

MAJOR PROPHETS

AN INTRODUCTION

MAJOR/MINOR

- The terms “Major” and “Minor” is due to the number of scrolls/ pages written by the concerned prophet.
- While the minor prophets consist of few scrolls the major prophets contain larger number scrolls
- As for the importance in the canon - both are equal

MAJOR

- According to the Jews/protestant canons they refer only to Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel as major prophets and the book of Daniel is put under the “Writings” (TaNaK).
- On the other hand in the Roman Catholic canon the book of Daniel is placed immediately after Ezekiel under the major Prophets.

BOOK OF ISAIAH

- The book of Isaiah, one of the longer units in the Hebrew Bible, comprises prophetic material in verse and prose collected over a period of at least half millennium.
- Gesenius (1821) > treated 1-39 & 40-66 as distinct units.
- Later Bernhard Duhm (1892) treated the book in three parts > 1-39, 40-55, 56-66.

ISAIAH

- Isaiah covers the long duration from the eighth-century to the Persian Period. But skip the destruction of Jerusalem and (most of) the exile.
- Then Isaiah jumps from the end of the eighth-century to the latter half of the sixth. The book moves from the account of the miraculous delivery of Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib (701 BCE) recounted in Isaiah 36-39 to the materials which presume the imminent return from Babylon (40-55).
- Isaiah thus skips the entire seventh-century and most of the sixth. Isaiah concludes with material that assumes the community is again living in the land and that the temple has been rebuilt (56-66).

JEREMIAH

- Ezekiel and Jeremiah overlap chronologically, but the locus of action is different.
- Jeremiah takes place in Jerusalem. It deals with the last quarter of the seventh-century, frequently narrating episodes of conflict between Jeremiah, the kings (Jehoiakim and Zedekiah), and the religious elites (certain priests and other prophets).
- Jeremiah also contains two accounts of Jerusalem's destruction (39:1-10; 52:1-16) and its aftermath (39:11-44:30; 52:17-34).
- It periodically hints at the hope of a return to Jerusalem, but by and large it devotes less space to a possible return than the other three books in the *nebi'im*

EZEKIEL

- Ezekiel begins abruptly in the midst of the first deportation (597 BCE), with Ezekiel already living among the Babylonian exiles. The book provides reports of Jerusalem's destruction (587 BCE), but these reports come from afar and lead to theological evaluations. Ezekiel contains more material which anticipates a return to the land (40-48), but nothing which already assumes the exiles have already returned

DANIEL

- In Jewish canon, Daniel appears among the *ketubim* because the prophetic canon had achieved some measure of fixed status as a group by 200 BC, since most critical scholars date Daniel no earlier than the early second-century.
- The literary setting of Daniel begins later and extends further into the postexilic period than any of the writings in the *nebi'im*.

FIRST ISAIAH

- Ch:1 Introductory collection of oracles from various periods
- 2-12 Oracles about Judah and Jerusalem
- 13-23 Oracles against Foreign Nations
- 24-27 The 'Isaiah Apocalypse'
- 28-31 Oracles Mainly about the 'Assyrian Crisis'
- 32-33 Oracles about Human and Divine Kingship
- 34-35 Oracles of Judgment on Edom and Salvation for Israel
- 36-39 Narratives about Isaiah

FIRST ISAIAH

- **Secondary Material:**
- 1) Chapters 24-27 are usually called 'the Isaiah Apocalypse'
- 2) Chapters 36-38 are almost identical with 2 Kgs 18-19, the account of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 BCE, though there are slight discrepancies.
- 3) The oracles against foreign nations in 13-23 are something of a ragbag of material, probably from a number of different periods.
- 4) Chapter 34-35 oracle against the Edomites,.
- 5) Chapters 32-33 are mysterious collection.

FIRST ISAIAH

- **Call of Isaiah** – Ch 6 ... God, who is enthroned majestically is calling
- **The Syro-Ephraimite Crisis** ... Ch 7-8; Isa 17:1-6 predicts the fall of Samaria and Damascus; Ch:28 fall of Samaria
- **Isaiah as the symbol** ... Ch 20
- **Messainic Prophecy** .. Ch 7:14; 9:1-6 (Post.Event.Reflection)
- **Is 30:15** “**By waiting and by calm you shall be saved. In quiet and in trust your strength lies. But this you did not wish**”

SECOND ISAIAH

- **The Prophet of the Exile**
- **Anonymity:** -the name of Isaiah never occurs in the last twenty seven chapters of the book (. 1-13 > 4x; ch. 20 > 2x; 37-39 > 10x;)
- **Time – sixth century BC –** (The mention of Cyrus 44:28; 45:1)
- **Style:** In general there is an unmistakable note of exultation and confidence which runs through these chapters and marks them as distinctive.

SECOND ISAIAH

- **Central Message:** 40:1-8 is summarized in the scene in the heavenly council. It's essential features are:
- The exiled people are to take heart because their sins have now been expiated and their term of punishment is over (vv 1-2).
- Yahweh is now about to come to the aid of his people in such a decisive fashion that the whole world will be astonished at this revelation of his glory (3-5).
- The guarantee of this message of hope and restoration is the word of Yahweh spoken through the prophet, which is all-powerful, and compared with which all human activity is ludicrously impotent (6-8).

SERVANT SONGS

- Who is the Lord, God – the mighty One and the victorious King
- The Israelites are the CHOSEN ONES of the Lord
- Jerusalem is the foot stool of the Mighty One.
 - With defeat and exile, the faith of Israelites was in crisis – what happened to the mighty and victorious One?
 - Then emerges the servant – “doulos” concept

FIRST SERVANT SONG 42:1-4

- - god's own upheld person is a servant
- - he is missioned to bring forth justice
- Method – not by shouting, nor by PRO
 - - a bruised reed he shall not break; a smoldering wick he shall not quench
 - He will never tire till Justice is established

SECOND SERVANT SONG 49:1-7

- The Lord who calls, names is the one who Trains the servant (sharp-edged sword and polished arrow)
- When the servant expresses his failure of the Mission, the Lord answers ... it is too little for you to be my servant for Jacob alone ... but you are a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth..

THIRD SERVANT SONG 50:4-11

- The Lord teaches the servant to listen and speak;
- The servant is patient and perseveres in midst of oppositions
- The servant trusts in the Lord

FOURTH SERVANT SONG 52:13-53:12

- The fourth servant song become a classic among the followers of Jesus to claim the servant hood to him.
- The concept of Vicarious suffering – one suffers for the other (53:4 it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured; v.5 he was pierced for our offences crushed for our sins)
- The servant does not complain (v.7 Like a lamb led to the slaughters, he was silent and opened not his mouth)
- The death of the servant – v.9 a grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers
- The servant's Resurrection – v.10-12 he shall see the light in fullness of days...

THIRD ISAIAH

- 56:1-8 concerning Sabbath-keeping and admission to worship
- 65:9-12 denunciation of leaders who 'turn to their own way'
- 57:1-58:14 denunciation of idolatry; promise to the faithful
- 59:1-15a lament on behalf of the community
- 59:15b-20 the divine warrior intervenes
- 60-62 promises of salvation
- 63:1-6 the divine warrior intervenes
- 63:7-64:12 lament on behalf of the community
- 65:1-25 denunciation of idolatry; promise to the faithful
- 66:3-4 denunciation of those who 'turn their own ways'
- 66:1-24 concerning temple, sacrifice admission to worship.

BOOK OF JEREMIAH

- Jeremiah – a prophet or a priest?
- **Jeremiah the actor:** 13:1–7 (buying linen cloth); 19:1–2, 10–11 (potters earthen flask); 25:15–17 (drinking wine from the cup); 27:1–7, 12 (bands and yoke bars upon the shoulders); 28:10–11 (two yokes); 32:6–15 (purchase of land); 35 (giving drinks to Rachabites); 43:8–13 (sinking the large stones); 51:59–64
- **Jeremiah the writer** - In 36:1–3 Jeremiah is commanded *to write* on a scroll all the divine words preached by him over the previous twenty-three years.

CONFESSIONS OF JEREMIAH

- Jeremiah's Confessions:
- 11:18-23; // 12:1-6; If running against men has wearied you, how will you race against horses?
- 15:10-21; Woe to me, mother, that you gave me birth... "I will make you a solid wall of brass...
- 17:14-18; heal me, Lord, that I may be healed
- 18:18-23; Must good be repaid with evil
- 20:7-18 - You duped me

EZEKIEL

This is a **book of prose**. (It is a rhetorical prose, sometimes rather wordy and repetitive.)

It is strongly reminiscent of the priestly parts of the Pentateuch, and is full of characteristic and idiosyncratic phrases.

1) The prophet is often addressed by God as 'Son of Man' 100x (Daniel)

2) God is addressed 'Lord God' – 200x.

3) 'Rebellious house' is a phrase applied to the prophet's own people – Rebellious people.

4) 'Behold, I am against...' usually 'Behold, I am against you'. It is typical of him (1:19; 15:6, 20; 18:11).

EZEKIEL

- 1:1 the first fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians took place in 597 BCE and resulted in the first deportation (2kgs 24:8-17).
- 1:1; 33:21; 40:1 implies that he had been among those first deported.
- He received his call to be a prophet near his home in Babylonia in 593
- 1:3 the priest – he knew the ins and outs of the temple
- Though he stayed Babylonia, his prophesying directed a good deal of his attention to the Palestinian homeland.
- 3:25-27 he was struck dumb and was relieved only after five years, when the news of second fall of Jerusalem in 586.

EZEKIEL

Chapters 1-3 Call and mission narratives

Ch 15 Vine to be thrown in the fire

Ch 16: Faithless spouse

Ch 17 Eagles and vine (king Jehoiachin and Zedekiah)

Chapter 18 on individual responsibility – v.4 only the one who sins shall die

Ch 23 story of two sisters – Samaria (oholah – tent shrine)
and Jerusalem (oholibah – she has a tent)

Ch 33 Prophet as watchman

Chapter 34 diatribe against the “Shepherds”

Ch 37 dry bones come to life

Ch 47 wonderful stream – restoring to fertility traditionally and

DANIEL

- The Book of Daniel is divided into two main parts that are almost equal in length. But these two parts are of two slightly different genres. The first part (chapters 1–6) contains six stories about Daniel that are more or less independent of each other. They focus on Daniel and his three companions, who were young Jews that had been deported to Babylon at the end of the seventh century B.C. These stories show the kinds of pressures, threats, and punishments inflicted on the Jews by their oppressors

DANIEL PART ONE

- THE STORY OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS 1.1–6.28
- The young men at Nebuchadnezzar's court 1.1-21
- The king's first dream 2.1-49
- The Fiery Furnace 3.1-100
- The king's second dream 4.1-34
- The handwriting on the wall 5.1-30
- Daniel in the lions' pit 6.1-29

DANIEL PART TWO

- The second part of the book (chapters 7–12) tells about several visions that God gave to Daniel. Daniel is directly forbidden to publish these visions until the appointed time. The visions reveal to Daniel the history of the Jewish people, who were successively placed under the domination of several foreign nations. But at last God gives them freedom, establishes his kingdom and fully manifests his own authority

DANIEL PART TWO

- DANIEL'S VISIONS 7.1–12.13
- The vision of the four beasts 7.1-28
- The ram and the goat 8.1-27
- Daniel ponders Jeremiah's prophecy 9.1-27
- The One dressed in linen 10.1–12.13

DANIEL - APPENDIX

- APPENDIX 13:1- 14:41
- Susanna's Story 13:1-64
- Bel and Dragon 14:1-42