

The Minor Prophets

Introduction

The Title

The common title for these twelve books of the English Bible is "minor prophets." This title originated in Augustine's time (late fourth century A.D.), but they are minor only in that they are each much shorter than the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (called "major prophets"). In Old and New Testament times, the Old Testament was called "The Law and the Prophets." This title looked at the Old Testament from the standpoint of its divisions, but it also included the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, which constituted a 24-book division.

The Origin of the Prophetic Office

Ultimately, the prophetic office found its origin in God's purpose for Israel as a nation through whom all the nations could be blessed. When God gave Israel the Law, He promised them that if they would be obedient, they would become "My own possession" (a special treasure of His) for the purpose of becoming a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" among all the nations (Compare Ex. 19:5-6 with Deut. 4:6-8). This purpose could not happen, however, if they followed the beliefs and ways of the nations. In preparation for their entrance into the land just before the death of Moses, the illegitimate and demonic methods used by the nations to discern the future or the divine will, called divination, was thoroughly condemned by the Lord through Moses (Deut. 18:9-14). So how, then, was God's will to be known? The true and legitimate means by which God's will would be delivered to His people is given in the very next verses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22.

15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. 18 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 'And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 'But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' 21 "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 22 "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

This revelation forms the biblical origin and reason for the prophetic office. Freeman rightly contends: "... the origin of the prophetic institution in Israel is not to be found in Canaan nor in other Near Eastern cultures as negative criticism contends, but was itself established for the specific purpose of guarding Israel against Canaan's superstitious practices, as well as those of her neighbors."⁷¹

⁷¹ Hobart Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 26.

Furthermore, so that the nation might fulfill God's purposes as stated in the Abrahamic Covenant (see Gen. 12:1-3), He gave them specific promises and warnings. These are spelled out in Deuteronomy 28-30 in the blessings and curses of these chapters (sometimes referred to as the Palestinian Covenant). For obedience there would be blessing and if disobedience, then cursing. So how did the prophets fit into the picture? They would come along and say, "Because you broke the covenant, the covenant curses have fallen upon you, or are about to fall upon you." In other words, it has happened (or is about to) just as God warned you in Deuteronomy 28-30. The prophets' messages of sin and judgment must be seen in the light of this background and understanding of the Old Testament.

However, the prophets did not just proclaim doom and gloom. They also proclaimed a message of salvation and coming glory. Modern scholars sometimes claim that these positive messages are later additions by some scribe, but God, remember, is the immutable and eternal God of all comfort and grace, so the prophets would usually give a message of doom and gloom, but coupled with this they would also tell the people about the light at the end of the tunnel to give them hope (cf. Isa. 12:1-2; 40:1-2). Ultimately, God's purposes would be fulfilled by the sovereign work of God in the lives of His people. Sometimes these salvation messages were "crystal ball" like visions describing a particular event which they had seen in a vision (e.g. Dan 9: and the 70th week). Other times they were just claiming and proclaiming the promises of God to Abraham and David as given in the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Literary Features of the Minor Prophets

When we study the prophets we find they all pretty much have the same basic ingredients: (1) warning of impending judgment because of the nations' sinfulness; (2) a description of the sin; (3) a description of the coming judgment; (4) a call for repentance; and (4) a promise of future deliverance.

If you want to outline a prophetic book, how do you recognize where one unit begins and ends?⁷² They use an introductory or concluding formula like "This is what the Lord says..." They then use what is called "inclusio" (they begin and end a section with the same word or phrase). And they use several common literary forms:

1. Judgment speech which contains two parts: (a) Part One—The Accusation; (b) Part Two—The Judgment
2. A Woe oracle—like a judgment speech, except that it starts with "Woe..."
3. Exhortation/call to repentance—consists of appeal with motivation (in the form of a promise and or threat). (Amos 5:4-6; Joel 2:12-14)
4. Salvation announcement—often alludes to a lamentable situation and focuses on the Lord's saving intervention (Amos 9:11-12)
5. Salvation oracle—introduced by the exhortation "fear not" (Isa 41:8-16)
6. Salvation portrayal—a description, often idealized and in hyperbolic terms, of God's future blessings on his people (Amos 9:13).

⁷² Notes taken from Hebrew class at Dallas Theological Seminary taught by Dr. Rober Chisholm, Spring 1993.

Chronology Overview

Their Order in the English Bible

1. Hosea	4. Obadiah	7. Nahum	10. Haggai
2. Joel	5. Jonah	8. Habakkuk	11. Zechariah
3. Amos	6. Micah	9. Zephaniah	12. Malachi

Their Grouping According to the Exile and The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Group	Book	Approximate Dates
Pre-Exilic Prophets of Israel	Jonah (preached to Nineveh)	780-850
	Amos	765-750
	Hosea	755-715
Prophets of Judah	Obadiah	840
	Joel	835-796
	Micah	740-690
	Nahum	630-612
	Habakkuk	606-604
	Zephaniah	625
Post-Exilic Prophets Prophets of the Returned Remnant	Haggai	520
	Zechariah	515
	Malachi	430

HOSEA (Persevering Love)

Author:

As declared in verse 1, the author is Hosea, the son of Beeri and the husband of Gomer (1:3), who was apparently a citizen of northern Israel since his concern was for the Northern Kingdom of Israel and called the king of Samaria "our king" (7:5). All we know about Hosea we learn from the book itself in its autobiographical sections.

Date:

According to 1:1, Hosea ministered during the days of Uzziah (767-739), Jotham (739-731), Ahaz (731-715), and Hezekiah (715-686), kings of Judah and during the days of Jeroboam II (782-752), king of Israel.

Hosea's ministry spanned several decades, beginning near the end of the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (ca. 790-739 B.C.) and Jeroboam II of Israel (ca. 793-753 B.C.) and concluding in the early years of Hezekiah's reign. The latter's rule began around 715 B.C. after a period of vice-regency with his father Ahaz. Since Israel was Hosea's primary audience, it seems strange that four Judean kings, but only one Israelite king, are mentioned in 1:1. The reason for the omission of the six Israelite kings who followed Jeroboam II is uncertain. Perhaps it suggests the legitimacy of the Da-

vidic dynasty (cf. 3:5) in contrast with the instability and disintegration of the kingdom in the North (cf. 7:3-7).⁷³

Perhaps also, the six other kings in Israel who followed Jeroboam II were omitted because of their relative insignificance, yet each of these continued in the sin of the Jeroboam I, son of Nebat. In essence, there were no good kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who instituted reforms as there were in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Title of the Book:

The book is named after its author, Hosea and is identical to the last king of the Northern Kingdom, Hoshea. For purposes of distinction, the English Bible always gives the name of the minor prophet as Hosea. Interestingly, the names Hosea, Joshua, and Jesus are all derived from the same Hebrew word, *hoshea*, which means "salvation." However, both Joshua and Jesus include the additional truth, "*Yahweh is salvation*." As God's messenger, Hosea offers salvation to the nation if they will turn from their idolatry and return to the Lord.

Theme and Purpose:

Hosea was written to demonstrate the steadfast or unfailing love of God for Israel in spite of her continued unfaithfulness. Through Hosea's marital experience, the book shows us 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, as demonstrated in its 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 God's love to Israel as His own dear children and as His covenant wife.

Key Word:

In view of the analogy of Israel as the wife of *Yahweh* and the command given to Hosea to take a wife of harlotry which would illustrate Israel's behavior, the words "**harlot**" (10 times) and "**harlotry**" (9 times) are key words. In addition, *God's loyal love for Israel* in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness is a key concept of the book.

Key Verses:

3:1. Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

4:1. Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.

4:6. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

⁷³ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1983,1985, electronic media.

11:7-9. So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them to the One on high, None at all exalts Him. How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zebaoim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 4 is key in that in this chapter we see how in following the ways of idolatry, Israel left the knowledge of God's truth and became rejected as priest.

Christ as seen in Hosea:

In Hosea, Messiah is presented as the Son of God (cf. 11:1 with Matt. 2:15), as the only Savior of His people (cf. 13:4 with John 14:6), as the one who will ransom us from the dead (cf. 13:14 with 1 Cor. 15:55), as the one who loves us with great compassion (11:4), and as the one who heals those who will return to Him (6:1).

Outline:

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. Hosea's Marriage: A Portrait of God's Dealings with Israel (1:2-3:5)
 - A. The prophetic nature of Hosea's family (1:2-2:1)
 - 1. Hosea's marriage: Israel's unfaithfulness (1:2-3a)
 - 2. Hosea's children: Israel's judgment (1:3b-9)
 - 3. Israel's future: restoration (1:10-2:1)
 - B. Restoration through punishment (2:2-23)
 - 1. The Lord's punishment of Israel (2:2-13)
 - 2. The Lord's restoration of Israel (2:14-23)
 - C. Restoration of Hosea's marriage (3:1-5)
 - 1. The divine command (3:1)
 - 2. Hosea's obedient response (3:2-3)
 - 3. The illustration explained (3:4-5)
- III. Hosea's Message: The Judgment and Restoration of Israel (4:1-14:9)
 - A. The Lord's case against Israel (4:1-6:3)
 - 1. Israel's guilt exposed (4:1-19)
 - 2. Israel's judgment announced (5:1-14)
 - 3. Israel's restoration prophesied (5:15-6:3)
 - B. The Lord's case against Israel enlarged (6:4-11:11)
 - 1. Israel's guilt and punishment (6:4-8:14)
 - 2. Israel's guilt and punishment restated (9:1-11:7)
 - 3. The Lord's compassion renewed (11:8-11)
 - C. The Lord's case against Israel concluded (11:12-14:9)
 - 1. A concluding indictment (11:12-13:16)
 - 2. A concluding exhortation (14:1-9)

JOEL (The Coming of the Day of *Yahweh*)

Author:

As indicated by 1:1, the author is "Joel," which means "*Yahweh* is God." We know nothing else about him other than the name of his father who is Pethuel (1:1).

Date:

Since the date is not specified within the book by any time references, we have to determine the date as much as possible from the internal evidences we find in the book, such as references to various nations, events, etc. People have suggested dates from 835-400 B.C., but determining the date is difficult. The difficulties with determining the date are clear from Chisholm's discussion of three common views of the dating of Joel.

1. *An early preexilic date.* Those who support an early date (ninth century B.C.) for Joel point to its position in the Hebrew Old Testament (between Hosea and Amos) and its references to Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom as enemies (Joel 3:4, 19). Hobart Freeman writes, "The very naming of these particular nations is strong evidence for a pre-exilic date for the book, inasmuch as they were the early pre-exilic enemies of Judah, not the later nations of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, p. 148; see also Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, p. 305).

Both of these arguments lack weight. The canonical position of the book is inconclusive, especially when one notes that the Septuagint places it differently in the canon. Even the Old Testament prophets in the Babylonian period delivered oracles against the nations mentioned (cf. Jer. 46-47; 49:7-22; Ezek. 27-30; Zeph. 2:4-7). One who contends for a late pre-exilic date could argue that Joel 2 pictures the Babylonians vividly enough to make formal identification unnecessary to a contemporary audience well aware of their ominous presence on the horizon.

Some seek to support an early date for Joel by appealing to the type of government reflected in the prophecy (elders, 1:2; 2:16; and priests ruling, 1:9, 13; 2:17, in view of Joash's crowning at age seven) and to verbal parallels in other prophetic books (Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 304-5). The inconclusive nature of these arguments is apparent as they are also used by proponents of a late date.

Several details of the text (cf. esp. 3:2, 6) seem to militate against an early date (in Joash's reign) for the prophecy (cf. S.R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos*, pp. 14-15).

2. *A late preexilic date.* The view that the book comes from the late preexilic period has much to commend it. If one dates the prophecy between 597 and 587 B.C. (with Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona* Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971, pp. 24-8), Joel 3:2b (with its reference to scattering God's people and dividing the land) would refer to the Babylonian invasion of 597 B.C. when 10,000 of Judah's finest men were deported (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-16). This would also account for Joel's references to the temple (Joel 1:9, 13; 2:17), for it was not destroyed until 586 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 25:9). At that same time such a dating would mean that Joel 1:15 and 2:1-11 anticipated the final destruction of Jerusalem (which indeed came in 586 B.C.; cf. 2 Kings 25:1-21).

Joel's prophecy would then fit nicely with several other passages which relate the "day of the LORD" (or "day of the LORD's wrath" or "day of the LORD's anger") to that event (cf. Lam. 1:12; 2:1, 21-22; Ezek. 7:19; 13:5; Zeph. 2:2-3). Joel's description (Joel 2:1-11) would also coincide with Jeremiah's description of the Babylonians (cf. Jer. 5:17). The reference in Joel 3:6 to slave trade between the Phoenicians and Greeks (or Ionians) harmonizes well with the late preexilic period. Ezekiel also referred to this economic arrangement (Ezek. 27:13). Arvid S. Kapelrud shows that Ionian trade flourished in the seventh and early sixth centuries B.C. (*Joel Studies*, pp. 154-8).

Despite the attractiveness of this view, problems arise in relation to Joel 2:18-19. This passage seems to record God's mercy to Joel's generation, implying they truly repented (see comments on those verses). If so, such a sequence of events is difficult to harmonize with the historical record of Judah's final days. Second Kings 23:26-27 indicates that even Josiah's revival did not cause the Lord to relent.

3. *A postexilic date.* Four arguments are used to suggest a postexilic date:

- (1) Joel 3:1-2, 17 refer, it is argued, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. In this case the references to the temple in 1:9, 13; 2:17 apply to the second temple, completed by the returning exiles in 515 B.C.
- (2) The "elders" (cf. 1:2; 2:16), rather than the king, appear as the leaders of the community. This is more consistent with the postexilic period (cf. Ezra 10:14).
- (3) Joel quotes other prophets, including Ezekiel (cf. Joel 2:3 with Ezek. 36:35; Joel 2:10 with Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:27-28 with Ezek. 39:28-29).
- (4) The reference to Greek slave trade (Joel 3:6) reflects the postexilic period.

Against these arguments the following responses may be made:

- (1) Joel 3:1-2, 17 could refer to the deportation of 597 B.C., not that of 586 B.C. (but as noted previously under "2. A late preexilic date," this view poses problems). Some attempt to explain the language of Joel 3:1-2, 17 in light of the events recorded in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 (Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 305). However, the captivity of the royal sons and wives recorded there hardly satisfies the language of Joel 3:2.
- (2) Though the omission of any reference to the monarchy is curious, it can carry little weight for it is an argument from silence. Also elders were prominent in Judean society *before* the Exile (2 Kings 23:1; Jer. 26:17; Lam. 5:12, 14; cf. Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, pp. 187-9).
- (3) In the case of literary parallels with other prophetic passages, it is often difficult to determine in any given case who quoted from whom.
- (4) Kapelrud has shown, as noted earlier, that Ionian slave trade flourished in the seventh century B.C.

In conclusion, it is impossible to be dogmatic about the date of the writing of Joel. The language of Joel 3:2b seems to favor a postexilic date. This verse suggests that nations in the future will be judged for having continued the policies of ancient Babylon in scattering the Israelites and dividing their land. Such a view is consistent with (but not proved by) several other observations (such as the reference to Phoenician-Ionian slave trade, the form of government implied in the book, and the liter-

ary parallels with other prophets). If one accepts a postexilic date, the references to the temple necessitate a date some time after 516 B.C. However, all this must remain tentative. Understandably, conservative scholars differ on the date of Joel.⁷⁴

Title of the Book:

The Hebrew for Joel is Yoáel, which, as stated above, means *Yahweh is God*. This name is extremely appropriate in view of the message of Joel, which lays stress on God as the Sovereign One who has all creation and the nations under His power and control as the God of History.

Theme and Purpose:

Joel uses a recent drought and locust plague that strikes Judah without warning as an object lesson to warn of a future invasion of Israel in the Day of *Yahweh*. In just a very short time, a matter of hours, every piece of vegetation is stripped bare. If the nation will repent and return to the Lord, God will restore His relationship with her and bless her. This was true in the historical situation in which Joel was writing and will be true any time in the future.

For the ultimate blessings and restoration promised by Joel to occur, Israel will have to experience the judgments of the Tribulation and the outpouring of the Spirit of God. It is this combination that will cause them to return to the Lord.

Key Word:

The key word or words, in keeping with the warnings of the book, is the **Day of Yahweh**.

Key Verses:

2:11. And the LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

2:28-32. "And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. "And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

Key Chapters:

Chapter 2 is the key chapter in that it promises that God will relent of the judgment to be poured out on Israel if she will only return to the Lord (vss. 13-14). This is then followed by the promise of the future deliverance of the nation through the outpouring of the Spirit of God, the display of wonders in the sky and on the earth, the coming of the day of the Lord, and the calling on the name of the Lord (vss. 28-32).

⁷⁴ Walvoord/Zuck, Electronic Media.

Christ as seen in Joel:

In Joel, Christ is presented as the one who will give the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:28 with John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), who judges the nations (3:2, 12), and who is the refuge and stronghold of Israel (3:16).

Outline:

- I. The Historic Day of the Lord (1:1-20)
 - A. The Historic Occurrence of Locust (1:1-12)
 - B. The Historic Occurrence of Drought (1:13-20)
- II. The Prophetic Day of the Lord (2:1-3:21)
 - A. The Imminency of the Day of the Lord (2:1-27)
 - 1. The Prophecy of an Invasion of Judah (2:1-11)
 - 2. The Condition Needed for the Salvation of Judah (2:12-27)
 - B. The Ultimate Day of the Lord (2:28-3:21)
 - 1. The Final Events Before the Day of the Lord (2:28-32)
 - 2. The Events of the Day of the Lord (3:1-21)
 - a. Judgment on the Gentiles (3:1-16)
 - b. Judgment on Judah (3:17-21)

AMOS (Judgment for Abused Privilege)**Author:**

Unlike Isaiah (a man of the court) and Jeremiah (who was a priest) this book was written by Amos, a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit (1:1; 7:14). He was from Tekoa, which was located near Bethlehem about ten miles south of Jerusalem. That Amos is the author is supported not only from the claim of the book (1:1; 7:14), but from the pastoral language (7:10f), and the contents which demonstrated his knowledge of an out-of-doors way of life (see 3:4-5, 12; 5:8, 9; 9:9). Though he was a farmer and rancher he was very familiar with the Word of God.

Date:

About 760 B.C.

According to verse 1, Amos tells us that he was a contemporary of Uzziah and Jeroboam II and prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, King of Judah (790-739 B.C), and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, King of Israel (793-753 B.C), two years before the earthquake" (1:1). Amos probably prophesied in the period from 767-753. We are also told that he prophesied "two years before the earthquake," but the precise date of this event is not known.

Title of the Book:

The name *Amos* comes from the Hebrew *ʾāmas*, "to lift a burden, carry." His name means "burden" or "Burden-bearer," which is entirely fitting for the burden given to him. Though from Judah rather than the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he was given the burden of carrying a message of warning against the greed, injustice, externalism, and self-righteousness of the Northern Kingdom. Amos should not be confused with Amoz, the father of Isaiah (Isa. 1:1).

Theme and Purpose:

The divine message given to Amos was primarily one of judgment, though it ends with words of hope. Amos warned that the Lord God, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, would come as a Warrior to judge the nations that had rebelled against His authority. Israel in particular would be punished for her violations against God's covenant. Amos sought to bring the prosperous and materialistic northern tribes under Jeroboam to repentance as the only escape from imminent judgment. In the process, the book demonstrates God's hatred of evil because of His holiness and that His justice must act against Israel's sin for He cannot allow it to go unpunished.

However, even though the nation would be destroyed, God would still preserve a repentant remnant and one day this remnant would be restored to their covenant blessing and political prominence when the Lord would then also draw all nations to His Himself.

Key Words:

The words "transgress" and "transgression" occur 12 times. This highlights one of the key elements of the book, *the judgment of God on Israel* for her sinful ways. A key phrase of the book is "I will not revoke its punishment because . . ." (see 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

Key Verses:

3:1-2. Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities."

4:11-12. "I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. "Therefore, thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I shall do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

8:11-12. 11 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. "And people will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it."

Key Chapter:

Chapter 9 is a key chapter because of its focus on the restoration of Israel. Set in the midst of the harsh judgments of Amos are some of the greatest prophecies of restoration of Israel anywhere in Scripture. Within the scope of just five verses the future of Israel becomes clear, as the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Palestinian covenants are focused on their climactic fulfillment in the return of the Messiah.⁷⁵

Christ as seen in Amos:

Amos presents Christ as the One who will rebuild David's dynasty (9:11) and as the one who will restore His people (9:11-15).

⁷⁵ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 246.

Outline:

- I. The Introduction: the Author and Theme (1:1-2)
- II. The Eight Judgments of Amos (1:3-2:16)
 - A. Concerning Damascus (1:3-5)
 - B. Concerning Philistia (1:6-8)
 - C. Concerning Tyre (1:9-10)
 - D. Concerning Edom (1:11-12)
 - E. Concerning Ammon (1:13-15)
 - F. Concerning Moab (2:1-3)
 - G. Concerning Judah (2:4-5)
 - H. Concerning Israel (2:6-16)
- III. The Sermons of Amos (3:1-6:14)
 - A. The Doom of Israel (3:1-15)
 - B. The Depravity of Israel (4:1-13)
 - C. A Dirge over Israel (5:1-6:14)
 - D. The ruin of Israel in coming judgment (5:1-17)
 - E. The rebuke of religious people (5:18-27)
 - F. The reprimand of the entire nation (6:1-14)
- IV. The Five Visions of Amos (7:1-9:15)
 - A. A Vision of Devouring Locusts (7:1-3)
 - B. A Vision of Fire (7:4-6)
 - C. A Vision of a Plumb Line (7:7-9)
 - D. An Historical Interlude: Opposition from the Priest of Bethel (7:10-17)
 - E. A Vision of a Basket of Summer Fruit (8:1-14)
 - F. A Vision of the Lord Judging (9:1-10)
- V. The Five Promise of Restoration for Israel (9:11-15)

OBADIAH (Poetic Justice)**Author:**

The author is an unknown prophet of Judah by the name of Obadiah (1:1). A number of Old Testament men were named Obadiah. These include an officer in David's army (1 Chron. 12:9), Ahab's servant who hid God's prophets (1 Kings 18:3), a Levite in the days of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:12), and a leader who returned from the Exile with Ezra (Ezra 8:9). Nothing is known of Obadiah's home town or family. The fact that his father is not named suggests that he was not out of a kingly or priestly line.

Date:

The shortest book of the Bible, containing only 21 verses, bears the distinction of being the most difficult of the minor prophets to date. Regarding the date Ryrie writes:

The question of date relates to which battle against Jerusalem the Edomites were associated with (vv. 11-14). There were four significant invasions of Jerusalem in Old Testament times: (1) by Shishak, king of Egypt, during Rehoboam's reign, in 926 B.C. (1 Kings 14:25-26); (2) by the Philistines and Arabians during the reign of Jehoram, from 848-841 (2 Chron. 21:16-17); (3) by King Jehoash of Israel during the reign of Amaziah, in 790 (2 Kings 14:13-14); (4) by Babylon during the years 605-586 (2 Kings 24-25). Obadiah prophesied against Edom either in connection with invasion #2 or #4. If the first, this book is the earliest of the writing prophets (see 2

Kings 8:20 and 2 Chron. 21:16-17; then see Joel 3:3-6 compared with Obad. 11-12 and the use of Obad. 1-9 in the extended passage in Jer. 49:7-22 as support for the earlier date).⁷⁶

Title of the Book:

The Hebrew name àObadyah means "servant or worshipper of *Yahweh*."

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of Obadiah is a reiteration of the truth that pride goes before a fall. Obadiah declares that Edom stands judged and under certain doom because of her pride in rejoicing over the misfortunes that befell Jerusalem.

Key Word:

Judgment on Edom. Combined, Edom and Esau occur nine times.

Key Verses:

1:10. "Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever.

1:15. "For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.

1:21. The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion To judge the mountain of Esau, And the kingdom will be the LORD'S.

Christ as seen in Obadiah:

Christ is seen in Obadiah as the judge of the nations (15-16), the Savior of Israel (17-20), and the Possessor of the kingdom (21).⁷⁷

Outline:

- I. The Prophecies of Judgment on Edom (1-9)
 - A. The Certainty of Judgment (1-4)
 - B. The Completeness of the Judgment (5-9)
- II. The Basis for the Judgment on Edom (10-14)
 - A. For an Absence of Brotherly Love (vs. 10)
 - B. For Aloofness (11-12)
 - C. For Aggressiveness (13-14)
- III. The Time of the Judgment (vs. 15)
- IV. The Results of the Judgment (16-18)
- V. The Deliverance of Israel (19-21)

⁷⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 1415.

⁷⁷ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 252.

JONAH (Fleeing From God's Will)

Author:

The author of the book is Jonah, the son of Amittai, a prophet from Galilee in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is evidenced by the book itself (1:1), the historical character of the book which names real places and persons, and by corroboration from other sources (2 Kings 14:25) including the testimony of Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 12:40).

Date:

In 2 Kings 14:27 Jonah is connected with the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (793-753). Jonah ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos and Hosea. While no Assyrian inscription mentions a religious awakening such as that described in Jonah, during the reign of Ashurbanipal there was a swing toward monotheism which could have been related to the preaching of Jonah.

The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurbanipal (747-722). Two plagues (765 and 759) and a solar eclipse (763) may have prepared the people for Jonah's message.⁷⁸

Title of the Book:

Jonah is from the Hebrew Yo,na,h, which means "dove." The Septuagint Hellenized this word into *Ionas*, and the Latin Vulgate used the title *Jonas*.

Theme and Purpose:

Jonah clearly demonstrates that the God of the Hebrews (1) has concern for the whole world, (2) is sovereign over nature and all human affairs. Jonah demonstrates that "salvation is of the Lord" (2:9), and that God's gracious offer of salvation extends to all who repent and turn to Him. The book also demonstrates how our prejudices like Jonah's warped sense of Jewish nationalism can hinder us from following the will of God.

Key Word:

A word that is repeated several times emphasizing God's sovereignty is the word "prepared." God prepared the wind, tempest, fish, gourd, worm, and an east wind. A key idea is *revival*.

Key Verses:

2:8-9. "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD."

3:10. When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

4:2. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to

⁷⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 257.

Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

Key Chapters:

The third chapter stands out in that it records one of the greatest revivals of history.

Christ as seen in Jonah:

Through Jonah, Christ is portrayed in His resurrection (Matt. 12:40), seen as a prophet to the nations (though obviously not reluctantly like Jonah), and as the Savior of the nations. In Jonah's life, He is seen as the Savior and Lord (2:9).

Outline:

- I. The Fleeing of Jonah (1:1-17)
 - A. The Reason for His Flight (1:1-2)
 - B. The Route of His Flight (1:3)
 - C. The Results of His Flight (1:4-17)
- II. The Praying of Jonah (2:1-10)
 - A. The Characteristics of His Prayer (2:1-9)
 - B. The Answer to His Prayer (2:10)
- III. The Preaching of Jonah (3:1-10)
 - A. God's Command to Preach (3:1-3)
 - B. The Content of Jonah's Preaching (3:4)
 - C. The Consequences of Jonah's Preaching (3:5-10)
- IV. The Learning of Jonah (4:1-11)
 - A. Jonah's Complaint to God (4:1-3)
 - B. God's Curriculum for Jonah (4:4-11)

MICAH (Who Is Like God?)

Author:

Little is known about the author of this book other than what can be learned from the book itself and from Jeremiah 26:18. The name Micah is a shortened form of Micaiah, which means "Who is like *Yahweh*?" Micah suggests this truth in 7:18 when he said, "Who is a God like You?" In Jeremiah's day the elders referred to Micah and quoted Micah 3:12 in defense of Jeremiah's message of judgment on the nation (Jer. 26:18).

Micah was from Moresheth (Micah 1:1; cf. 1:14), a town in Judea about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem near the Philistine city of Gath. Moresheth was located in Judah's fertile foothills near Lachish, an international trading town.

Date:

Micah tells us he prophesied during the days of Jotham (750-732), Ahaz (736-716) and Hezekiah (716-687) (1:1). Micah speaks primarily to Judah, but since he also speaks to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and predicts the fall of Samaria (1:6), a good part of his ministry occurred before the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., probably around **700 B.C.**

Title of the Book:

The book takes its title from its author, Micah the prophet. The Greek and Latin titles for this book are *Michaias* and *Micha*.

Theme and Purpose:

Micah shows 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). In the process, Micah exposed the injustice of Judah and declared the righteousness and justice of *Yahweh* showing He was just in disciplining them. He indicts Israel and Judah for sins like oppression, bribery among the judges, prophets, and priests, and for covetousness, cheating, pride, and violence. Of course, this discipline on the nation demonstrated His love for them and that He would restore them.

The theme of judgment is prominent in each of Micah's three messages, but he also stressed the truth of restoration. Further, Micah referred to the principle of the *remnant* in each of his three messages (Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18). He declared that in the future *Yahweh* would restore the people of Israel to a place of prominence in the world under the coming Messiah.

Key Word:

The concept of "hear" in Micah's challenge for the people to listen to the Lord is found some nine times. Then in keeping with the focus on judgment for failing to hear are key words like "desolation," "desolate," and "destruction," which combined together occur some four times. Finally, in keeping with the thrust of restoration, the concept of "gather" or "assemble" is seen some seven times.

Key Verses:

1:5-9. All this is for the rebellion of Jacob And for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley, And will lay bare her foundations. All of her idols will be smashed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire, And all of her images I will make desolate, For she collected them from a harlot's earnings, And to the earnings of a harlot they will return. Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked; I must make a lament like the jackals And a mourning like the ostriches. For her wound is incurable, For it has come to Judah; It has reached the gate of my people, Even to Jerusalem.

6:8. He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

7:18-20. Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

Key Chapters:

Undoubtedly, chapters 6-7 are the key chapters of Micah. Wilkinson and Boa have an excellent discussion on the significance of these two chapters.

The closing section of Micah describes a court-room scene. God has a controversy against His people, and He calls the mountains and hills together to form the jury as He sets forth His case. The people have replaced heartfelt worship with empty ritual, thinking that this is all God demands. They have divorced God's standards of justice from their daily dealings in order to cover their unscrupulous practices. They have failed to realize what the Lord requires of man. There can only be one verdict: guilty.

Nevertheless, the book closes on a note of hope. The same God who executes judgment also delights to extend mercy. "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy" (7:18). No wonder the prophet exclaims, "Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (7:7).⁷⁹

Christ as seen in Micah:

Micah presents Christ as the God of Jacob (4:2), the Judge of the nations (4:3), and the Ruler who would be born in the city of Bethlehem (cf. 5:2 with Matt. 2:1-6). The priests and scribes quoted Micah 5:2 in answer to Herod's question about the birthplace of Messiah.

Outline:

- I. The Superscription or Introduction (1:1)
- II. First Message: Judgment for Samaria and Judah (chaps. 1-2)
 - A. Prediction of coming judgment (1:2-7)
 - B. Lament over the people (1:8-16)
 - 1. Micah's lament (1:8-9)
 - 2. Micah's call for others to mourn (1:10-16)
 - C. Sins of Judah (2:1-11)
 - 1. Sins of the people (2:1-5)
 - 2. Sins of the false prophets (2:6-11)
 - D. Prediction of future regathering (2:12-13)
- III. Second Message: Doom followed by Deliverance (chaps. 3-5)
 - A. Judgment on the nation's leaders (chap. 3)
 - 1. Judgment on the rulers (3:1-4)
 - 2. Judgment on the false prophets (3:5-8)
 - 3. Judgment on all the naive leaders (3:9-12)
 - B. Kingdom blessings for the nation (chaps. 4-5)
 - 1. Characteristics of the kingdom (4:1-8)
 - 2. Events preceding the kingdom (4:9-5:1)
 - 3. The Ruler of the kingdom (5:2-15)
- IV. Third Message: Denunciation for Sin and a Promise of Blessing (chaps. 6-7)
 - A. An indictment by the Lord (6:1-5)
 - B. The response of Micah for the nation (6:6-8)

⁷⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 263.

- C. The Lord's judgment because of sin (6:9-16)
 - 1. The sins (6:9-12)
 - 2. The punishment (6:13-16)
- D. Micah's pleading with the Lord (chap. 7)
 - 1. Micah's bemoaning of the nation's sins (7:1-6)
 - 2. Micah's confidence in the Lord (7:7-13)
 - 3. Micah's prayer that God would again shepherd His flock (7:14)
 - 4. The Lord's promise to show miraculous things to His people (7:15-17)
- E. Micah's affirmation that God is unique (7:18-20)

NAHUM (The Doom of Nineveh)

Author:

Other than what Nahum tells us in 1:1, that the book is of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite and that it is an oracle about Nineveh, we know nothing about this prophet. Nahum means "consolation," but his message was certainly not one of comfort to the wicked Assyrians who occupied Nineveh. It would, however, bring comfort to Judah. He may have been a prophet of Judah in view of 1:15, and though the exact location of Elkosh is uncertain, most conservative scholars believe this city was located somewhere in southern Judah.

Date:

Nahum speaks of the fall of Thebes as already past in 3:8-10 and Thebes fell in 663 B.C.. Further, in all three chapters Nahum predicted Nineveh's fall and this occurred in 612. Nahum therefore gave his oracle somewhere between 663 and 612, probably close to the end of this time because he represents the fall of Nineveh as imminent (2:1; 3:14, 19). This would place his ministry sometime during the reign of Josiah and makes him a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

Title of the Book:

As with all the minor prophets, the book gets its name from the prophet who spoke the prophecy. The title used in the Greek and Latin Bible is *Naoum* and *Nahum*.

Theme and Purpose:

Nahum's theme is the fall of Nineveh as the retribution of God against the wicked Assyrians of Nineveh. What Jonah wanted to see, namely God's judgment on the Assyrians, was later predicted by Nahum approximately one hundred and fifty years later. The conversion of the Ninevites in response to the preaching of Jonah was evidently short lived because they soon became ruthless, returning to their former wicked ways. Sargon II of Assyria destroyed Samaria and took the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity, scattering the ten tribes in 722. Later, Sennacherib of the Assyrians almost captured Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah in 701 B.C. But regardless of its power and prominence, Nineveh is clearly judged as doomed by a Holy God through the prophet Nahum. Assyria's cruelty, power, and pride would come to an end by the power of God. Though the book focuses on Assyria's fall and judgment, it is written to bring comfort to Judah.

Key Word:

The key word or idea is simply the judgment of Nineveh, but the words that stand out in this connection are "avenging" and "vengeance" occurring three times in the opening chapter (1:2).

Key Verses:

1:7-8. The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him. 8 But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies into darkness.

3:5. "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of hosts; "And I will lift up your skirts over your face, And show to the nations your nakedness And to the kingdoms your disgrace. 6 "I will throw filth on you And make you vile, And set you up as a spectacle. 7 "And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, 'Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?' Where will I seek comforters for you?"

Key Chapter:

Because it sets forth the basis of God's judgment against Nineveh as retribution of a Holy God who, though slow to anger, is also great in power and reserves wrath for His enemies, **chapter one** stands out as a key chapter.

Christ as seen in Nahum:

While there are no direct Messianic prophecies in Nahum, in keeping with the basic Christological spirit of all prophecy, Nahum sees Christ as the jealous God and avenger of His adversaries (1:2f).

Outline:

- I. The Introduction (1:1)
- II. The Prophecy and Certainty of God's Judgment on Nineveh (1:2-15)
 - A. God's Holy Wrath Against Nineveh (1:2-8)
 - B. Nineveh's Scheming Against *Yahweh* Will Come to an End (1:9-11)
 - C. Judah's Affliction Will End Because of Nineveh's Judgment (1:12-15)
- III. The Description of God's Judgment on Nineveh (chap. 2)
 - A. The Assault Described (2:1-6)
 - B. The Defeat Declared (2:7-13)
- IV. The Cause for God's Judgment on Nineveh (chap. 3)
 - A. Because of Her Violence and Deceit that Leads to Shame (3:1-7)
 - B. Her Treatment of Thebes (No-amon) Results in Her Own Defeat (3:8-11)
 - C. Her Defenses to be Useless (3:12-19)

HABAKKUK (Solution to Perplexity)

Author:

The author is identified as Habakkuk in 1:1 and 3:1. He clearly identifies himself as a prophet and the fact that his prayer and praise is concluded with the statement, "For the choir director, on my stringed instruments" suggests he had a priestly background.

Date:

Because the book anticipates the coming Babylonian invasion and shows an awareness of the fame of the Babylonians, Habakkuk probably ministered during the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah. It

appears that Babylon had not invaded Judah, though it was imminent (see 1:6 and 2:1), which suggests Habakkuk prophesied shortly before Babylon's invasion in 605 B.C. around **606**.

Title of the Book:

The book gets its title from the name of the author. Habakkuk comes from a Hebrew word, *hē'abaq*, which means "embrace." But how is this to be understood? We should probably understand this in an active sense, "one who embraces or clings," rather than the passive, "one who is embraced," for in spite of his perplexity over the coming invasion, the prophet finally clings to *Yahweh* as the God of his salvation and strength.

Theme and Purpose:

The theme of this prophecy flows out of Habakkuk's perplexity over the coming invasion of the wicked Babylonians. It concerns the problems of his faith in the face of two apparent difficulties: (1) Why did God permit the increasing evil in Judah to go unpunished (1:2-4)? And how could a Holy God (1:13) use sinful nations like Babylon as His source of judgment (1:12-2:1)? Habakkuk grapples with these difficulties which are solved in the light of God's continuing revelation, and the prophet closes in a psalm of joyous trust. The book is thus a theodicy, a defense of God's goodness and power in view of the problem of evil.

Key Word:

Two words are key not because of their repetition but because of the content of the book. One is "why" as Habakkuk struggled with the issues here and the other is "**faith**" as declared in 2:4, "the just shall live by faith."

Key Verses:

2:4. 4 "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.

3:17-19. Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

Key Chapters:

The book of Habakkuk builds to a triumphant climax reached in the last three verses (3:17-19). The beginning of the book and the ending stand in stark contrast: mystery to certainty, questioning to affirming, and complaint to confidence. Chapter 3 is one of the most majestic of all Scripture and records the glory of God in past history and in future history (prophecy).⁸⁰

Christ as seen in Habakkuk:

Again in the light of the christological nature of prophecy, Christ is portrayed as the Savior. The word "salvation," which appears three times in 3:13 and 18, is the root word from which the name

⁸⁰ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 274.

"Jesus" is derived (see Matt. 1:21). He is also seen as the Holy One (cf. 1:12 with 1 John 1:9), the one who justifies the righteous by faith (2:4), and the one who will one day fill the earth "with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2:14).

Outline:

- I. The Perplexities of Habakkuk: faith is tested and taught (1:1-2:20)
 - A. The First Problem: Why Does God Allow Wicked Practices to Continue in Judah? (1:2-4)
 - B. God's First Answer (1:5-11)
 - C. The Second Problem: Why Will God Use Wicked People to Punish Judah? (1:12-2:1)
 - D. God's Second Answer (2:2-20)
- II. The Praise of Habakkuk: faith is triumphant (3:1-19)
 - A. Praise for God's Person (3:1-3)
 - B. Praise for God's Power (3:4-7)
 - C. Praise for God's Purpose (3:8-16)
 - D. Praise for Faith in God (3:17-19)

ZEPHANIAH (Blessing Through Judgment)

Author:

As seen in 1:1, the book was written by Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. In tracing the prophet's ancestry through four generations, this heading is unique. Usually only the prophet's father is identified (cf. Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1; Ezek. 1:3; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1) when the author provides genealogical information. Such a long genealogy suggests the noble birth of the prophet, his great-great-grandfather being the good King Hezekiah.

Date:

630-625 B.C.

According to the introduction (1:10), Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.). His prophecy preceded the fall of Nineveh in 612 and the reforms of Josiah in 622-621. This seems evident since the book of Zephaniah presupposes the existence of pagan idolatry in Judah (1:4-6) which was pretty much eliminated by Josiah's reforms. All this suggests a date of between 630 and 625 B.C.

Title of the Book:

The book takes its name from the prophet Zephaniah (from the root "hide, treasure up, store," and a shortened form for *Yahweh*. It means "hidden of *Yahweh*." See 2:3. The Greek and Latin title is *Sophonias*.

Theme and Purpose:

The prophet speaks to the people of Judah whose moral and spiritual life had been dulled by the evil influence of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon (see 3:1-7). Consequently, in keeping with the warnings of cursing for disobedience in Deuteronomy 28, the central theme is that of judgment or the coming of the day of the Lord. In view of *Yahweh's* holiness, He must vindicate and demonstrate His holiness against sin by calling the nations of the world into account before Him. But God is also a God of mercy and blessing so there is also a strong emphasis and call for repentance with

the promise of blessing. Thus, Zephaniah clearly divides into three sections: retribution or judgment for sin, a call for repentance, and a promise of future redemption or blessing.

Key Word:

The key words are "day of the Lord," "that day," the day," which combined occur some twenty times. The key idea is that of judgment and restoration in the day of the Lord.

Key Verses:

1:7. Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests.

1:12. "And it will come about at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And I will punish the men Who are stagnant in spirit, Who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good or evil!"

1:14-15. Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

2:3. Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger.

Key Chapters:

The day of the Lord involves two distinct aspects: judgment followed by blessing. **Chapter three** clearly records these two distinct aspects of this awesome day. After Israel repents and returns to the Lord, they will be restored under the righteous rule of Messiah.

Christ as seen in Zephaniah:

Though not specifically mentioned in this book, Messiah is presented as the Righteous One within the nation of Israel (3:5) who is also their King (3:15).

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1)
- II. The Judgment of the Day of *Yahweh* (1:2-3:8)
 - A. Judgment on the whole earth (1:2-3)
 - B. Judgment on Judah (1:4-2:3)
 - 1. The causes of judgment (1:4-13)
 - 2. The description of judgment (1:14-18)
 - 3. A summons to the nation: Repent and Seek God (2:1-3)
 - C. Judgment on the surrounding nations (2:4-15)
 - 1. On Philistia (2:4-7)
 - 2. On Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
 - 3. On Ethiopia (2:12)
 - 4. On Assyria (2:13-15)
 - D. Judgment on Jerusalem (3:1-7)
 - 1. The prophet's indictment (3:1-5)

- 2. The Lord's judgment (3:6-7)
- E. Judgment on all the earth (3:8)
- III. The Restoration of the Day of *Yahweh's* (3:9-20)
 - A. The restoration of the nations (3:9-10)
 - B. The restoration of Israel (3:11-20)

HAGGAI (Encouragement)

With Haggai, we come to the only three post-exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all of whom spoke to the returned remnant. Their objective was to encourage their spiritual and moral life of this remnant, now back in their home land, as they sought to rebuild the temple and the nation. Haggai and Zechariah dealt mostly with the spiritual needs as they related to the rebuilding of the temple and Malachi dealt primarily with the moral and social needs involved with the reconstruction of the nation itself.

Author:

Haggai's name means "festal" or "festive, suggesting to some that he was born on one of the major feast days, though there is nothing in the text to support this. Haggai is known only from this book (mentioned 9 times) and the mention of him in Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14. Little is known about him. He refers to himself as "the prophet Haggai" (1:1), but nothing is known about his parents or genealogy. He was a contemporary of Zechariah the prophet and Zerubbabel the governor. His authorship is uncontested.

Date:

520 B.C.

Under the policies of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, almost 50,000 Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Among these were Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:2-4; cf. Isa. 44:28), Joshua the high priest and the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple occurred in 538 B.C.

Levitical sacrifices were soon reinstituted on a rebuilt altar for burnt offerings (Ezra 3:1-6), and in the second year of the return the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:16). However, Samaritan harassment and eventual Persian pressure brought a halt to the rebuilding of the temple. Then spiritual apathy set in; and for about 16 more years—until the rule of the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.)—the construction of the temple was discontinued. In the second year of Darius (520 B.C.) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; Hag. 1:1).

As stated by Haggai in 1:1, his first message was given on the first day of Elul (Aug.-Sept.) in the second year of Darius. This was in 520 B.C.

Title of the Book:

As is normal with the writing prophets, the book gets its name from the prophet himself. The title in the Septuagint is *Aggaïos*, and in the Vulgate it is *Aggaeus*.

Theme and Purpose:

The Book of Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament; only Obadiah is shorter. The literary style of Haggai is simple and direct. The content of the book is a report of four messages by a seemingly insignificant postexilic prophet whose ministry was apparently of limited duration.

Though Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, we should not underestimate the power of Haggai's four messages in his role in encouraging the rebuilding of the temple. "The truth is that few prophets have succeeded in packing into such brief compass so much spiritual common sense as Haggai did" (Frank E. Gaebelin, *Four Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Haggai*, p. 199). One outstanding feature of Haggai's message is his strong awareness that his messages had their origin in God. Some 25 times he affirmed the divine authority of his messages. He consistently introduced his messages with, "This is what the LORD Almighty says," and concluded them with a similar focus ("declares the LORD Almighty").

Haggai wrote to encourage and exhort the returned remnant to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. In the process of this he taught (1) God blesses His people when they put Him first, (2) that we should not grow weary in the service of the Lord, and that (3) God's promises for tomorrow become the foundation for our confidence for today.

Key Words:

The repetition of the term "house" as it is used in relation to the Temple focuses the readers' attention on the *reconstruction of the Temple* as the key focus of the book.

Key Verses:

1:7-8. Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! "Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD.

1:14. So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

2:7-9. "'And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' declares the LORD of hosts. 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and in this place I shall give peace,' declares the LORD of hosts."

Key Chapters:

The Messianic nature of 2:6-9 with its prophecy regarding the future glory of the temple makes **chapter two** the key chapter.

Christ as seen in Haggai:

Here Messiah is portrayed as the Restorer of the Temple's glory (2:7-9) and the Overthrower of the kingdoms of the world (2:22).

Outline:

- I. The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple (1:1-15)
 - A. The Introduction (1:1)
 - B. The First Rebuke (1:2-6)
 - C. The Remedy (1:7-8)
 - D. The Second Rebuke (1:9-11)
 - E. The Response to the Prophet's Message (1:12-15)
- II. The Second Message: A Call to Find Courage in God's Promises (2:1-9)
 - A. The Introduction (2:1-2)
 - B. The Promises of Enablement and Future Glory (2:3-9)
- III. The Third Message: A Call to Cleanness of Life (2:10-19)
 - A. The Introduction (2:10)
 - B. The Problem: The Disobedience of the Remnant (2:11-14)
 - C. The Solution: The Obedience of the Remnant (2:15-19)
- IV. The Fourth Message: A Call to Confidence in the Future (2:20-23)
 - A. The Introduction (2:20-21a)
 - B. A Promise of the Future Defeat of the Gentile Kingdoms (2:21b-22)
 - C. A Promise of the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom (2:23)

ZECHARIAH (the Jealousy of *Yahweh*)

Author and Title:

Zechariah the prophet was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the priest who led the Levites (Neh. 12:4), and a contemporary of the previous prophet (Ezra 6:14). His name (Zekarya,h) means "*Yahweh* remembers" or "*Yahweh* has remembered." This is a theme that runs like a thread through the whole book. In the Greek and Latin version Zechariah is *Zacharias*.

Date:

520-518 B.C.

The first verse presents Zechariah as the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, who was undoubtedly the same priest as the one mentioned in Neh. 12:4 as a contemporary of Zerubbabel. In Zech. 2:4 the prophet is spoken of as a youth (*na'ar*). He would probably have been a young man at the time he cooperated with Haggai in the rebuilding campaign of 520 B.C. His last dated prophecy (chap. 7) was given two years later, in 518; yet chapters 9-14 show every appearance of having been composed some decades after that, possibly after 480 B.C. in view of the reference to Greece (9:13). As Unger points out (IGOT; p. 355), the successful resistance of the Greek nation to the invasion of Xerxes would naturally have brought them into a new prominence in the eyes of all the peoples of the Near East. We have no further information concerning Zechariah's personal career, except the reference in Matt. 23:35, which seems to indicate that he was martyred by mob action in the temple grounds (since the Zechariah that Christ mentions is said to be the son of Berechiah rather than of Jehoiada, who however met his end in a like manner back in the days of King Joash, according to 2 Chron. 24:20-21).⁸¹

⁸¹ Gleason Archer, Electronic Media

Theme and Purpose:

Zechariah was written to encourage the returned remnant to complete their work in rebuilding the temple. The prophet also showed that God was at work in the world restoring Israel to their spiritual inheritance in preparation for the coming Messiah. Doctrinally, Zechariah demonstrates the prominence of the temple in God's spiritual restoration of Israel; shows the providence of God in bringing back His people to their land, and it highlights the preeminence of the Messiah in the future spiritual restoration of the Nation.

Key Word:

"The Word of the Lord" (13 occurrences) and "The Lord of Hosts" (53 occurrences) are two prominent expressions that lay stress on the divine nature of Zechariah's message, but the prominent idea of the book *preparing for the coming Messiah* in both of His advents.

Key Verses:

8:3. "Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.'

9:9-10. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Key Chapters:

Zechariah builds to a tremendous climax in chapter 14 where he discloses the last siege of Jerusalem, the initial victory of the enemies of Israel, the cleaving of the Mount of Olives, the Lord's defense of Jerusalem with His visible appearance on Olivet, judgment on the confederated nations, the topographical changes in the land of Israel, the Feast of Tabernacles in the Millennium, and the ultimate holiness of Jerusalem and her people.⁸²

Christ as seen in Zechariah:

Perhaps no Old Testament book is more Messianic than Zechariah.

In an often-quoted statement, George L. Robinson has called the Book of Zechariah "the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, 5:3136). The messianic emphasis of Zechariah accounts for its frequent citation by New Testament authors.⁸³

Zechariah presents Messiah or Christ in both of his advents and as both Servant and King, as Man and God, as the Angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous Branch (3:8), the Stone with the seven

⁸² Wilkinson and Boa, p. 290.

⁸³ Walvoord/Zuck, Electronic Media.

eyes (3:9), the Crucified Savior or the pierced One (12:10), the coming and humble King (9:9-10), the smitten Shepherd who will be abandoned (13:7), and the coming Judge and righteous King (14).

Outline:

- I. The Call to repentance (1:1-6)
- II. The Eight Visions of Zechariah (1:7-6:8)
 - A. The Vision of the Horses and Riders (1:7-17)
 - B. The Vision of the Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)
 - C. The Vision of the Surveyor (2:1-13)
 - D. The Vision of the Golden Lampstand (4:1-14)
 - E. The Vision of the Flying Scroll (5:1-4)
 - F. The Vision of the Woman in the Ephah (5:5-11)
 - G. The Vision of the Four Chariots (6:1-8)
- III. The Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. The Questions Concerning the Fasts (7:1-8:23)
- V. The Oracles Concerning the Future (9:1-14:21)
 - A. The First Oracle: The Rejection of Messiah (9:1-11:17)
 - B. The Second Oracle: The Reign of Messiah (12:1-14:21)

MALACHI (Repent and Return)

Author and Title:

Malachi is only mentioned in Malachi 1:1 as the author of this prophecy. However, though there is an unsubstantiated Jewish tradition that claims it was written by Nehemiah (interpreting the word *Malachi* as a designation of an unnamed messenger),⁸⁴ the authorship, date, and unity of the book has never been effectively challenged. Malachi (Maáa,chi,) means "My Messenger" and may be a shortened form of Maláak Ya,h, "Messenger of *Yahweh*." This is fitting for the book anticipates the coming of the "messenger of the covenant" (cf. 3:1), a prophecy of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10). The Septuagint has *Malachias* and the Latin uses *Maleachi* for the title.

Date:

450-400 B.C.

Concerning the date of Malachi, Gleason writes:

Judging from internal evidence, it seems clear that his prophecies were given in the second half of the fifth century, probably around 435 B.C. We come to this conclusion from the following indications: (1) The temple had already been rebuilt and Mosaic sacrifice reinstituted (1:7,10; 3:1). (2) A Persian-appointed governor (mentioned in 1:8) was in authority at that time; hence it could not have been during either of Nehemiah's governorships (in 445 and 433). (3) The sins which Malachi denounces are the same as those Nehemiah had to correct during his second term, namely, (a) priestly laxity (1:6; Neh. 13:4-9), (b) neglect of tithes, to the impoverishment of the Levites (3:7-12; cf. Neh. 13:10-13), (c) much intermarriage with foreign women (2:10-16; cf. Neh. 13:23-28). It is reasonable to assume that Malachi

⁸⁴ Geisler, p. 297.

had already protested against these abuses in the years just preceding Nehemiah's return; hence a fair estimate would be about 435 B.C.⁸⁵

Theme and Purpose:

Under the leadership of Nehemiah, there had been a period of revival (Neh. 10:28-39), but the priests and the people had grown cold in their walk with God and had become external and mechanical in their observance of the law. Though they were guilty of the sins Malachi denounced (priestly laxity, neglect of the tithes, and intermarriage with foreign women), the people acted bewildered over why God was dissatisfied with them. Malachi wrote to answer the questions of the priests and people, to reveal and rebuke them for their sins, their backsliding, and poor attitudes, but to also encourage them by ending on a note of encouragement through the coming of the Lord's messenger who would clear the way for Messiah.

Thus, Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of the true worship of the Lord and called them to repentance (1:6; 3:7). Gleason summarizes the theme as follows:

The theme of Malachi is that sincerity toward God and a holy manner of life are absolutely essential in the Lord's eyes, if His favor is to be bestowed upon the crops and the nation's economic welfare. Israel must live up to her high calling as a holy nation and wait for the coming of the Messiah, who by a ministry of healing as well as judgment will lead the nation to a realization of all her fondest hopes.⁸⁶

Key Word:

Twelve times in Malachi we read either "you say" (11 times) or "you also say" (once). Also, the word curse or cursed occurs seven times in four verses. In answer to their questions and their failure to understand God's judgment, Malachi answers and shows them why. The key idea that prevails is Malachi's answer and appeal to the wayward remnant that had returned.

Key Verses:

2:17. 17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

3:1. "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

4:5-6. "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

Key Chapters:

In that they anticipate or prophesy of the coming of the Messenger of the Lord who will precede the coming of Messiah Himself, **chapters 3 and 4** together are the key chapters of the book,

⁸⁵ Gleason Archer, Electronic Media.

⁸⁶ Gleason Archer, Electronic Media.

for it is the Messiah Himself who is the answer to our sin as is so illustrated in the sins of the returned remnant.

Christ as seen in Malachi:

Regarding the Messianic focus of Malachi, Wilkinson and Boa have an excellent summary:

The Book of Malachi is the prelude to four hundred years of prophetic silence, broken finally by the words of the next prophet, John the Baptist: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Malachi predicts the coming of the messenger who will clear the way before the Lord (3:1; cf. Is. 40:30. John the Baptist later fulfills this prophecy, but in the next few verses (3:2-5) jump ahead to Christ in His second advent...⁸⁷

Outline:

- I. The Privilege Place of Israel (1:1-5)
 - A. God's Love Declared (1:1-2a)
 - B. God's Love Doubted (1:2b)
 - C. God's Love Demonstrated (1:3-5)
- II. The Pollution of Israel (1:6-3:15)
 - A. Cheating (1:6-14)
 - B. Unfaithfulness (2:1-9)
 - C. Spiritually Mixed Marriages (2:10-12)
 - D. Divorce (2:13-16)
 - E. Impiety and Impertinence (2:17)
 - F. Parenthesis: The Coming of John the Baptist (3:1-6)
 - G. Robbery (3:7-12)
 - H. Arrogance (3:13-15)
- III. The Promises to the People (3:16-4:6)
 - A. The Promise of the Book of Remembrance (3:16-18)
 - B. The Promise of the Coming Christ (4:1-3)
 - C. The Promise of the Coming of Elijah (4:4-6)

⁸⁷ Wilkinson and Boa, p. 296.