The Prophets

1. Who Were the Prophets?
   1. Prophets were a common part of life in the ancient Near East. They regularly worked in royal courts.
   2. In the Hebrew Bible, prophets:
      1. Are Called by God
         1. Jer 1:4-5 *Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*
         2. Isaiah 6
      2. Receive Visions from God
         1. 1 Kings 22:19 *Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him…"*
      3. Do Not Primarily Predict the Future
2. The Latter Prophets in the Hebrew Bible
   1. Isaiah
      1. Isaiah is often organized into three sections:
         1. Isaiah 1-39: First Isaiah
         2. Isaiah 40-55: Second Isaiah
         3. Isaiah 56-66: Third Isaiah
      2. First Isaiah
         1. Chapters 1-12 focus on the sins of Israel and Judah
            1. Isaiah 1:2-3 *Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.*
      3. Second and Third Isaiah
         1. Isaiah 40:5 - *A voice says, "Call." And I said, "What shall I call? All flesh is grass, and all its constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass dries up, the flower withers, when the breath of Yahweh blows upon it. Surely the people is grass." "The grass dries up, the flower withers, but the word of our God stands forever. Get yourself up on a high mountain, Zion's herald of good news, lift up your voice with strength, Jerusalem's herald of good news, lift (it) up, do not fear, say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold, your God.'"*
         2. The Servant of Yahweh
            1. Isaiah 41:8 *But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend*
            2. Isaiah 44:1-2 *But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.*
            3. Isaiah 49:5-6 *And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*
            4. Isaiah 53:3-5, 11 *He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed… Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*
   2. Jeremiah
      1. Jer 7:1-10 *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD." For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever. Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"-- only to go on doing all these abominations?*
      2. Sign Acts (Jeremiah 27-28)
         1. Jer 27:2-9 *Thus the LORD said to me: Make yourself a yoke of straps and bars, and put them on your neck. Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to King Zedekiah of Judah. Give them this charge for their masters: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the people and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever I please. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him even the wild animals of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, then I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, says the LORD, until I have completed its destruction by his hand. You, therefore, must not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon.'*
         2. Jer 28:10-15 *Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, and broke it. And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: This is how I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years." At this, the prophet Jeremiah went his way. Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Go, tell Hananiah, Thus says the LORD: You have broken wooden bars only to forge iron bars in place of them! For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put an iron yoke on the neck of all these nations so that they may serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they shall indeed serve him; I have even given him the wild animals. And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you made this people trust in a lie.*
   3. Ezekiel
      1. Outline
         1. Section 1: Ezekiel 1-24 - Warning and Judgment
         2. Interlude: Ezekiel 25 -32 - Oracles Against the Nations
         3. Section 2: Ezekiel 33 - 48 - Hope and Restoration
      2. Prophetic Visions
         1. Ezekiel 1- the divine chariot in exile
      3. Prophecies of Restoration and Hope
         1. Ezekiel 47 and water from the temple
         2. 47:12 *On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.*
   4. The 12 Minor Prophets (The Book of the Twelve)
      1. These books include: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
      2. Oracles Against the Nations
         1. Amos 1:3-4 *For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. So I will send a fire on the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad. I will break the gate bars of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven, and the one who holds the scepter from Beth-eden; and the people of Aram shall go into exile to Kir, says the LORD.*
         2. Amos 2:4-5 *Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, but they have been led astray by the same lies after which their ancestors walked. So I will send a fire on Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.*
         3. Amos 2:6-8 *Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals-- they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way; father and son go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink wine bought with fines they imposed.*