

The Minor Prophets

D I G G I N G D E E P E R

Folsom, 2001

Prepare
to meet your

G O D



Amos 4:12



The Interpretation of Prophecy

A proper approach to prophecy will read nothing into a prophecy that is not there and will make clear all that the prophet said or wrote to his own people and make the correctly interpreted message of the prophet relevant to our own times.

As you read a prophecy, make sure you understand the terms, get the context and discern the meaning for the original audience. If predictive, find the fulfillment and determine whether there is single or multiple fulfillments. Look for any New Testament allusions or applications. Then glean lessons for today (application).

The Prophet

... a "spokesman for God who declares God's will to the people." He spoke about the past, present and future. Heart of message: Amos 4:5

Two forms of speaking:

- *Forthtelling*: exhortation, reproof, correction, instruction (Ezek. 3:16-21)
- *Foretelling*: prediction of future events (Isa. 46:10)

Credibility

Where did prophet obtain message?

- Dt. 18:21-22 / Jer. 14:14-15
- False Prophets saw "visions of emptiness": Ezek. 13:6, 9, 21; "deceptions & falsehood": Ezek. 13:8; Jer. 23:16. Prophesied peace when there was no peace: Jer. 6:13-14.

Means of receipt of message...

- Dreams & visions. Num. 12:6; Hb. 1:1
- Ecstatic state of mind. Isa. 6:1ff. Amos 1:1 ("words...saw")
- Direct encounter with God. II Kings 20:1-6 (and Moses).

Interpretation Principles

- Text has but one meaning...
- Avoid being too-literal...
- Avoid being too-figurative...
- Employ correspondence, equivalence, analogy approach...

E.g., "chariots" correspond to transportation in day of fulfillment; worship items in day of prophecy are analogous to worship in day of fulfillment (cf. temple, priesthood, temple rites in Ezekiel with I Corinthians 3, 6 and Hebrews 8-10).



Minor Prophets

Things to Look For...

Single fulfillment

Isaiah 7:14 >> Matthew 1:23. Isaiah 9:1-2 >> Matthew 4:12-17
Isaiah 44:28; 45:1 re: "Cyrus" (c. 700 B.C.) >> Fulfilled in 539 B.C.

Multiple fulfillment

II Samuel 7:12-14 >> (1) Solomon – I Chron. 28:1-8 (2) Christ – Psalm 2:6-7;
Hebrews 1:5; 5:5

Time clues

Daniel 2:44; 7:1-14. When the kingdom was to come.
Daniel 8:26 (550 B.C.) refers to Antiochus IV, "Epiphanies" (164 B.C.). "Many days."
Cf. Mt. 3:2; 4:17; Rev. 1:3 = "at hand," "must shortly come to pass."

Miscellaneous

- "Subtle" teaching: Jeremiah 22:24-30. Cf. Mt. 1:12 (Acts 2:29-36).
- Vivid language: Ezek. 37:1-14; Jer. 2:13
- Nature & Character of God: Habakkuk 2:20; Jonah 4:10-11;
- What God requires: Jeremiah 7:3-7; Micah 6:6-8



Obadiah

The most "minor" of the Minor Prophets, Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It is a treatise against all forms of pride, pictured here in terms of Edom's pride in her dealings with Israel. They were proud of their military strength, which made them independent of God. They were proud of the alliances they had formed with other nations, giving them a false sense of security. And they were proud of their wisdom: they thought they could deal with anything that came along. Obadiah came with a message of judgment on all such pride; it surely "goes before the fall" (Pr. 16:18).

Meaning of Name: _____

Obadiah's Audience: _____

Date & Historical Context: c. _____ B.C.

The Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah and plundered Jerusalem (II Chron. 21:16-17; Joel 3:3-6; Amos 1:6). The Edomites were also bitter enemies of Judah at that time (II Kings 8:20-22; II Chron. 21:8-10).

Notes: Esau, Jacob's brother, came out to meet Jacob from Seir, in Edom (Gen. 32:3) which lay about 50 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Gen. 33:16 tells us that Esau returned there. Later, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, the Edomites refused to let them pass through their land (Num. 20:14-21). David conquered the Edomites in a battle recorded in II Sam. 8:13, 14 and from then through the reign of Solomon, the Edomites were subject to the sons of Jacob. The Nabateans controlled Edom from 312 B.C. During this time, Edom was called Idumea. Herod the Great was an Idumean. As Obadiah prophesied, Edom has been "brought to nothing," never heard from again after about 70 A.D.

Main Theme, Historical: _____

Timeless Truths

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Joel

Joel's prophecy followed a great locust storm that ravaged Palestine. A similar plague struck the same area in 1915 and National Geographic reported on it. In early March, female locusts, about 2 ½ inches long, swarmed into the land and laid 65,000 to 75,000 eggs in each single square meter of soil. Patches covered the entire land in Syria and Palestine down to the border of Egypt. Within weeks, the eggs hatched young locusts that resembled large ants. They had no wings, but began hopping forward on the ground, like fleas, covering 400-600 feet a day and devouring all vegetation along the way. By the end of May, they had molted, had turned bright yellow (a caption on a picture said that the yellow skin means a "grasshopper gone berserk"). They now had wings, though they still could not fly. Instead they walked along the ground, once again consuming anything in their path. Finally, they molted again, becoming the adults like those that invaded the land initially. The damage was devastating. Within minutes, a vineyard or an orchard would be stripped bare. It is within this historical framework that Joel proclaims God's judgment.

Meaning of Name: _____.

Audience: _____.

Date & Historical Context: c. _____ B.C.

A locust plague prefigures the judgment of God upon the nations. But there is hope, as God declares that "afterward" He will pour His Spirit on all flesh and "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (2:28, 32).

Main Theme, Historical:

_____.

Timeless Truths

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.



Jonah

The best known of the "Minor Prophets," the story of Jonah is both fascinating and instructive. Unlike the prophecies of Obadiah and Joel, both of which can be considered "sermons" or "oracles," Jonah is an historical narrative about the prophet's experience. The central figure of the narrative, though, is not Jonah, nor the fish, nor the Ninevites; it is God. As you read the story, focus on what it tells you about the Lord.

Meaning of Name: _____.

Audience: _____.

Date & Historical Context: c. _____ B.C. II Kings 14:25 says "He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher." This fixes the date of Jonah during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (c. 783-743 B.C.). Apparently, Assyria had been toying with the idea of monotheism during the reign of Queen Semiramis and her son Adad-Nerari III (810-782), though the worship was directed to the god Nebo. God knew the time was ripe to preach to Ninevah an "unknown God" and he must have done it during the reign of Assuradan III (771-754 B.C.).

Notes: Some hold that the story of Jonah is a *myth*. Others regard it as an *allegory* (a fanciful description of Israel's later captivity and restoration). But that it is an *historical* event is certified by Jesus Himself when he refers to it in Mt. 12:39, 40. One cannot deny the historicity of Jonah without also calling into question Jesus' credibility.

Main Theme, Historical:

_____.

Timeless Truths

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.



Minor Prophets

Amos

Amos was not a prophet nor the son of a prophet; he was a shepherd and a tender of sycamore fruit from the town of Tekoa, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem (see 1:1; 7:14). He was called by God and told to go prophecy to the people of Israel. He was not a cultic¹ prophet, but was called to prophecy against the cult, condemning their practices.

Amos prophesied during the reign of Uzziah in the South (c. 792-740 B.C.) and Jeroboam II in the North (c. 793-753 B.C.). Israel was enjoying a time of economic prosperity and with it, opulent luxury. The abundance of creature comforts turned Israel's heart away from God and they became spiritually bankrupt, though they continued to practice the public worship of God.

The prophet's warnings to a rich nation, in the midst of unparalleled peace and prosperity, make it a timely message for Christians in America today. "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion," is a message alive with meaning for us today and we do well to look to ourselves to see how our spiritual lives are faring in the midst of luxury.

Meaning of Name: _____.

Audience: _____.

Date & Historical Context: c. _____ B.C.

Main Theme, Historical: _____.

Textual Study

Look for the following as you read through the text: *Judgments* on the surrounding nations, and the reason for judgment on each. *Exhortations* (look for the key words, "Hear this word..."). *Woes*. *Visions*. *Promises*.

Timeless Truths

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

¹"Cultic" refers to the public worship of a people, involving established forms, rites, feasts, times, places, etc. It should not be confused with the popular connotation (e.g., the Satanic Cult).

The Minor Prophets

D I G G I N G D E E P E R

Folsom, 2003

Micah to Malachi

Who is a
God
like You?

Micah 7:18



Micah

“Who is like Yahweh?” (see 7:18) • From Moresheth-Gath
735-710 BC • To Judah

Introduction

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and prophesied during a time of national and political upheaval. He worked during part of the reigns of three Southern kings: Jotham (750-732 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC) and Hezekiah (715-686 BC). Assyrian domination of the Near East was nearly complete by 740 BC. Judah and Israel became tribute-paying vassals of Assyria and in 722 BC, Israel fell to Assyria (2 Kings 16-17). The written records of Sargon II say that he “beseiged and conquered Samaria (and) led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it.” Meanwhile, Judah remained a vassal.

Micah ascribes Samaria’s destruction, imminent in his day, to God’s judgment on their idolatry. Hezekiah, the faithful king of Judah, instituted many reforms, moving Judah away from idolatry. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king during Hezekiah’s reign, was destroying many cities in Judah and sought to attack Jerusalem in 701 BC. However, God intervened and the Assyrians were unsuccessful (see 2 Kings 18-19). The annals of Sennacherib boast that he had destroyed 46 cities and countless small villages. He took 200, 150 people captive, along with livestock. Of Hezekiah, Sennacherib said, “Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage.”

Micah’s work, as that of the other prophets, was to denounce the evil practices of the nation and predict the coming judgment of God. Like other prophet’s, Micah competed with “the people’s prophets,” false prophets who said “all is well, don’t worry, be happy!” (See Jeremiah 6:14ff.). God’s message, through Micah, was that destruction was right around the corner. In preaching the message of destruction, he also delivered a message of hope and gave direction to the faithful. Perhaps the most famous of his statements, and one that is applicable to us today, is found in 6:6-8.

Textual Study

As you read, think about how the concept of authority is developed by the prophet. Who was placing themselves in authority? Who truly had the authority?

Timeless Truths

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.



History

Judean Kings: Jotham (739-731); Ahaz (731-715); Hezekiah (715-686).

- Put an asterisk (*) by the name of the “good” kings.

Assyrian Kings: Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727); Shalmaneser V (727-722); Sargon II (722-705); Sennacherib (705-681)

Prophecies:

Where are these prophecies found in Micah?

- Concerning the Babylon Captivity _____
- Concern the place of birth of the Savior _____ (why is this a particularly notable prophecy?)

Political/Social Situation

Under Uzziah (767-739) and his son Jotham (739-731), Judah had prospered. What was the effect of this prosperity on the spiritual condition of Judah? Describe some of the sins Micah specifies in his preaching.

During the reign of Ahaz, Judah was threatened by a coalition of Israel and Syria. The kings, Rezin (Syria) and Pekah (Israel) became upset at Ahaz because he would not join them in a war against Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria. In fact, while Tiglath-Pileser was at Damascus, Ahaz appealed to him for help against Israel and Syria. This cost Judah their independence and they had to pay tribute to Assyria during Ahaz' reign.

During the reign of Hezekiah, Sargon II, successor to Tiglath-Pileser, invaded Judah in 712 BC. After Sargon died, Sennacherib became ruler and captured, according to his own claims, 46 Judean cities, and prepared to lay siege on Jerusalem in 701 BC (see Micah 1:9). They were repelled by God, however, undoubtedly because of the faith of Hezekiah and the preaching of Micah and Isaiah (740-680).

Key Passages

Note the passages in Micah that you find most significant. . .

- Historically:
- Theologically:
- Spiritually:

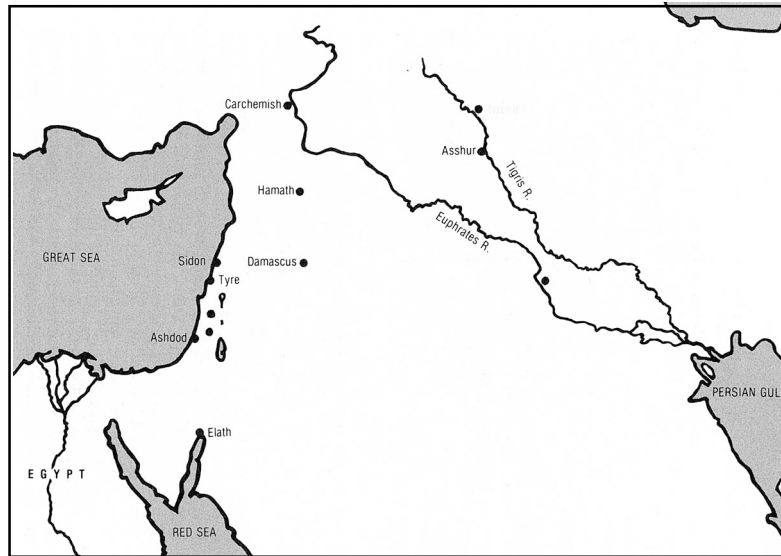


Geography

Find on map – Syria, Assyria, Judah (Southern Kingdom), Samaria (Northern Kingdom), Moresheth-Gath, Edom

Point the prophet to the place where he prophesied.

- Jonah (760)
- Amos (760-753)
- Hosea (755-710)
- Isaiah (740-680)
- Nahum (660)
- Joel (835)
- Micah (735-710)
- Obadiah (845)
- Jeremiah (627-580)
- Zephaniah (630-625)
- Habakkuk (606)



Notes



Nahum

Meaning of Name: "Comfort"

Audience: Ninevah (Assyrian Kingdom Capital)

Date: c. 660 BC

MAIN THEME: WICKEDNESS PROVOKES GOD'S WRATH

ANALYSIS OF THE PROPHECY

The Declaration of Vengeance (chapter 1)

The subject and method (1:1)

Who is Like Yahweh? (1:2-8)

His character (1:2-3)

His majesty (1:4-6)

His method (1:7-8)

The Verdict (1:9-14)

To Ninevah (1:9-11)

To Israel about Ninevah (1:12-13)

To Ninevah (1:14)

The message to Judah (1:15)

The Execution of Vengeance (chapter 2)

Sarcastic Warning to Ninevah (2:1-2)

Prepare! (2:1)

Purpose (2:2)

The vision of destruction (2:3-10)

The conflict (2:3-5)

The conquest (2:6-9)

The consummation (2:10)

The end of the "lion's" roar (2:11-13)

The Vindication of Vengeance (chapter 3)

The sins of the city (3:1-4)

A city with blood on its hands (3:1)

A city bent on war (3:2-3)

The city as the world's whore (3:4)

Nineveh's Doom (3:5-19)

The exposure of their sins (3:5-6)

The verdict of the nations (3:7)

A fate similar to other nations, like

Thebes (No-Amon) (3:8-11)

Details of destruction (3:12-17)

The joy of the world (3:18-19)



Arrogant Assyria



When It Happened

David 1000 BC

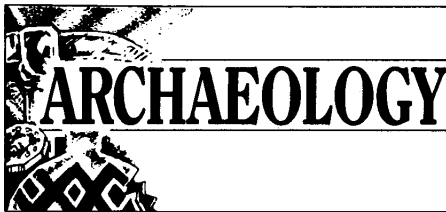
Fall of Thebes 663 BC

Fall of Assyria 612 BC

Malachi 425 BC

Nahum's Prophecy (c. 660)

The End



Nineveh's Fall. Archaeology has teamed up with Nahum's prophecy to corroborate the accuracy of his predictions, even to the minutest details. This great city stood on the left bank of the Tigris River. Its walls were one hundred feet high, which were strengthened by 1,500 towers, wide enough for three chariots to ride abreast, and sixty miles in circumference.

The side of the city not protected by the Tigris was surrounded by a moat. The oldest aqueduct in history supplied the city with water, even in times of siege, and the city maintained its own food supply. To the Ninevites, their city was impregnable. Yet Nahum predicted its destruction as follows:

1. With an overwhelming flood: 1:8
2. While its leaders are drunk they shall be devoured as stubble: 1:10
3. The enemy against them shall be like chariots with flaming torches: 2:3,4
4. In drunkenness they shall seek to prepare their defenses: 2:5
5. The gates of the river shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved: 2:6
6. "Nineveh is like a [flooded] pool, whose waters run wild": 2:8
7. By its being leveled it will become "empty, and void, and waste": 2:10; 3:7
8. "I am against you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke": 2:13
9. Fire to destroy her strongholds: 3:13
10. No hope for survival—God will "make an utter end of the place," with "no healing of thy bruises:" 1:8; 3:19

When Nineveh was conquered in ca. 612 B.C. by Cyaxares of the Medes and Nabopolassar of Babylon, the destruction fulfilled Nahum's prophecy to the last detail! They sent a demolition squad to destroy the city's aqueduct, and to divert the Tigris River simultaneously, which flooded Nineveh (1:8; 2:6). The flood waters dissolved the mud-brick foundations of houses and buildings, and the walls crumbled. Evidence also shows that, along with the flood, the city was burned (2:13; 3:13). Those in authority, as drunk as they were (2:5), and seeing their doom, mounted a funeral pyre and died as they were devoured by the flames. No one wept over her funeral, and she was no more heard of (3:7; 2:13). From 612 B.C. till A.D. 1845 it was a forgotten site. Since then, discovered evidence tips the scales in favor of God's Word through Nahum.

From World's Bible Handbook, by Robert Boyd



Habakkuk

Meaning of Name: “One who embraces”
 Audience: Judah
 Date: c. 607-606 BC

MAIN THEME: THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

ANALYSIS OF THE PROPHECY

Habakkuk's Twofold Complaint & God's Reply (Chapters 1-2)

The first complaint (1:1-11)

Israel's sin and God's silence (1:2-4)

God's reply: the Chaldean invasion (1:5-11)

The second complaint (1:12-2:20)

Chaldean cruelty and God's silence (1:12-2:1)

God's response: Israel's salvation

Woes upon the Chaldeans (2:2-20)

Habakkuk's Prayer (Chapter 3)

Title (3:1)

Initial request (3:2)

A hymn to God's greatness (3:3-15)

An unshakable faith (3:16-19)



Background

II Kings 23:31ff. tells us that Jehoahaz was king at age 23 and “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” He only reigned for three months before Pharaoh Necho dethroned and replaced him with Jehoahaz’ brother, Jehoiakim (Eliakim), the son of Josiah. He reigned eleven years, but also “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (II Kings 23:37). Without a faithful leader, Judah was ripe for judgment.

Nature of the Book

This prophecy differs from the others in that Habakkuk takes the burden to the Lord, not the other way around. Like the book of Jonah and the first part of Hosea, it is intensely personal. But unlike those, this prophecy consists almost entirely of an exchange between the Lord and the prophet. He is a man of faith, who has questions for God about why He allows evil to exist, the same question that is on the minds of many modern thinkers. The book begins with a cry of fear, but ends with a shout of faith. It is movement – better, *growth* – from fear to faith. God's ultimate answer to Habakkuk's questions appears in 2:4 – “the just shall live by faith.”

Message

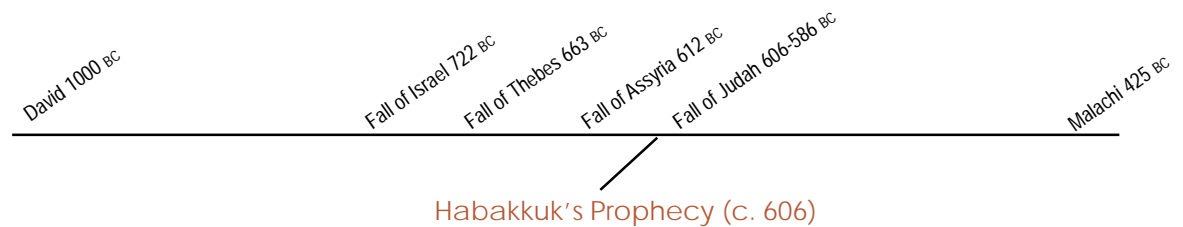
The book is a treatise on an important principle that is repeated time and time again in Scrip-



Minor Prophets

ture: there are only two avenues in life and all must choose which they will travel. There is the avenue of the *self-centered life*, self-righteousness, where “what you see is what you get,” and the sooner the better; God has little to do with this life. Then there is the avenue of *righteousness by faith*, a road that takes you to God for all your answers. In either case, you reap what you sow. If you sow to the flesh, you’ll reap corruption, because that’s the only future for flesh. If you sow to the spirit, you’ll reap eternal life, because the spirit will live into eternity. The man who sows to the flesh must find his answers there, and live with them. The man who sows to the spirit may never fully understand the answers, but he accepts them by faith, and he lives.

When It Happened



Questions

1. What is Habakkuk's first question, and what prompts it?
2. How does God reply? Who are the "Chaldeans"?
3. Why does Habakkuk have a hard time accepting this answer?
4. Describe God's second reply.
5. What does 2:4 mean, in context? Read Galatians 3:11; Romans 1:16-17; Hebrews 10:38-39. Describe the meaning of the text in each of those instances.
6. Describe Habakkuk's attitude as evidenced by his prayer recorded in chapter 3.
7. How does Habakkuk describe God?