save or Yahweh is salvation) reflects this aspect of God’s character.

B. Salvation is deliverance from foes and oppressors. God would deliver the nation from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition (734), from Assyria, and from Babylon. The Lord would vindicate Himself before the eyes of the nations by saving His people. Salvation is deliverance in the time of trouble and is to be a future time of blessing.

C. Salvation calls for a response of doing justice and righteousness (56:1).

D. Salvation is personal (“my salvation” 12:2), and refers to the city and the people who cry to the Lord.

E. Redeemer: Just as Yahweh had redeemed Israel from Egypt, so also He would redeem them from bondage in Babylon and restore them to the inheritance He had provided in Canaan. They had been “sold for nothing” and would be redeemed “without money” (52:3).

## 3) The Remnant Theme

The remnant is that group of people who survive some catastrophe brought about by God, ordinarily in judgment for sin. This group becomes the nucleus for the continuation of humankind or the people of God. This surviving remnant inherits the promises of God afresh. God destroys His people because of their sin. The very continuation of the nation would be threatened. They will be left like the stump of a fallen tree (6:13). Yet, new life will sprout from that stump, a righteous Branch from the Davidic line (4:2-3, 11:1-16). This purified remnant will make Jerusalem a “city of righteousness, the faithful city” (1:21-26).

#### 4) The Spirit of the Lord

The Spirit of God gives wisdom and understanding; the Lord's servant, anointed by God's Spirit, responds by proclaiming good news (61:1). The Spirit of the Lord makes possible the announcing of the purpose of God. Where once God's Spirit was active in creation, in Isaiah, God's Spirit brings re-creation to a desolate land. Out of moral chaos the Spirit brings order and justice.

#### 5) God's Rule Over History

A. Isaiah's absolute monotheism. Yahweh's glory is the whole earth (6:3), therefore the other gods are nothing (2:8): They were no gods, but the work of human hands - wood and stone (37:19). When the great power of Assyria developed, the people of Yahweh puzzled whether Yahweh was weaker than the gods of Assyria and/or Babylonia. But Assyria was only a rod in Yahweh's hand to punish Israel. Yet God himself would soon punish Assyria for its arrogance and pride.

B. The universal nature and power of God's rule is presented in the second part of Isaiah. Yahweh is not only the protector and sustainer of his people Israel, but the controller of all nations. The Maker of Israel, Creator of the earth and the heavens, is also Maker of Cyrus. Cyrus would be His shepherd, who shall rebuild His city and free His exiles.

### God's Plan for Israel (Isa. 5:1-7)

Imagery in Isaiah of vineyards, roots, and branches are extremely common: 1) Israel is a vineyard (3:14; 5:1-7), 2) Israel's future remnant is a vineyard (Isa. 27:1-6; 37:31-32; 60:21), 3) Israel as a root (5:24; 11:10), 4) Messiah as a branch (11:1; 53:2). The common denominator in all of this imagery is that Israel was expected to bear fruit for God and to feed the nations. They failed to live up to God's expectations.

#### A) Preparation of the Vineyard: (vv. 1-2).

1) Intent of the Song ⇨ some scholars (Wild-berger) understand the song to be a message to the bride from the bridegroom through an intermediary. This hearkened back to an ancient custom. The bridegroom is Yahweh and the bride is Israel. However, it is perhaps better to understand the song as simply a complaint of Yahweh toward Israel that used the genre of love song (love song and law-court both used) to capture interest (OsWalt) The term "my beloved" is in the masculine before the wedding.

2) Intensity of the Sower ⇨ he digs or turns the soil for the prep of planting, he removes the stone. This is apparent since the country of Israel was covered with rocky soil. He then planted the "choicest vine." These are not ordinary grapes, but the choicest stock. In the two year period of waiting for the production of the grapes the sower builds a tower and wine press. In the end, his labor **does not pay off**. He ends up with "worthless ones." BDB links this word to a root that means "have a bad smell or stink." God ended up with sour grapes.

B. Failure of the Vineyard, (vv. 3-4). "And now" makes a turning point. He asks them for their opinions. Undoubtedly, many in the crowd perhaps shouted their answer. There is nothing more that you could have done. The obvious question to the rhetorical questions is nothing.

C. Judgment of the Vineyard (vv. 5-6). With characteristic intensity, this section begins with a Hiphil Cohortative: "now let me make you know." God is going to give up the vineyard to its inclination. He will remove the protection and allow the wild beasts to eat the grapes (cf. 5:26-30). The destruction of the people will be the nation of Assyria.

D. Explanation of the Parable (v. 7). God expected *mishpat* (justice), but received *mishpach*, "bloodshed." He also expected *tsadekah* (righteousness), but received *tsa-aka* (this word is the distressful cry of those who suffer from political or social violence (1:21-26)).

**God's Plan for Isaiah** (6:1-13). There is a question as to the position of chapter six within the book of Isaiah. There are two basic views to the position of the chapter within the book:

1) Some scholars (Fohrer, Kaiser, Wildberger), have suggested that the compilers of the prophecy had already put together chapters 1-5 and did not want to place the call narrative in front of them because it was originally part of a section that composes 6:1-8:18 -- an autobiographical section.

2) Other scholars (Ackroyd, Lebreich, Oswalt) understand the position of the chapter as crucial to the first twelve chapters of the book. Oswalt likens the chapter to a hinge: a conclusion to the first five chapters by showing the way out to Israel through repentance (Isa. 6:5-7); and an introduction to 7-12 which further explains the commission of Isaiah. Chapter seven showing the hardening that occurred with Ahaz and subsequently the judgment of God (10:33, 34; 6:13) and its hope (11:1-12).

A. **Confrontation with God** (vv. 1-4).

1) Risk: "I saw the Lord." The general thought was that to see God was to invite death (Gen. 32:20; Exod. 33:20).

2) Reverent: "sitting on a throne, Lord, lofty & exalted, Holy Holy Holy." All of these point to the vast difference of a Sovereign Holy God and man. The use of the three fold use of *qadosh* is significant, in that only God is the true holy one. Three repeats -- Strongest form of the superlative in Hebrew. Verse four mentions the smoke that continually filled the temple. This probably added to the mysteriousness of the theophany.

B. **Confession and Cleansing of Isaiah** (vv. 5-7).

1) Agreement: "Woe is me." Isaiah is seeing who he truly is and is agreeing with the decision of God in chapters 1-5 that he, as well as the nation deserved destruction. "Unclean lips" could refer to the idea that the lips betray the heart

or that the lips were unclean in the sense that neither the prophet or the people had been willing to do the work of a servant in bringing the world to a true knowledge of God.

2) Agony; "he touched my mouth." A symbolic act that took away the sin of Isaiah. It was a thorough cleansing because it cleansed "iniquity and sin." But it was only through the shedding of blood. Young conjectures that the altar from which the coal was taken was the altar of sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Lev. 16: 14-19, Heb. 9:22). In addition to this aspect is the pain involved. When God takes us away from a life of sin and iniquity it is sometimes a searing experience with a lot of pain and discomfort.

### C. **Commission of Isaiah** (vv. 8-13).

1) Judgment: (vv. 9-12). The message of Isaiah was the message of Judgment in the first five chapters! Vv. 9-12 describe the effect of Isaiah's ministry. His ministry would be a ministry of hardening which would result in judgment. Would God send such a message? Ex. of Israel in the Wilderness. (Numbers 14- the people rebelled after hearing the report of the spies- all but Joshua & Caleb will be allowed to enter the Promised Land). Isaiah asks "How long?" This is a question from a heavy heart. God's reply is until there is no one left in the land or until judgment is complete.

2) Hope; (v. 13). The LXX leaves out the last phrase, but the MT keeps it. The DSS reads *ashera* (*asherah*) for *ahser* (that, which). "Like a terebinth or like the oak of an *ashera* (becomes) a monument or a high place." Therefore, the DSS scroll understands the verse to be an indication of judgment. (See textual notes in WBC, p. 68-70). Nonetheless, it seems that the message of the passage is that hope will be found even within the burnt out stump of Israel.

## **Major Issue**

### **The Servant of the Lord**

A. B. Duhm separated certain passages, 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12, from the rest of chs. 40-55, and designated them as the "Servant Songs." Scholars are not in agreement over the extent of the poems. Duhm's view of these four "Servant Songs" portrayed the career of a historical individual earlier than or a contemporary with the prophet. Sometimes the "servant" is plainly Israel (42:8) or Jacob (44:1). Sometimes the servant is chosen for a mission to Israel and/or the world (42:1-4; 44:1-2; 49:1-6). Sometimes the servant is a great sufferer (50:4-6; 52:13 53:12). Who was this servant?

B. a collective group: The servant as the nation Israel or as the faithful remnant or as some other ideal representation of the nation.

C. a particular person (Zerubbabel, Jehoiachin, Moses, Uzziah, Ezekiel, the prophet Isaiah, a leper, Cyrus), or an eschatological figure (the Messiah or Jesus as Messiah). A third view is that the servant represented the king in a cultic celebration of the new year's festival in which the king portrayed the dying and rising God. The fourth theory is the "messianic" or the "fluid" theory. The messianic view sees the servant as a

future individual representative (perhaps of the Davidic line) who by suffering, would save his people.

D. the passages do not pin down to a collective or individual interpretation, instead they require both approaches.

E. Some believe that Cyrus of Persia is Yahweh's servant. But Cyrus is servant in concert with Yahweh's purposes for Israel.

F. The Servant of the Lord imagery can be represented by a triangle:

- 1) Nation: The bottom represents the entire nation of Israel, thus the servant of chs. 41-48.
- 2) Remnant: The middle portion represents the more faithful servant, whether interpreted as the righteous remnant or the prophet himself.
- 3) Suffering Servant: The apex represents the servant who perfectly serves his Lord. He is the true Israel, who fulfills to the utmost the will of Yahweh. G. Miller argued that the songs refer to the prophet himself and that their context reveals the conflict the prophet had with some of his fellow countrymen and with the leaders in Babylon.

### **Content of the Songs**

1) Isa. 42:1-4; probably referring to Israel (41:8-9; 42:1). The role of Israel in this song is to establish the rule of Yahweh in the earth quietly and patiently. It will finally be fulfilling the role that God intended.

2) Isa. 49:1-6: the identity of the servant is of major concern in this passage, because he is identified as Israel (v. 3) and yet distinct from Israel. His goal, however, is to restore Israel and to extend God's salvation throughout the earth (vv. 1, 6).

3) Isa. 50:4-9: the role of the servant in suffering for the faith in Yahweh will be a role model for Israel as she faces her task in the world, but it is also a foreshadowing of the sufferings of Christ in the NT. To be able to console others requires the discipline of discipleship and the suffering of life.

4) Isa. 52:13-53:12: this is the most quoted of the songs in the NT and the most noted. It describes the death of a man for the sins of all men. In the end, one finds a shadowy portrayal of resurrection. This is the primary pericope for the concept of vicarious suffering in the OT.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS AND PEOPLE OF THE 8TH CENTURY B.C.

- \* Isaiah prophesied 742-700 B.C.
- \* 811-784 B.C. Adad-Nirari III, last strong leader of Assyria, the world power of Isaiah's day.
- \* 783-745 B.C. 3 weak Assyrian rulers: Shalmanesar IV. Ashur-clan V. Ashur-nirari V.
- \* 786-746 B.C. Jeroboam II, king of Israel: Strong military, control of politics, consolidated power. Israel prospered --> SECOND GOLDEN AGE.
- \* 783-743 B.C. Uzziah king of Judah – Prosperity, age of separation from Assyria, existential theology interpreted prosperity as God's blessing, many sins yet still blessed -- divorced theology from practice. Isaiah sent by God to say, "Repent or die!"
- \* 745-727 B.C. Tiglath-pileser II – Strong military, consolidated power, good administrator/ politician.
- \* 727-722 B.C. Shalmanesar V – Hoshea refused to pay tribute; Samaria surrounded and taken. Assyrian records say Sargon, he (Sargon) probably changed them.
- \* 722-704 B.C. Sargon II
- \* 704-681 B.C. Sennacherib

God Sent at Minimum **four (4)** prophets in this era.

- Amos 760 B.C. to Jeroboam of Israel
- Hosea 750-725 B.C. to Jeroboam of Israel
- Isaiah 742-700 B.C. to Manasseh of Judah
- Micah 735-700 B.C. to Manasseh of Judah

Jonah prophesied in day of Jeroboam II ca. 780 B.C. (2 Kings 14:25). Many date him post-exilic. Legend says Isaiah hid in a log, & Manasseh sawed it in two.

## MAJOR CRISES DURING THE MINISTRY OF ISAIAH

### 1) Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis: 735-732 B.C.

Syria and Israel joined against new Assyria strong man Tiglath-pileser III. Syria was trying to rebuild; Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) formed an anti-Assyrian coalition and tried to recruit Ahaz (Judah), who refused. Rezin and Pekah marched to Jerusalem in 735 B.C. Ahaz could (1) trust God or (2) join Tiglath-pileser III. Ahaz of Judah joined Tiglath-pileser III. Tiglath-pileser III destroyed Damascus and all of Syria; he subjugates Israel (unvoluntary) as well as Judah (voluntary). After Tiglath-pileser III destroyed Syria, king Hosea of Israel killed Pekah and aligned with Tiglath-pileser to spare Israel. In Isaiah ch. 7, God sent the prophet Isaiah.

## 2) Siege and Fall of Samaria: 725-722 B.C.

Crisis of Israel. Hoshea of Israel refused to pay tribute to Assyria. Shalmeneser conquered the northern kingdom, though Sargon II was given the credit. Samaria was well fortified and was geographically easy to hold. It took Assyria three years to overcome by way of siege (ramps).

## 3) Ashdod Rebellion: 713-711 B.C.

Ashdod was a strong Philistine city-state encouraged by Egypt to revolt against Assyria. This was a common policy of Egypt and Babylon to weaken Assyria. The chapters of Isaiah 18-20 predict the failure of Cush's (Egypt) rebellion. Judah, Edom, Moab, Ethiopia, etc. all invited into coalition. Hezekiah obeyed God and did not join the coalition. Judah was spared. In 712 B.C., Sargon II crushed rebellion.

## 4) Sennacherib Crisis 701 B.C. (Some say 688 B.C.)

Hezekiah withheld tribute from Assyria. Merodach-baladan of Babylon sent letters to Hezekiah. Ch. 39 happens before ch. 36 (702 and 701 B.C. respectively). Reasons for this shift: Envoy sent by Merodach-baladan. Chapters 1-39 end with Babylonians seeing the treasure of Israel; by switching the chronology Isaiah recalls this incident and points to future events. Assyria marches against Jerusalem and almost takes it. The angel of the Lord fights for Jerusalem and sends Sennacherib home with 185,000 less troops!

# JEREMIAH

## Title & Authorship

The title is from the prophet that the book centers around. Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, wrote down the oracles (36:4,18 and 36:32 after Jehoiakim burned the first scroll) and probably compiled the biographical information about Jeremiah.

## Textual Variants of the Book of Jeremiah

- A) LXX is approx. 1/8 (2700 words) shorter than the MT
- B) Order of parts of the book is different:
  - 1) Oracles against foreign nations
    - a. MT — chapters 46-51 are found in the LXX after 25: 13
    - b. Order of the nations addressed in the oracles is different -- MT is geographical (from west to east): LXX is political strength (strongest to weakest)
  - 2) Comparison of order in MT vs. LXX (see handout)
- C) DSS (Qumran) — both LXX and MT traditions were found
- D) Conclusion
  - 1) Essentially the same (theologically) and both are reliable
  - 2) MT expands the shorter ideas/actions of the LXX

**Characteristics of Jeremiah the man:** We know more about the personal life of Jeremiah than any other prophet in the OT. The exact meaning of his name is uncertain, possibly Yahweh founds, or Yahweh exalts, or Yahweh throws down.

1) Son of a priest, Hilkiah (not the same Hilkiah, the high priest, who found the "book of the law" in the Temple in 622); descendant of Abiathar, high priest banished by Solomon (1 Kgs. 2:26) and of Eli (1 Samuel 1ff).

2) Probably a priest himself, though the book does not say (if he was a priest, or at least a priest in training: he was probably 30 when he was called, just like Ezekiel).

3) He was from Anathoth, a few miles NNE of Jerusalem

4) Forbidden to marry, rejected by family and friends (a very lonely ministry w/o the usual support system).

5) He possessed a deep-seated personal honesty, especially in his relationship with God (e.g., 15:17ff; 20:7).

6) He was courageous in carrying out his convictions; he suffered greatly at the hands of his enemies (e.g., 11:21-23; 20:1-6; and 38:6-13). Throughout the classical prophets, God addressed idolatry as the greatest sin committed by His people. Shouldn't we be addressing this same sin in our preaching today?

7) He demonstrated a passionate hatred of morally or spiritually unsound conduct; idolatry (chs. 2-5); social injustice (5:26-29); false prophecy (5:30ff).

8) He combined a sensitivity to his people's sufferings (14:17) and a gracious humanity (had some friendships - Baruch, Zedekiah).

9) His hope for the future, a hope grounded not in glib optimism but in the sovereignty and loyalty of God (ch 32).

10) He was called to stand up against the flow of public opinion.

11) He prophesied to Judah from 627 to 582/581 BC, through the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, and Governor Gedaliah. He died in Egypt where the assassins of Gedaliah carried him.

### **broad Outline:**

- 1 - 45 Prophecies relating to current history and domestic matters
- 46 - 51 Oracles against foreign nations
- 52 Historical appendix

\*\*\*The prophetic material in Jeremiah is not arranged in chronological order; the outline above suggests a thematic arrangement.

**Jeremiah's call** Chapter 1:4ff Jeremiah's call (the word of the LORD came to him many times during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; He was "called upon" many times in his ministry.

- 1) v 4&5 divine call
- 2) v6 his response: I don't know "speaking," I'm too young to communicate
- 3) v7 God's rebuttal: you don't have to think of clever things to say, just do what I say. In other words, I don't want your ability, just your availability.
- 4) v 8&9 God's deliverance: He is present with Jeremiah and He puts His words in Jeremiah's mouth.

v 10 The thematic verse of the oracles given to Jeremiah; God wants Jeremiah to do the following things:

4 destructive actions: pluck up, break down, destroy, and overthrow

2 constructive actions: build and plant

5) v 11ff God gives Jeremiah two visions: the first in verses 11 & 12 promises internal security and the second (13-19) promises external security

a) v 11 What are you seeing, Jeremiah? an almond tree (*shaqed*).

v 12 Correct, I am watching (*shoqed*) to assure that My word is fulfilled; a Hebrew wordplay intended to assure Jeremiah that he is not alone.

b) v 3-19 What do you see again? A boiling pot pouring to the south: Judah will soon be laid waste by armies from the north (the Babylonians), but God will fortify Jeremiah so he can stand against all the people of Judah and preach God's word.

✚ **Application for us today:** v 19, if we are called by God to ministry, God will be with us and deliver us if we are faithful to Him.

Remember that Jeremiah was also historically conditioned (Assyria, Egypt, and finally Babylon were the world powers) Included in 1:13-19 are 7 "foe from the north" passages (chapters 4, 5, and 6); all armies would attack from the north, because they would follow the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and then turn south to Palestine (there is only desert between Babylon and Jerusalem).

In the same year Jeremiah began to prophecy (627), Ashur-Banipal, the last strong king of Assyria, died and Nabopolassar began his reign in Babylon.

In 612, Nabopolassar captured Nineveh, capital of Assyria

In 605, at the Battle of Carchemish, Nabopolassar (his son, Nebuchadrezzar, was his field general) defeated the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt

Facts about the foe from the north:

- ① used to discuss the agent of YHWH's coming judgment on Judah
- ② when it is described, it is always neutral or negative, never in positive terms
- ③ never identified with a specific nation
- ④ the foe's visit results in death and devastation on a great scale
- ⑤ the emphasis of the foe passages is "God judges sin"
- ⑥ 11 passages in chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15, 46, and 47 that have been used to "identify" the foe

Nations that are considered to be the foe: Scythians (until recently because 1) Not an ancient nation 5:15, 2) Did not use chariots 4:13 3) Did not use siege machines to capture cities 4:16; 6:6 4) Did not fight in regular ranks 6:23, and 5) Were not lovers of Jerusalem 4:30), Assyria, Syria, Greece, and Babylon.

Jeremiah and Josiah were friends, but Jeremiah felt the reforms didn't become internalized. So he was instructed to write the New Covenant (31:31-34). Because the people disobeyed the Mosaic Covenant, God will write His law on their hearts, not on stone; then everyone will know Yahweh. He will be their God and they will be His people.

### Jeremiah's attitude toward the Deuteronomic reform of Josiah

A) No biblical evidence that Jeremiah advised Josiah

B) Ch. 21; 37:3; 37:17; and 38:14 — showed that one of Jeremiah's chief roles was advisor to the king.

C) Ch. 11:1-8 — demonstrates his support for spiritual reform (argument against this chapter: written late by Dtr)

D) View of H.H. Rowley and J. Skinner

- 1) Initially supportive
- 2) Later opposed: because the reforms became meaningless rituals w/o simultaneous change of heart; for Jeremiah the reforms gave rise to false hope (that performing the rituals ensured God's deliverance and protection) and he wanted no part of that false message

E) Why was Jeremiah virtually silent on Josiah's reforms? TWO POSSIBILITIES:

- 1) Concern that his initial prophecies had not been fulfilled

2) after the Dt reforms, he separated himself spiritually and physically from the reforms and reformers

3) From H.H. Rowley -- No textual reason exists for the assumption that Jeremiah was opposed to the cult and the temple sacrificial system throughout his entire life. In fact, Jeremiah's unswerving belief in YHWH and in the oracles given him by YHWH are the motivation for changing his view of the reforms. Precisely because he knew YHWH to be faithful and true, Jeremiah changed his view from one who supported the reforms to one who stood in opposition. Jeremiah understood better than any other person in his day the true nature of religion, and he saw clearly that what had begun as sincere reform had degenerated into a new form of idolatry.

#### Jeremiah has been called the most honest pray-er in the Bible:

He called God a "deceitful brook" because he felt that God had deserted him like a wadi (seasonal creek/river bed, dry most of the time) in the desert (15:18)

Some other prayers:

- 11:18-23 He called for God's protection when his enemies plotted to kill him
- 12:1-5 He questioned God's justice because the wicked prospered
- 15:10-21 He wished he had died at birth/asked God to punish his persecutors and fight for him; God said: return to me and I will restore you
- 18:19-23 Wanted exact, stern punishment against his enemies
- 20:7-8 He must preach the word of the LORD even though it brings him reproach and derision
- 32:17-25 Wonders why he was told to buy land from a cousin who didn't own the land anymore

#### CHRONOLOGY OF THE LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH

- 640 Josiah begins to reign in Judah
- 627 Jeremiah called; Ashur-Banipal, king of Assyria, died; Nabopolassar of Babylon began to reign
- 622 Book of the Law found bringing on Josiah's reforms
- 612 Fall of Nineveh
- 609 Josiah killed by Neco II at the Battle of Megiddo; Egypt takes control -- Neco places Jehoahaz (puppet king) on the throne. On the way back from being defeated by Babylon, he removes Jehoahaz and places Jehoakim on the throne.
- 605 Battle of Carchemish (First deportation)
- 604 Nebuchadrezzar began to reign in Babylon
- 597 Jerusalem conquered; 2nd (Great) Deportation 10,000+ taken from Judah
- 592 Call of Ezekiel
- 586 Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
- 550 Ascendency of Cyrus
- 539 Defeat of Babylon
- 538 Decree of Cyrus: the Israelites may return to Judah and Jerusalem

# LAMENTATIONS

## TITLE

The English title comes from the Vulgate subtitle: These are the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah; the LXX and Greek both use the title: wailings or dirges (Gr. threnoi and Latin, threni); the Hebrew name is *'ekah* from the characteristic word of lament (how! or alas!) (chapters 1, 2, and 4 begin with this word)

## DATE AND AUTHOR

between 586 and 530 BC; early tradition attributes the book to Jeremiah, but the text is silent; we do know that the author is

1. an eyewitness to the tragic events in 586
2. a profound theologian who grasped the deeper causes of the terrible judgment as well as their painful symptoms
3. a poet of great skill
4. a true patriot who mourned his nation's passing and yet he knew that such death was the only hope of new life

The historical narratives of 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52 give the facts about the destruction of Jerusalem; Lamentations captures the emotions.

## STRUCTURE

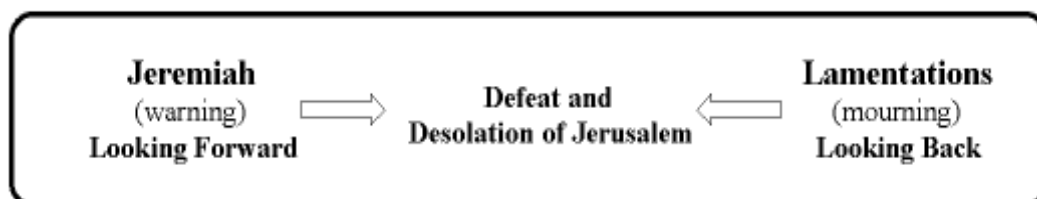
All but the last chapter is an acrostic.

## OUTLINE (by chapters; five poems, one per chapter)

1. The misery of Jerusalem
2. The anger of YHWH
3. The example of personal response
4. The magnitude of judgment
5. The cry for salvation

## FOUR LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS:

1. No place on earth is inviolable especially if the people disobey God (1:1)
2. Choosing not to consider your destiny and future in choices is to risk the possibility of losing everything (1:9)
3. God always judges sin (2:17)
4. There is always a source of hope, and the source is always God (3:21-27)
5. Seek the Presence of God and not the place of God (5:21).



# EZEKIEL

- ❑ His name means "strengthened by God"
- ❑ He was of the priestly line of Zadok, the son of Buzi
- ❑ He is not mentioned in any other OT book
- ❑ He is not directly cited in the NT, though Revelation has similar imagery
- ❑ No evidence that Ezekiel ever performed any priestly functions before deportation
- ❑ Has been called the "Father of Judaism" because of the influence attributed to his emphasis on worship in Israel
- ❑ Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon in 597 with Jehoiachin and was called to ministry/prophecy in 593/2 in the fifth year of his exile (1:1-3)
- ❑ He was one of the three (also Jeremiah and Daniel) "captivity prophets"
- ❑ His last dated prophecy was in 571 BC

Ezekiel the man:

- ❖ He was married and had his own home (24:18)
- ❖ The elders of Israel went to his home to consult with him
- ❖ His wife died during his ministry, but he was forbidden to mourn for her (24:16-18)
- ❖ He prophesied about 20 years
- ❖ No information of the end of his ministry
- ❖ Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah, yet neither mentions each other

## BROAD OUTLINE (by chapters)

|       |                                                   |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1-24  | judgment on Judah and the reasons given           |
| 25-32 | judgment on the nations                           |
| 33-39 | prophecies of restoration of the nation of Israel |
| 40-48 | the vision of the new city and the new temple     |

The book is full of Ezekiel's experiences:

- 👉 He shut himself up in his home, bound himself and was smitten dumb (3:24-26)
- 👉 Told to lie on his right side and then his left side for 430 days (4:4-8)
- 👉 He ate bread prepared in an unclean manner (4:12)
- 👉 He had to shave his head and beard (5:1)
- 👉 He lost his speech (24:27)
- 👉 God intended Ezekiel to be a sign to Israel in the experiences of his life (24:24)

## CHAPTER ONE The Vision of God vv. 4-28

"like" is used 13 times and "likeness" is used 8 times.

Remember that the priests' basic theology was that God is transcendent and that no one person can see God and live. So "such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh."

Ezekiel could only see the appearance of the likeness of Yahweh in the midst of the storm (v 4) and this vision of the LORD knocked Ezekiel flat to the ground; he could only stand when God raised him up by the Spirit/spirit.

\*\* a basic assumption is that God reveals Himself to man in a way that is meaningful to that man.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- 1) "In the 30th year" probably refers to Ezekiel's age; 30 years old was that age at which a priest began his priestly duties (v 1)
- 2) Ezekiel is in exile by the river Kebar in Babylon (v 1)
- 3) He "saw visions of God" (v 1); remember that poetic language uses grandiose language (hyperbole, etc.)
- 4) The visions occur in 592 BC (this is about the time that Zedekiah is making decisions that will lead Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple -586)
- 5) The hand of God = the power of God (v 3)

### OUTLINE OF THE VISION

#### I. Vision

##### A. Four Creatures 1:4-21

- 1) Mystery ➡ God is filling Ezekiel's mind with wonderful images; Ezekiel is portraying the incomprehensible.
- 2) Mobility ➡ (wheels within wheels), w 13-19; Ezekiel is asking "where is God?" since he is in Babylon; God shows Ezekiel that He is everywhere, that He is not limited to the temple in Jerusalem.
- 3) Majesty ➡ describes the four creatures ✓ 4 in Hebrew numerology is creation (or man) and 3 is the number for God; therefore,  $4 + 3 = 7$  (the perfect number). This then suggests a majestic view of the creation in its entirety, i.e., the best of creation.

The four faces (1:10) are symbolic: man symbolizes wisdom; the lion symbolizes dominion; the ox/bull symbolizes might; and the eagle symbolizes freedom the four creatures went wherever the spirit would go (v 12)

#### B. Firmament (1:22-25), a hammered-out shield; the firmament is above the four creatures ➡ v 25 -- the four creatures obey a voice from above the firmament

- 1) Separation ➡ the firmament is used to show the separation between the Creator and the creation), just like Genesis 1
- 2) Service ➡ the stretched-out wings of the four creatures
- 3) Sensitivity ➡ the four creatures hear and obey the voice from above

### C. Throne (1:26-28)

- 1) Ezekiel's priestly nature is seen again: he sees the transcendence of God (God is way up there)
- 2) God's appearance is awesome
- 3) God is in control (the throne is symbolic of His sovereignty)

### THE CALL OF EZEKIEL (2:1-3:3)

- ① directed by God (He called Ezekiel and charged him to preach the word regardless of the response of rebellious Israel)
- ② empowered by the Spirit (Ezekiel was enabled to stand)
- ③ focused on people (rebellious and hard-headed)
- ④ internalized by the prophet (he ate the scroll: completely filled with the word of God since the scroll was written on the front and back, 2:10-3:3)

### THE COMMISSION OF EZEKIEL (3:4-27)

- A. 3:4-11 God tells Ezekiel to realize two things about his task:
- 1) Importance — hearing, internalizing and communicating God's word.
  - 2) Difficulty — people who so desperately need the message have set themselves against it.
- B. 3:12-15 Ezekiel was led to rely on the movement of the Spirit to aid him so he could find the people wherever they are.
- C. 3:16- Ezekiel was called to relay a warning call as a watchman: looking out for the safety of his people, not just sitting there and watching the people sin
- D. 3:22-27 **Success in ministry** is in
- ① perceiving the glory of God
  - ② being empowered by the Spirit
  - ③ obeying God's commands

→ **SUCCESS IS NOT FOUND IN THE PEOPLES' RESPONSE OR LACK OF IT** ←

\*\*\*\*This commission is appropriate for anyone called by God to any ministry\*\*\*\*

### The **Message of Ezekiel**

- ① At first, not well received. Later the prophecies took hold and the nation was purged of its idolatrous tendencies.
- ② Ezekiel is chiefly concerned with the sovereignty and glory of the Lord, though the boisterous claims of men had sequestered this truth.
- ③ He stressed the divine government of the universe.
- ④ He ministered to all 12 tribes with a twofold purpose:
  - ① remind them of the sin that brought this judgment.
  - ② encourage and strengthen their faith by prophecies of future restoration and glory.
- ⑤ He uses more symbols and allegory than any OT prophet.
- ⑥ He is the most neglected prophet because of the difficulty interpreting his figurative and visionary prophecies.
- ⑦ He explain the manner of his inspiration process more than any other prophet.

- ⑧ He uses several styles -- visions, symbols, parables, allegories, and prophetic discourses by way of both poetry and prose.

### Content of Ezekiel's Prophecy

A. Vision of God: (1:4-28). This vision which has captured the imagination of many is sometimes overlooked as to its significance → which is to assure Ezekiel that God is with the people in exile. Notice the fact that the vision comes from the North (1:4), the same direction from which the exiles ascended to Babylon. God has followed His people here. Everything about this vision emphasizes the sovereignty of God (a concept that the people were in danger of losing). The creatures faces symbolize that God is sovereign over all of life, the wheels full of eyes represent God's awareness, throne, and designation as the "son of man."

B. Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-14) This vision begins with despair (very dry bones). God asks if the bones can be revived, and Ezekiel says only God knows the answer (nice move). Ezekiel begins to prophesy and the bones are brought to life by the Spirit of God (vv. 9-10). What is the meaning? It is given in vv. 11-14. This vision was to rekindle hope in the people that had lost hope. Notice the emphasis upon "my people." in vv. 12-13.

C. River of Life: when God returns to the rebuilt temple, there will flow from it a life giving stream (47:1-12). The difference between God's presence and God's absence is life. The desert will blossom and the salt sea will come to life. (cf. Rev. 22:1-5). The important thing is that the presence of God (regardless of how its communicated) is needed for life to occur.

D. City of Presence: (48:35). The name of the city of Ezekiel's vision is "The Lord is there." That is what is most needed and wanted. (Rev. 21). That city which Ezekiel described was an ideal heavenly city that John also envisioned.

→ All of these sections emphasize the need to have GOD reigning in society or one's personal life. This was the message that disheartened exiles needed to hear. Put God back into your lives, and then do what God called you to do → extend the rule of God in the world.

### INTERPRETIVE ISSUE †

Much has been said about the "God of the OT" is a vengeful and judgment oriented God. This perspective is subjective and presumptuous. Yahweh does not delight in the execution of punishment or judgment. Moses pleaded with the Israelites to choose life that "you may live." God desired blessing for His people (Dt. 30:15&16). Ezekiel reiterates the same message (18:23; 32, & 33:11)! **Yahweh is the same...**

33:11 – Say to them, "As I live!" declares the Lord God, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back (*shuv* 2x) from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?"

# Daniel

## A. The Man:

- 1) Name: means "God is my judge." He was from Judah. Captured by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. (1:1, 6). He continued his service until at least 520 B.C. (10:1)
- 2) Position: trained for three years to be part of the royal court. The training included: Sumerian, religion, and basic skills.

## B. Date of the Work:

- 1) Traditional: 6th cent. B.C. Based upon the events of the book.
- 2) Maccabean Date: (164 B.C.). Reasons: 1) part of the Writings, which closed around 200 B.C., 2) Aramaic sections (use to be considered incontrovertible evidence), 3) Detailed prophecies (11:3-4) of Alex, the Great, as well as the Abomination of Desolation. Which people thought was Antiochus Epiphanes IV (167 B.C.).
- 3) Modified Traditional: (450 B.C.) Maccabean date is impossible because of finding Daniel at Qumran. R. K. Harrison believes that the book was written soon after the visions. Later it was edited (1:21; 6:28).

## C. Structure:

It is a bifid (divided into 2 equal parts). Chapters 1-6 is historical and 7-12 is apocalyptic.

## D. Apocalyptic:

- 1) Definition: Hanson defines apocalyptic eschatology as: "a religious perspective which focuses on the disclosure of God's sovereignty, which the visionaries failed to translate in terms of plain history."
- 2) Development - apocalypticism grew out of a disenchantment with reality. It is an expression of faith that transcends history. Apocalypticism flowered between **200 B.C. -100 A.D.** It was during this time that the Jews were governed by Greeks and Romans. They were looking for a day when God would overthrow the kingdoms of men.

- a) Persian Rule: 539 - 333 B.C.
- b) Greek Rule: 333 - 142 B.C.
  1. Alex, the Great: 333 - 323 B.C.
  2. Ptolemies: 323 - 198 B.C.
  3. Seleucids: 198 - 142 B.C.]
- c) Hasmonean Rule: 142 - 63 B.C.
- d) Roman Rule: 63 - (Pompey)

Apocalypticism is like prophecy, and yet different. They speak the same language, but with different accents. Rowley says, that apocalypticism is the child of prophecy. The differences include:

- ① more symbolism,
- ② more cosmic terms (God breaks into history, not working through history),
- ③ medium of revelation is primarily dreams and visions, not "Thus saith the Lord."

3) Distinctives:

- a) Kingdom of God will break in above history, not within it. This suggests despair with reality.
- b) Messiah is no longer a "Son of David," but a "Son of God."
- c) Dualism: this Age (evil) and the age to come (blessed). See Mk. 4:19.
- d) Divine transcendence: Dan. 2//Rock cut without hands.
- e) Angelology
- f) Resurrection of the Dead

E. **Message:** (Nebuchanezzar's Dream (2:31-45) and Daniel's Vision (7).

1) Neb's Dream: Neb. has a dream, but forgets it. The wise men could not tell him his dream, so Neb. decides to kill them. Daniel prays and God gives him the interpretation. The dream is about the future (w. 28-29). It was a large statue with a gold head, silver trunk, bronze abdomen, and iron/tile feet. The stone is thrown and destroys the statue.

Interpretation: (w. 36-45). The interpretation is clear to Daniel, but not to us. The first empire is Babylon and the last one is the kingdom of God, but 2-4 is another story. The kingdoms are probably: Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek.

2) Daniel's Vision: This vision goes along with Neb's dream. Some interpreters understand the four beasts as Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The ten horns represent the revived Roman Empire (European Common Market). The little horn is the Antichrist (Rev. 13:5) who will persecute believers for 3 and 1/2 years - He will be overthrown by God.

The other interpretation is that the beasts represent Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. The little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes IV who suppressed Jewish laws and religious practices from 168 -165 B.C. (He may be the Abomination of Desolation (11:31ff.) This was in Dec. 167 B.C. → This instituted the Maccabean revolt which was led by Mattathias and his son Judas Maccabeus. Eventually, Jews won independence and cleansed the Temple in Dec. of 165 (Basis of Hanukkah).

3) Fiery Furnace: Even in Babylon, God is still Yahweh. Daniel's God is a force that has greater power than Marduk.

# The Twelve Minor Prophets: A Synopsis

|           |                          |                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hosea     | 750-725 BC               | Judgment for spiritual prostitution                                                                                                                                       |
| Joel      | 837 or 400 BC            | Judgment and restoration                                                                                                                                                  |
| Amos      | 760-750 BC               | Judgment because of social injustice                                                                                                                                      |
| Obadiah   | c. 920, 845, 790, or 587 | The destruction of Edom through God's judgment                                                                                                                            |
| Jonah     | c. 780 or 400-300 BC     | Teaches God's universal love                                                                                                                                              |
| Micah     | 735-700 BC               | Tell of coming captivity and certainty of restoration (doom and promise)                                                                                                  |
| Nahum     | c. 612                   | To proclaim and defend the destruction of Nineveh                                                                                                                         |
| Habakkuk  | Before 605 BC            | God is in control and can be trusted though He may appear to be inactive and uncaring                                                                                     |
| Zephaniah | Between 640 and 626 BC   | Gives an interpretation of the day of the Lord                                                                                                                            |
| Haggai    | 520 BC                   | Addresses religious indifference of the people reflected in failure to rebuild the Temple                                                                                 |
| Zechariah | 520-518 BC               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>① Inspire the rebuilding of the Temple</li><li>② Point to the Messiah as the true Temple</li></ul>                                  |
| Malachi   | 460-450 BC               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>① Explain non-fulfillment of promises of restoration</li><li>② Re-establish confidence in the coming of the Lord Messiah.</li></ul> |

# Hosea

## A) The Man:

- 1) name: means "he has rescued/delivered/saved."
- 2) occupation: though there has been many suggestions (baker/7:4ff; farmer/2), there is no conclusive evidence of his occupation. One should see Hosea as educated: a) knowledge of Israel's past, b) grasp of politics, c) imagery is well-chosen.
- 3) origin: Doesn't say, but most scholars assume that he was a native of N. Israel.

## B. Times:

- 1) Date of Prophecy: 750-722 B.C. There are two reasons for this: ❶ Hos. 1:4> Zechariah was the last king of Jehu's dynasty. Zechariah's last year was 753 B.C ❷ Hos. 7:11; 9:6> these two verses can be interpreted as referring to Hoshea's vacillating policies from 732-724 B.C. Therefore, he prophesied during the last 28 yrs. of Israel's existence.
- 2) Tenor of Times: his ministry lasted during the days when Assyria was dominant and Israel was its vassal. Ultimately, he lived during the days of the Syro-Ephramitic War (733-2 B.C.).

## C. Message: Hosea's message is tied to his relationships to his family. (Hosea 1-3).

- 1) Through relationship with Gomer:
  - a) **initial marriage**: There are four views concerning the interpretation of 1:2:
    - ❶ God actually commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute,
    - ❷ Prostitute is a synonym for a Baal worshipper. She was a prostitute spiritually,
    - ❸ Gomer was initially pure, but now looking back; Hosea realizes that she had a tendency to stray,
    - ❹ allegorical. It seems that #c fits the story line better. Israel was initially pure with a tendency to wander from God in adultery (2:14-15).
  - b) **continual love**: (Chapt. 3) After Gomer strays, God tells Hosea to buy his wife back as a symbolic gesture of what God will do to Israel in v. 5. Notice that the requirements of Hosea illustrate the tough love of God that blocks our way to sin, but opens the way to love God.

2) Through Children: each child's name is symbolic: (1:2-9)

a) **Jezreel**: (v. 4). His name is enigmatic. It means "God sows." This is usually a symbol of fertility, but here it is the sentence of death on the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of his reign. This prophecy came true with the invasion of Tiglath Pileser III.

b) **Lo-ruhamah**: (v. 6). "Not pitied." Compassion is the love stirred in the emotions by the need or dependence of another. God is saying that He is going to no longer pity Israel. He is giving up the role of father.

c.) **Lo-Ammi**: (v. 8). "Not my people." This phrase comes from the covenant at Sinai (Exod. 6:7). God is breaking off the covenant promises made at Sinai .

\* It is interesting that after these symbolic names of Judgment, God then says that a day will come when all of this judgment will be reversed (1:10-2:1). Chapters 4-14 are a hodgepodge of oracles not interrelated; except around the twin poles of judgment and hope. In the end, there is hope held out after judgment for Israel. (Hosea 14).

**Theme and Purpose** are demonstrated through the steadfast or unfailing love of God for Israel in spite of her continued un-faithfulness. Through Hosea's marital experience, we see the heart of a loving and compassionate God who longs to bless His people with the knowledge of Himself and all that knowing God intimately can mean to man. In keeping with this purpose, the theme of Hosea is a strong testimony against the Northern Kingdom because it had been unfaithful to its covenant relationship with the Lord. This was demonstrated by the widespread corruption in moral life both publicly and privately. Thus, the prophet seeks to get his countrymen to repent and return with contrite hearts to their patient and ever-loving God. This is presented from the standpoint of Yahweh's love to Israel as His own dear children and as His covenant wife.

# Joel

## A. The Man:

- 1) Name: *yoe/* means: "Yahweh is God," It is a common name in the OT. At least a dozen individuals are so designated.
- 2) Hometown : We know little of the man's background. It does seem likely that he was from Jerusalem. This is based upon the many allusions to Judah (6x), Jerusalem (6x), Zion (7x), and the temple (5x).
- 3) Occupation: based upon his emphasis upon temple ritual some scholars have conjectured that Joel was a temple prophet (A. S. Kapelrud, Allen). However, there is not any explicit evidence for this assumption. It is, however, a possibility.

## B) The Date: (3 major views)

- 1) Late 9th Century: during the reign of Joash/ Jehoash in Judah (837-800 B.C.). Evidence often pointed to is the lack of reference to Assyria or Babylon. The simple reason is that they were not in existence. That is why only the traditional enemies of Judah are mentioned: Egypt, Edom, Philistines, Phoenicians.
- 2) Late Preexilic Date: 600 B.C. This view is favored by Kapelrud and LHB. The primary basis is a theological similarity between Zephaniah's and Joel's view of the Day of the Lord as a day of darkness. (Zeph. 1:15; Joel 2:2). Kapelrud sees the two prophets as contemporaries.
- 3) Post-Exilic Date: this view favors a date ca. 400 B.C. There are several reasons for this view: 1) the reference to Greeks in 3:6 best fit a Persian time period, 2) no reference to a king fits the time frame, and 3) quotes and allusions to other books. This date is favored by R. K. Harrison.

## C) Unity of the Book:

The book of Joel has in juxtaposition historical, and apocalyptic elements. This has caused some scholars to suggest that the book is a composite of sources and authors.

- 1) Argument for Division: Early critical scholars understood the first part of the book as preexilic and the later part as postexilic. Duhm argued that Joel was the author of the book up to 2:17, and of that section 1:15; 2:1b-2a, & 11b were the work of an apocalypticist.

2) Argument for Unity: most scholars today understand that the book is a unity in content and style. The primary argument is that the locusts of the first half are a precursor to the Day of the Lord. The second half then describes in detail the Day of the Lord.

It should be remembered that the prophets often combined a contemporary problem with an eschatological hope. This understanding of the prophetic mindset underlies the correspondence found between the two halves of the book by J. A. Thompson (IB).

#### D) The Message of The Book.

Most scholars divide the book up into two parts: 1) 1:2-2:27 which deals with the contemporary locust plague and 2) 2:28-3:21 which is eschatological blessing for Judah and judgment on the nations.

##### 1) **Retribution of God** (1:2-13; 2:1-11).

a) Agents: there has been a debate as to the identity of the locust in Joel. Some commentators believed them to be symbolic of an invading army. However, there is no evidence that locusts were ever symbols of an army (JNES 14 (1955): 52-55). It is more likely that Joel is speaking of literal insects (2:25).

b) Purpose: their purpose is to judge the people. They will destroy the crops (1:4-12). This will interrupt the *raison d'être* ("the reason or purpose that justifies a thing's existence") for four groups of people: alcoholics, people of Judah, priests, and farmers.

Notice in 2:2, there is not only a parallel to Zeph. 1:15, but there is also a veiled allusion to Exod. 10:14. Allen states that Joel is painting a religious nightmare. Now Israel is the enemy that God will judge. The majesty of the language is that Joel is weaving the current with the cosmic dimensions of the Day of the Lord (gloom, darkness, as compared to a locust plague).

##### 2) **Repentance of the People** (2:12-17)

a) Intensive: (vv. 12-14) Joel begins this section on repentance by repeating the plea of God for decisive change, "NOW." The repentance included the emotional, as well as the volitional. It is based upon the character of **your** God. However, Joel does not guarantee that God will turn. He protects God's sovereignty.

b) Extensive: (vv. 16-17). Everyone is to participate; from elders to nursing infants. Even newlyweds were expected to be involved, though normally exempted from military, and other types of duties the first year (Deut. 24:5). The priests also were to voice a communal lament to God (v. 17).

### 3) **Restoration of the People** (2:18-32)

Like shifts in the lament psalms, the shift in mood from lamentation to deliverance is evident in vv. 17-18.

a) Materially: (vv. 18-27) there is an emphasis here on the replenishing of the food and land (vv. 19, 21-24, 26). There will be the destruction of the locusts (v. 20). There will be no more shame (vv. 19, 26, 27). This could be the key that connects this section with v. 17.

b) Spiritually: (vv. 28-32) there is a democratization of the Spirit (cf. Num. 11:29), which is possibly alluded to in Gal. 3:28. In the last days, all people will have the Spirit. This was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts. 2:16-21). There is also a demonstration of God's wrath among the nations (vv. 30-32). All of the signs in the earth and sky are indicators that God has invaded the physical world (Rev. 6:12). The judgment of the nations is continued on in chapter three.

### E) Theological Implications of Joel

- 1) God gives plenty of warnings before judgment falls.
- 2) People of God must interpret and warn the sinful that judgment is about to fall.
- 3) God can *nacham* (repent) concerning judgment in light of repentance. However, sometimes He may not.
- 4) God's restoration is earthly and spiritual.

# AMOS

## A. The Man:

Name: Amos' name comes from a verb root which means "to carry a load." The load that Amos carried was the judgment of God upon the Northern kingdom.

### Occupation:

- a. **Shepherd: (1:1).** The word for shepherd refers to a person who was a small cattle raiser or breeder.
- b. **Fig pincher: (7:14)** Figs were a favorite fruit of the poor. The sycamore fig had to be pierced 3-4 days before harvest so that it would ripen with a sweet taste. Some believed that Amos was a traveling agricultural specialist.
- c. **Prophet: (7:14-15).** This text tells us that Amaziah, the priest of the king's sanctuary at Bethel thought that Amos was trying to be a member of the entourage of prophets who attached themselves to the king. (See 1 Kings 22) Amos denies any idea that he was a professional prophet that prophesied all the time. He states that God called him to be a prophet, not to fill his stomach or billfold.

**Origin:** Amos is from Judah. His hometown is Tekoa. It is located about 6 miles S. of Bethlehem and 15-16 miles S. of Jerusalem. It is located on a hill 2700ft. high, looking over the vast Judean wilderness. Besides being a place noted until today for shepherding, it was also known in that day for its wisdom (cf. 2 Samuel 14 where Joab brought a wise woman from Tekoa).

## B. Historical Background

**Date:** 765-755 B.C. This dating of Amos' years of prophecy is based on several reasons. 1) The two kings mentioned in Amos 1:1, **Jeroboam II** (793-753 B.C.) and **Uzziah**, king of Judah (792-740 B.C.). Certainly, a mid-eighth century B.C. date fits the reign of both kings. 2) The time frame of two years before the earthquake would fit within the 6 yr. period (cf. 8:8; 9:1-6). 3) A solar eclipse in 763 B.C. may be hinted at in several passages (4:13; 5:8; 8:9) .

**Developments:** Several things were going on during this era in Israel and in the world abroad that should be understood in order to paint a backdrop to the time period of Amos' prophecy.

- a) Time of Peace: (2 Kings 14:23-27) when one looks upon political horizons, one finds a time of peace during the ministry of Amos. During this period, all the previous great kingdoms of the world were in decline:

Egypt, Assyria, & Syria. There was peace with Judah to the south. In fact, some scholars argue this on the basis of the military exploits of both Jeroboam on the E. of the Jordan and Uzziah against the Philistines. It was not until the rise of the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser in 745 B.C. will this unusual state of affairs change.

**Time of Prosperity:** There is every indication, both archaeologically and textually, that the time of Amos' prophecy was a time of extensive prosperity. The confidence of the N. Kingdom (6:1, 8, 13) came from the idea that because we are at peace and prosperous, therefore God must be blessing us!??

1) Archaeologically: Excavations at Tirzah in N. Israel demonstrate that in the 10th cent, there was a uniformity of houses in terms of size, but in the 8th cent, there were large expensive homes and shacks.

2) Textually: There is every indication of prosperity and the resulting social sins: ① selfish indulgence (6:4-7), ② mistreatment of the poor (5:11-13), ③ greed (8:4-6), & ④ A lack of justice for the deprived (5:12-13). \*\*\*\*\*In the face of the social sin, the religion of the day flourished – **BEWARE MINISTERS** (4:4; 5:5, 21-24)!!

**The Message of Amos** Motto: Judgment of God on Israel. (5:24)

**Oracles of Judgment:** (1:2-2:16) The oracles were judgments of God against the nations. Notice that the level of suspense is raised by style two ways: 1) numerical pattern: 3/4, the fourth sin spilled the cup of God's wrath, 2) the movement around the points of the compass until it reaches Israel. The reason for the judgment was treating humanity without compassion (1:13).

**Day of Judgment:** (3:1-6:14) The Day of the Lord was the day in which God acted on behalf of his people for salvation, but here Amos says the expected salvation will be judgment. Its going to be a day of death; "woe" comes from a funeral context and a day of darkness: which is a metaphor for trouble (1 Sam. 2:9; Job 5:14).

**Visions of Judgment:** (7:1-8:3; 9:1-4) There are five visions: 1) Locusts, 2) Fire, 3) Plumb line, 4) Summer Fruit, 5) God by the Altar. In the first two, Amos prays and God repents, but in the last three, God begins the vision and the judgment will come. God judges because Israel is crooked (plumb line) and rotten (fruit). This calls for utter destruction (9:3-4).

# Obadiah

Meaning of his name: Servant of Yahweh

BROAD OUTLINE (remember this is only one chapter, like Jude, so the numbers represent verses)

1-14 Yahweh's messages against Edom

15-21 The Day of the LORD

## Possible Dates:

- 1) Just after the fall of Jerusalem ✓
- 2) Post-exilic period ca. 400BC

## THE PURPOSE OF OBADIAH

- 1) Yahweh condemned the pride and cruelty of Edom because of their harsh treatment of their brothers in Judah during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (verses 12-14).
- 2) Obadiah addressed the godly remnant and assured them that Yahweh would ultimately triumph over all of the nations in the coming Day of the Lord.
- 3) Yahweh is the Sovereign Lord over all nations.

## RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

- ❶ God will hold us accountable for how we treat our brothers.
- ❷ Human wisdom is always foolishness with God.
- ❸ God will ultimately right the wrongs done by people against people, restore just possessions (v 19ff), and establish His rule on earth.

# Jonah

**Name:** his name means "dove" or "pigeon." There is no evidence that his name bears any symbolism as tied to the book. Jonah is also mentioned in 2 Kgs. 14:25, which reports his prophecies concerning the expansion of Israel under Jeroboam II.

**Origin:** according to 2 Kgs.14:25, Jonah is from Gath-Hepher. This city lay within the tribal borders of Zebulun, some three miles northeast of Nazareth.

**Date:** According to Bright, Jeroboam II reigned from 786-746 B.C. We also know that Nineveh fell to Babylon in 612 B.C. This time span is much too large for the ministry of the prophet. More specifically, in the first half of the 8th century, Assyria was going through a series of turmoils :

- ① military losses
- ② famine
- ③ domestic uprisings
- ④ earthquake and eclipse
- ⑤ dreaded omens to Assyrians added to the already troubled times

All of these events point to the general time frame when Asshur-Dan III (773-756 B.C.) was in power. Therefore, it would be safe to assume a time frame within the first half of the 8th century.

## Message:

### A. Jonah's Disobedience. (1:1-3)

1) Shocking: there are two stock prophetic phrases associated with the call of a prophet: 1) "the word of the Lord came . . ." and 2) "Arise, go to Nineveh ..." (1 Kings 17:8). The shock is that the prophet arises to flee rather than go. In addition, the reason for his action is not clear until 4:2.

2) Senseless: notice that the phrase "to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" appears 2x. This of course suggests what was in the mind of Jonah. How can one flee from a universal God? Stuart in WBC suggests that Jonah may have thought that God revealed Himself only through his prophets, in the land of Israel. Therefore, one could go where no prophets were and away from Israel and escape confronting God (Isa. 66:19).

## B. Nineveh's Obedience. (3:5-10)

1) Nineveh Repents: there is a typical pattern being followed in the text: ① threat of disaster, ② acts of penitence, and ③ divine intervention (1 Sam. 7:3-14; Jer. 36; Joel 1:1-2:27). This is a theology of repentance. Yet the amazing circumstance was the accursed Ninevites who actually repent!

It was an intense repentance! There was fasting, sackcloth, and turning from violence (cf. Nahum) and wickedness. The repentance was practiced by the rich/poor -- man/beast.

2) God Repents: (v. 10) God chose not to punish Nineveh. Later of course the people of Nineveh went back to their evil ways and were judged. (612 B.C., see Nahum).

## C. **Jonah's Displeasure.** (4:1-11)

Anger or its lack (God) is a major theme of this section. Notice the parallel:

- ① Jonah is angry (vv. 1, 8),
- ② Jonah prays for death (vv. 3, 8), 3)
- ③ God asks the question: Do you have a right to be angry?" (vv. 4, 9).

\*\*\*\*These parallels point to the extreme inconsistency in the values of Jonah. He has more compassion for a plant than a people! The whole reason Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh is captured in Jonah 4:2: he knew God would *nacham* (repent) if the Assyrians would heed the warning! Strikingly, Jonah could envision the Ninevites repenting whereas, most times, God's own people would not turn back (shuv)!

1) Angry at God's Compassion. (vv. 1-4). Jonah suggests that God's nature (Exod. 34:6ff. & Jonah 4:2) was the initial reason **why** he attempted to flee from his duty. Jonah is so angry, he would rather die than live and face the compassion of God. (1 Kings 19:4ff.) One pastor called the prophet, "sick, sad, and sorry."

2) Angry at the Gourd's Death. (vv. 5-11). God gives Jonah a lesson that he will never forget. God through the use of a plant, worm, wind, and sun showed Jonah that he loved his gourd more than God's people, the Ninevites (Nineveh in Hebrew means "great to God"). Some commentators suggest that 4:5 was originally after 3:4, but was moved in order to add more emphasis to the lack of compassion of Jonah over against God.

☉ How many evangelists would be **elated** that people responded to their message? How about the possibility of the whole town repenting and turning toward God? What great joy would fill the hearts! Jonah, the prophet of God is absolutely beside himself!

# MICAH

## A. **Micah:** the Man:

name: "Who is like Yahweh?" This name asks a rhetorical question. The answer: No one is like Yahweh. Little is known about the author of this book other than what can be learned from the book itself and from Jeremiah 26:18.

hometown: Moresheth which is 25 miles SW of Jerusalem, near the stronghold of Lachish, an international trading town. Foothills of the Shephelah which had deep valleys, rich soil, well-wooded, and was the route of invading armies. This gave Micah a love for the farmers and poor, as well as an understanding of international affairs.

B. **Date**: prophesied during the reigns of Jotham (742-735), Ahaz (735-715), & Hezekiah (715-687). This allows 55 yrs. of ministry. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, & Hosea. Micah 1:10-16 refers to Sennacherib's march to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. \*Jer. 26:18 speaks of his prophesying during Hezekiah's reign.

C. **Background**: a) politically: Assyria was dominate. Major events: Syro-Ephramitic War, and invasions of Sennacherib (701, 688).  
b) religiously: syncretism; under Jotham and Ahaz, but reform under Hezekiah possibly at the preaching of Micah (Jer. 26:18-19).  
c) socially: bribes (3:11), theft (2:1-2), & violence (3:10).

## Message:

The book can be divided up into three sections: (1-2, 3-5, 6-7). Each section begins with judgment, but ends with hope.

## A. **Calling the Nations to Trial** (1:1-2:13) (*rib* – “covenant lawsuit”) – read 2:1-5

1) Judgment: The judgment of God falls upon Samaria because of her idolatry (vv. 5-8), while the judgment of God upon Judah is primarily because of social sins (2:1-11). They stay up working on evil plans (vv. 1-2). The plans are to covet and take the poor's land.

2) Hope: (2:12-13) God in the last days will save a remnant of the people and lead them as a Shepard/King. No longer will He be the judge.

## B. Calling the Leaders to Trial (3:1-5:15)

1) Judgment: the leaders (judges and prophets) are judged. The judges are cannibalistic in their denial of justice and eating up the poor (3:2-3). The prophets preached on the basis of gifts (v. 5). This is going to lead to the overthrow of Jerusalem, as well as the Temple (vv. 11b-12) cf. Jer. 26:1-19.

2) Hope: in the last days there will be a New Zion: where peace and prosperity will dwell (vv. 3-4). There will also be a New David who will Shepherd his people (5:2-5).

## C. Calling the People to Trial (6:1-7:20)

1) Judgment: (6:1-8) Here God becomes judge, prosecuting attorney, and plaintiff. This is a lawsuit brought by God against the people. The people ask God what He requires to satisfy the suit (vv. 6-7). There is a progression of costliness: 1) yearlings, 2) rams/oil, 3) firstborn son. God answers (v. 8) with a classic statement which is the Eph. 2:8-9 of the OT. **He wants relationship not simply sacrifice.**

2. Hope: (7:18-20). Micah ends with a play upon his own name. "Who is a God like You?" This allows Micah to assure the people that God is a God of compassion who delights in forgiveness (Ps. 103:12).

## Theme and Purpose:

The Book of Micah reflects how the people had failed to live up to the covenant stipulations God had made with Israel in which there would be blessing for obedience (Deut. 28:1-14) and cursing for disobedience and eventually cast from the land of promise (Deut. 28:15-68). Micah was called to expose the injustice of Judah and declared the righteousness and justice of Yahweh. Though the people could not see it, Yahweh was just in disciplining them. Micah indicts Israel and Judah for sins like oppression, bribery among the judges, prophets, and priests, and for covetousness, cheating, pride, and violence (not a "holy" list!). Of course, this discipline on the nation demonstrated His love for them and that He would restore them.

# Nahum

## A. The Man:

1) name: "Yahweh is comfort." This was true for Judah, but not for Nineveh.

2) hometown: Elkosh (1:1). There is no agreement as to where this place is, some options are: ❶ Capernaum: "village of Nahum.", ❷ Elkosh: 25 miles N. of Nineveh on E. side of the Tigris (perhaps Nahum was an exiled Israelite native), ❸ unknown village in Judah (because of his concern for Judah).

3) date: this is one of the few prophecies that can be dated with some accuracy. Two events described gives us the two extremes of date for the prophecy: ❶ Fall of Thebes (3:8-10) which was taken by Assurbanapal in 663 B.C. and ❷ Fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.). If this is after the event, then sometime after 612, but if before prior to 612.

## B. Message:

1:2-8 is an acrostic poem that gives the theological reasons for understanding the destruction of Assyria and Nineveh. The reason given is that God is a God of Justice and Vengeance. God's vengeance is mentioned 7x in vv. 2-3. God's patience is limited toward sin.

The rest of the book is a graphic portrayal of God's wrath on Nineveh. The reason for the apparent enjoyment of God's wrath can be explained:

- ❶ the personal feelings of the writer
- ❷ the vindication of God's justice
- ❸ the intense hatred for sin
- ❹ understanding the war practices of the Ninevites (their way of "hanging")

The Israelites needed to know that this situation was God's vengeance, not theirs.

Nahum **1:2** A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful.

The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.

**3** The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

What a different response of Nineveh here in contrast to the message of Jonah!

Look at 2:2, then 2:11-13: let God be the One who unleashes judgment – be careful in how you deal with people! We will answer...

# Habakkuk

## A. The Man:

1) name: there are two possible meanings to Habakkuk's name: ① "to embrace." or ② from the Akkadian word "garden plant." Since Habakkuk was probably from Jerusalem, then the first is the better of the two possibilities.

2) profession: since it is a little unusual for a prophetic book to make it a point to identify the author as a prophet, some scholars have suggested that Kabak-kuk was actually part of the prophetic guild in charge of temple music (1 Chron. 25:1-8). There are several reasons for this assumption: 1) musical notations in chapter three (vv. 1, 3, 19), & 2) legend identifies Habakkuk with the Levi tribe.

3) date: most understand that the prophecy occurred between 605-597 B.C. 605 being the end of the Assyrians at Carchemish and the rise of the Babylonian nation. This would be during the reign of Jehoiakim, who reversed the reform efforts of Josiah. This would suggest that the identity of the wicked in vv. 2-4 is Judah.

## B. Message:

The book can be broken into three parts:

- ① 1:1-2:5 - Habakkuk's questions
- ② 2:6-20 - Habakkuk's woes
- ③ 3:1-19 - Habakkuk's prayer

### The Question of Theodicy

a) **Is God deaf?** (1:2-4), Habakkuk saw the sins of his society and wondered why God turned a deaf ear to him. Wickedness seemed to prevail (v. 3) and God didn't appear to be paying attention.

b) **Is God blind?** (1:12-2:1) After God tells him that the Babylonians will be His instrument of judgment.

The answer to both of these: **NO** Faith is the answer!

Habakkuk's response to God as He spoke to him and he understood: ab. 3:16a "I heard and my inward parts trembled (lit. "liquefied within myself"), at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble."

# Zephaniah

## A. The Man:

1) name: "Yahweh hides." Could suggest that his family remained hidden or protected by God during the reign of Manasseh (687-642 B.C./2 Kgs. 21:1-18).

2) family: many scholars suggest that the Hezekiah mentioned in 1:1 is the king of Judah. More genealogical information is given concerning Zephaniah than any other prophet. One should note that the "iah" in the name was indicative of the "family loyalty to Yahweh." Zephaniah was the great, great grandson of Hezekiah and a cousin of Josiah.

3) background: the date of his ministry was prior to the Josianic reform (1:2-6) because of the prevalent idol worship. The reform of Josiah began around 622--discovery of the law in the Temple. Therefore, Zephaniah preached between 640-622 BCE. His preaching is highly likely to have begun the reform movement of Josiah.

B. **Message**: the essence of Zephaniah's message was the coming "Day of the Lord." The idea is used explicitly 15x in the prophecy. The day is coming because of idolatry among the people. The imagery used is horrifying:

- ① Sacrifice is to be offered (1:7b-II) and the victim is Judah!
- ② Search will be conducted (1:12-13)--God will be looking for men to judge!

The message of Zephaniah ends with another day (3:9-20) in which God will save and restore his people to himself.

# Haggai

MEANING OF HIS NAME - my feast or my festivity

DATE OF HIS MINISTRY/PROPHECY -- first of the postexilic prophets and first Scripture of the post-exilic period; due to Haggai's identification of all of his prophecies occurring in the second year of Darius, we can positively date Haggai to a four-month period, August - December, 520 BC; Haggai and Zechariah both prophesied in Jerusalem at the same time

BACKGROUND -- 539 BC, Cyrus captures Babylon (beginning of the Persian Empire)  
538 BC, Cyrus allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem, only a fraction in Babylon return  
536 BC, the Jews had laid the foundation for the Temple, but had quit the construction; this is the context of Haggai's prophecy

BROAD OUTLINE --

|         |               |                        |
|---------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1:1-15  | August 520:   | Now or never           |
| 2:1-9   | October 520:  | Take heart and work    |
| 2:10-23 | December 520: | Promise and Prediction |

## FOUR MESSAGES

- 1 1:1-11 call to finish the temple, known as the Second Temple
- 2 2:1-9 God assures the people: "I am with you"
- 3 2:10-19 dialogue between Yahweh and Haggai: work on the Temple does not sanctify the people; rather their sin desecrates the Temple; if they will repent, God will increase their harvest
- 4 2:20-23 message about the end times

## THE POSTEXILIC PERIOD

Formation of the Canon -- during the Intertestamental Period, the Torah and the Prophets of the Hebrew canon were completed

**Diaspora Judaism and the Synagogue** -- During this time, Jews lived in Palestine, Babylon, Egypt and other places. Synagogues were places of prayer and worship for people who no longer had access to the Temple. Even Jerusalem had synagogues by NT times.

**Political Scene** -- Under the Persians, Judah was part of the satrapy - Beyond the River (see Daniel) - with a governor but no king. After Alexander the Great, the land came under the rule of one group of his successors known as the Seleucids. Later the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) overthrew the Seleucids and Judah had self-rule from 142-63 BC. The Romans then claimed Palestine for Rome and allowed for a limited kingship (Herod the Great and his descendants). In AD 70 Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple.

**Sectarian Judaism** -- Judaism developed with many sects, from 7 to 12 by the first century BC. There was not just one form of Judaism.

# Zechariah

MEANING OF HIS NAME -- Yahweh has remembered

DATE OF HIS MINISTRY/PROPHECY -- 520-518 BC (from 1:1 and 7:1); the date of chapters 9-14 is less certain (the book does not date these oracles); most scholars date these chapters between 480-332 BC, depending on their view of one author or multiple authors.

## OUTLINE

|          |                                                          |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:1-6    | Prelude: The Covenant Still Stands                       |
| 1:7-6:15 | The eight visions                                        |
| 7-8      | Zechariah's messages prompted by the question of fasting |
| 9-14     | The two oracles                                          |

## THE EIGHT VISIONS

- 1 A patrol of the whole earth reports 1:7-17
- 2 The nations meet retribution 1:18-21
- 3 Jerusalem has a divine protector 2:1-13
- 4 The high priest reinstated 3:1-10
- 5 Divine resources for the high priest and the prince 4:1-14
- 6 Evil meets retribution 5:1-4
- 7 Jerusalem is purified 5:5-11
- 8 God's patrols encompass the earth 6:1-15

## THE TWO ORACLES

- 1) Chapters 9-11: Triumphant intervention of YHWH; His Shepherd is rejected
- 2) Chapters 12-14: Final intervention of YHWH and the suffering involved

## APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE -- Chapters 9-14

Apocalyptic literature had a different view of the world than prophetic literature. The latter gave the sense that the world could be salvaged by obedience to God. But apocalyptic literature said the world always was and always would be evil and would only be cleansed by the end of time; it was a much harsher view of the world than prophetic literature.

# Malachi

MEANING OF HIS NAME -- my messenger (same word as angel); hence some scholars doubt whether there was an historical prophet name Malachi and believe this book has an anonymous author.

DATE OF HIS MINISTRY/PROPHECY - the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple has been built and the similarity between Malachi and Nehemiah on mixed marriages suggest they were contemporaries, thus 450 - 433 BC.

## BROAD OUTLINE

|         |                                                       |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:1     | The heading                                           |
| 1:2-4:3 | Six oracles                                           |
| 4:4-6   | Concluding exhortation: remember the Torah and Elijah |

## CONTENT OF THE SIX ORACLES

(the book is in a question and answer format, the people are constantly questioning God's actions and motives):

- ❶ 1 :2-5      A privileged people
- ❷ 1 :6-2:9      A privileged priesthood
- ❸ 2 :10-16      The importance of family life
- ❹ 2 :17-3:5      The Lord is coming with justice
- ❺ 3 :6-12      The Lord longs to bless
- ❻ 3 :13-4:3      God's judgment will be final

**UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF MALACHI:** Yahweh has a "book of remembrance" (3:16,17) in which are written the names of those who fear Yahweh.

## RELATIONSHIPS

- 1:8      the priests were offering polluted food to God; what would happen if we only paid half of our income tax? we would go to jail; yet they were sacrificing less than the best
- 1:13      what a burden -- the people must come to serve God to get out of their worship what God intended, i.e., the more you put into church, the more you get out of it; God wants our hearts, not merely our rituals
- 2:10-16      mistreating and divorcing their wives for foreign wives; God hates divorce, not divorced people
- 3:6-12      tithing, sacrifice, living in the right marriage relationship and speaking rightly of God are ways we can show our faith and trust in the Lord
- 3:16-18      God loved Jacob (Israel—the nation) and saved them to serve; He distinguishes between the righteous (those who serve God) and the wicked (those who do not serve God).