

HOW TO STUDY

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Which books of the Bible are considered the “prophets”?

- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi
- The different categorization of prophets as “major” or “minor” is simply based on relative length, and has nothing to do with relative importance.

What is a prophet? ————— LEVITICUS 26 & DEUTERONOMY 28

- Covenant enforcement mediators — Announced the fulfillment of the Law’s blessings and curses
 - COVENANT BLESSINGS** — life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, safety
 - COVENANT CURSES** — death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, disgrace
- Spokesmen for God — The prophets were unoriginal. They only spoke/did what God told them, and they only reiterated what was *already* in the Law. This is shown by the formula: “**Thus says the LORD.**”
- Foretellers — The prophets are notable for their telling of the future and demonstrating their divine calling by fulfilled prophecy.
- **Moses** is the Old Testament prototype of a prophet. **Jesus** is the ultimate Prophet, since He not only spoke of the fulfillment of the Law, but Himself fulfilled the Law.

Forms of “Oracles”

1. The lawsuit.
 - *summons* —> *charge* —> *evidence* —> *verdict*
 - Ex: Isaiah 3:13–26
2. The woe.
 - *announcement of distress* —> *reason for distress* —> *prediction of doom*
 - Ex: Habakkuk 2:6–8
3. The promise.
 - *reference to the future* —> *mention of radical change* —> *mention of blessing*
 - Amos 9:11–15

Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry

1. Synonymous parallelism — Second/subsequent line repeats/reinforces the sense of the first line
Isaiah 44:22 — “I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,/your sins like the morning mist.”
2. Antithetical parallelism — Second/subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first
Hosea 7:14: “They do not cry out to me from their hearts,/but wail upon their beds.”
3. Synthetic parallelism — Second/subsequent line adds to the first line by providing further information.
Obadiah 21: “Deliverers will go up from Mount Zion/to govern the mountains of Esau./And the kingdom will be the LORD’s.”

Things to Remember:

- It takes work to understand the prophets. The meaning and application won’t necessarily “fall of the page!”
 - History — unfamiliar events: CONTEXT IS KEY (*see timeline on back*)
 - Geography — unfamiliar places and people
 - Culture — unfamiliar customs and phraseology
- There is a lot of *figurative language* in the prophets.
- Collections of spoken oracles, not necessarily in order, and not necessarily directly related.
- Much of Old Testament prophecy is *already fulfilled!*