

Basic Descriptions of Israel's Seventeen Prophets

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The role of the prophet in Israel's history originated when she had kings ruling her people. These leaders of God's people needed a means of receiving God's directions for the community's welfare. The prophets supplied this source of communication with God. Furthermore, they provided insights that would be helpful for the future of the Israelites; we call such predictions of future events prophesies.

Throughout their period of existence in Israel's history the prophets of God gave a description of the times they lived in. These witnesses of the past supply us with a keener understanding of the Jewish beliefs and customs through the written books about them which compile a portion of the Old Testament. Likewise, these testimonies serve to provide us with a chronology of events in the history of the old covenant from almost 900 B.C. (Obadiah) to the heralding of the new covenant in 33 A.D. (St. John the Baptist).

1. 845 Obadiah

The "Servant of Yahweh," he officiated over the house of Ahab, taught the law in Judah, offered priestly sacrifices, and helped repair the temple under Josiah. The book describes the poor relationship between the descendents of Jacob (Israelites) and those of his brother Esau (Edomites), the latter of whom were eventually conquered by foreigners.

2. 835 Joel

He whose name means "Yahweh is God" and who is sometimes called the "Prophet of Pentecost" because he prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, may have been a priest. His writings express a need for prayer, as he called the people enduring a plague of locusts to repentance. He likely lived during the reign of the 'boy king,' Joash, who was raised by the current high priest and his wife until he was seven years of age.

3. 782 Jonah

This prophet of Israel, whose name means "dove" in Hebrew, prophesied the return of old land boundaries to Israel. Assyrian forces were at the time impressing their power upon the nations of the Middle East, at times making the Israelites pay tribute. Ninevah, the city this prophet was called to preach to, was a part of this of this sinful empire, detested by most Jews.

4. 760 Hosea



“Salvation,” (the Hebrew translation of this man’s name) was a prophet in Israel who found religious, moral, and political issues to be of the greatest importance. He foretold and experienced the exile of his people Israel. The period of Israel’s history attested to by this man was politically in upheaval with multiple murders of successive men taking rule of the land. Likewise a problem, the people suffered from a poor example in devotion to God from their priests.

5. 760 Amos

A humble herdsman made prophet, “Load of burden” boldly criticized the moral disintegration of Israel and Judah. Primarily a prophet to the northern kingdom he also served those in other parts inhabited by Israelites. Historically, Israel was quite materially prosperous during his time of ministry; however, this led to horrific corruption among the people of God.

6. 739 Isaiah

This great literary prophet, married to a prophetess who bore him two sons, has a name meaning “Yahweh saves.” His labors were closely related to the royalty of Ahaz and Hezekiah. He also served as an historian during the rule of Uzziah and Hezekiah. The history of his days includes the time of wealth and victories for Israel, as well as her following defeat when attacked by foreign invaders.

7. 735 Micah

Likely born of holy parents, who gave him his name meaning “Who is like Yahweh?” this courageous and outspoken prophet possessed special affection for the poor. At the time of his ministry Judah was at unrest with the joint forces of Damascus and Israel, which were defeated by Jotham, king of Judah, with the help of Assyria. This cooperation of Judah with the foreign Assyrians proved to be a problem. When the men of Judah continued to fight in civil wars with the rest of the chosen people, Assyrian power destroyed their nation.

8. 650 Nahum

With a unique name to the Old Testament meaning “consolation,” this man from the land of Elkush (debated upon in terms of location by scholars) proclaimed a message of comfort to the children of Israel who were under Assyrian oppression at the time. However, according to his prophesy, Assyria eventually fell... forever!

9. 640 Zephaniah

A contemporary of Nahum and Jeremiah, he whose name means “Yahweh protects” was probably of the royal line of King Hezekiah and therefore related to Josiah, whom he likely prompted to bring about reforms. Josiah was the son of two generations of sinful ancestry leading Judah; however, he on the other hand proved to at least temporarily bring about better conditions for promoting the religious devotion of the people.

10. 627 Jeremiah

This prophet's name might mean "Yahweh appoints or establishes." A young man for this calling to preach to his people, he was called by God just prior to the Babylonian exile to call God's people away from their sins, which had caused their suffering. Called to prophesy the destruction of the wicked and the restoration of the righteous, the prophet's judgments were testified to by accounts of his dreams. The three major political forces of the time, Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, were fighting to be in supreme control of the world at this period in history.

11. 609 Habakkuk

Much is unknown concerning he whose name means "embrace." Some consider him to have been a priest and therefore a Levite; however, another account accredits his birth from the tribe of Simeon. At this time the Neo-Babylonian Empire emerged and defeated Egypt; hostages of Jerusalem, including Daniel, were taken to Babylon; another taken into Babylon at a later time was the king of Judah, Jehoiachin; for his father had rebelled against his Babylonian overlord.

12. 605 Daniel

Granted great wisdom from God that he shared with the Babylonians while in exile, this man lived according to his name's meaning: "God is my Judge." He continued to live in the land of exile until his death even though by this time the Persians had invaded Babylon and permitted the Jewish people to return to their homeland.

13. 593 Ezekiel

His name means "God strengthens." This man of God's messages received his call to be a prophet in a miraculous vision of God. Likewise, he was able to supernaturally visit Jerusalem before it was captured in 586 B.C., as well as experience visions concerning the coming restoration of Israel. His life was the wedding of priesthood and prophet. The history of this prophet's lifetime includes the overrunning of Judah by the Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. Only after being in exile did this prophet receive his call to ministry.

14. 520 Haggai

The name of this prophet most likely comes from *hag*, meaning a feast; therefore, his name would mean "festival" or "feast." The name seems to fit his role in the history of the Israelites, who returned from exile during the time of his ministry (probably towards the end of it). In fact, some argue that he was among those few who knew the glory of Israel before, during, and following her exile. The return of the people from exile was made possible due to the decision of Cyrus, who had conquered Babylon with Persian soldiers.

15. 520 Zechariah

One among many Jews to receive the name which means "Yahweh remembers," this priestly messenger of God began to receive direct visions from him at an

unusually young age. A contemporary of Haggai, he experienced the joy of returning to his nation's homeland in Palestine. Here the people labored to restore the land with order, especially by reconstructing the temple. Although these were disheartening circumstances with so much to do, God comforted his people through the words of his messenger.

16. 433 Malachi

The name of this prophet is rather ambiguous, for nowhere else does the name "Malachi" appear in Sacred Scriptures. Likely the term, translated "my-messenger," simply means to reference the author's office in the service of God. He seems to have been a priest, an office he speaks of in his writings. At a time when indifference in the practices of morality was creeping into the lives of Jews who had returned to their homeland only a century before, this faithful man reminded them that repentance was necessary to please the Messiah, whose deliverance they longed for.¹

17. 33 A.D. John the Baptist

This final prophet to the Jewish people received a name which means "mercy of the Lord."² A cousin of Christ, his call to the Israelites for repentance heralded the coming of the Word made flesh. His penitential life in the desert was a living example of devotion to God (Matt 3). The Jews were under the rule of Herod the tetrarch at this period in the history of salvation (Matt 14:1-5).

¹ Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 135-350.

² Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hitchcock/bible_names.html?term=john.

885 BC	Asa		Elah dies		
874 BC	Asa		Omri		
874 BC	Asa		Ahab		Elijah
871 BC	Death of Asa		Ahab		Elijah
871 BC	Jehoshaphat	25 years	Ahab		Elijah
855 BC	Jehoshaphat		Ahab/Ahaziah	Co-regency	Elijah
853 BC	Jehoshaphat/Jehoram	Co-regency	Death of Ahab		Elijah
853 BC	Jehoshaphat/Jehoram	Co-regency	Ahaziah	(Reigns 2 years)	Elijah Obadiah
852 BC	Jehoshaphat/Jehoram	Co-regency	Death of Ahaziah		Elijah
852 BC	Jehoshaphat/Jehoram	Co-regency	Jehoram (Joram)	(Reigns 12 years)	Elisha
847 BC	Death of Jehoshaphat		Jehoram		Elisha
847 BC	Jehoram (Joram)	8 years	Jehoram		Elisha
841 BC	Death of Jehoram		Death of Jehoram		Elisha
841 BC	Ahaziah	1 year	Jehu	(Reigns 28 years)	Elisha
841 BC	Death of Ahaziah		Jehu		Elisha
841 BC	Athaliah (a woman)	6 years	Jehu		Elisha
835 BC	Death of Athaliah		Jehu		Elisha
835 BC	Joash	40 years	Jehu		Elisha
814 BC	Joash		Death of Jehu		Elisha
813 BC	Joash		Jehoahaz		Elisha
800 BC	Joash		Jehoahaz		Elisha Elisha dies
799 BC	Joash		Jehoahaz/Jehoash	Co-regency	
798 BC	Joash/Amaziah	Co-regency	Jehoahaz/Jehoash	Co-regency	
797 BC	Joash/Amaziah	Co-regency	Death of Jehoahaz		
796 BC	Death of Joash		Jehoash		
795 BC	Amaziah	29 years	Jehoash		
794 BC	Amaziah		Jehoash/Jeroboam	Co-regency	
791 BC	Amaziah/Azariah	Co-regency	Jehoash/Jeroboam	Co-regency	
781 BC	Amaziah/Azariah	Co-regency	Death of Jehoash		
781 BC	Amaziah/Azariah	Co-regency	Jeroboam II		Amos
780 BC	Amaziah/Azariah	Co-regency	Jeroboam II		Amos
767 BC	Death of Amaziah		Jeroboam II		Amos
766 BC	Azariah (Uzziah)	26 years	Jeroboam II		Amos
760 BC	Azariah		Death of Jeroboam		Amos Hosea
754 BC	Azariah		Zechariah reigns		Amos Hosea Isaiah
754 BC	Azariah		Zechariah		Amos Hosea Isaiah
753 BC	Azariah		Shalum		Amos Hosea Isaiah
753 BC	Azariah		Menahem's rise		Amos Hosea Isaiah
751 BC	Azariah		Menahem reigns		Amos Hosea Isaiah
750 BC	Azariah/Jotham (co-regent)	Co-regency	Menahem	(Reigns 10 years)	Amos Hosea Isaiah
742 BC	Azariah/Jotham (co-regent)	Co-regency	Death of Menahem		Amos Hosea Isaiah
742 BC	Azariah/Jotham (co-regent)	Co-regency	Pekahiah		Amos Hosea Isaiah
741 BC	Azariah/Jotham (co-regent)	Co-regency	Death of Pekahiah		Amos Hosea Isaiah
740 BC	Death of Azariah		Pekah		Micah Hosea Isaiah
739 BC	Jotham	16 years	Pekah	(Reigns 20 Years)	Micah Hosea Isaiah
734 BC	Death of Jotham		Pekah		Micah Hosea Isaiah
734 BC	Ahaz	16 years	Pekah		Micah Hosea Isaiah
731 BC	Ahaz		Death of Pekah		Micah Hosea Isaiah
731 BC	Ahaz		Hoshea		Micah Hosea Isaiah
729 BC	Ahaz/Hezekiah	Co-regency	Hoshea		Micah Hosea Isaiah
723 BC	Ahaz/Hezekiah	Co-regency	Death of Hoshea		Micah Isaiah
721 BC	Ahaz/Hezekiah	Co-regency	ASSYRIA CONQUERS ISRAEL		Micah Isaiah
715 BC	Death of Ahaz				Micah Isaiah
714 BC	Hezekiah	29 years			Micah Isaiah
713 BC	Hezekiah				Micah
696 BC	Hezekiah				Micah
695 BC	Hezekiah/Manasseh	Co-regency			
686 BC	Death of Hezekiah				
686 BC	Manasseh	55 years			
641 BC	Death of Manasseh				
640 BC	Amon	2 years			
639 BC	Death of Amon				
638 BC	Josiah	31 years			Nahum
630 BC	Josiah				Zephaniah
621 BC	Josiah				Zephaniah
620 BC	Josiah				Jeremiah
609 BC	Death of Josiah				Jeremiah
609 BC	Jehoahaz	3 months			Jeremiah
608 BC	Jehoiakim	11 years			Jeremiah
607 BC	Jehoiakim		ASSYRIA IS CONQUERED		Jeremiah
606 BC	NEBUCHEDNEZZAR INVADES JUDAH				Jeremiah
606 BC	Jehoiakim				Jeremiah Daniel
598 BC	Jehoiakim				Jeremiah Daniel Habakkuk
597 BC	Jehoiachin	3 mths, 10 days			Jeremiah Daniel Habakkuk

BABYLONIAN EMPIRE under Nebuchednezzar

597 BC	Zedekiah reigns			Jeremiah	Daniel	
592 BC	Zedekiah			Jeremiah	Daniel	Ezekiel
586 BC	Zedekiah			Jeremiah	Daniel	Ezekiel
586 BC	FALL OF JERUSALEM - CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH			Jeremiah	Daniel	Ezekiel
572 BC				Jeremiah	Daniel	Ezekiel
562 BC	Death of Nebuchednezzar		His son Evil-Merodach succeeds him		Daniel	
562 BC	Evil-Merodach	2 years	Murdered by Belshazzar		Daniel	
560 BC	Belshazzar (Nergalsharezer)	10 years	LAST OF BABYLONIAN KINGS		Daniel	
BABYLON BY MEDES AND PERSIANS						
550 BC	Cyrus/Darius I		(King of Persia)		Daniel	
538 BC	Cyrus/Darius I					
536 BC	Decree by Cyrus		Joshua (priest)	Zerubbabel		
522 BC	Cyrus/Darius I		Joshua (priest)	Zerubbabel		
521 BC	Darius I		Joshua (priest)	Zerubbabel		
520 BC	Darius I		Joshua (priest)	Zerubbabel		
516 BC	Darius I		Ezra - Tabernacle completed		Haggai	Zechariah
486 BC	Death of Darius I				Haggai	Zechariah
486 BC	Xerxes I (Ahaseuerus)					
478 BC	Xerxes I		Married Esther			
464 BC	Artaxerxes (Longimanus)					
457 BC	Artaxerxes (7th year)		Ezra arrives in Jerusalem		Ezra	
450 BC	Artaxerxes				Malachi	
444 BC	Artaxerxes (20th year)		Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem		Nehemiah	
432 BC	Artaxerxes (32 year)		Nehemiah's second journey		Nehemiah	
427 BC	Artaxerxes		Nehemiah's second term ends		Nehemiah	
427 BC	Artaxerxes		Nehemiah's brother Hananiah continues as governor		Nehemiah	
424 BC	Artaxerxes dies					
424 BC	Xerxes II		Killed soon after by brother Darius II			
423 BC	Darius II Nothus (died 404 BC)					
419 BC	Darius II		Some suggest that Hananiah ceases as governor			
410 BC	Darius II		Bagoas is governor of Judah			
407 BC	Darius II		The Jews voluntarily cease animal sacrifices			
404 BC	Artaxerxes II Mnemon (Died 358 BC)					
402 BC			The temple is restored once more			
386 BC			Artaxerxes conquers Greece			
358 BC	Artaxerxes III Ochus					
343 BC			Egypt is conquered again and restored to Persian rule			
338 BC	Artaxerxes III is poisoned and succeeded by his son, Arses					
338 BC	Arses reigns (Died from poison in 336 BC)					
338 BC	Philip II of Macedon had begun to reign over the Greeks (Died 336 BC)					
336 BC	Darius III Codomannus reigns over Persia. He was the last king of Persia					
BABYLON BY GREEK-MACEDONIANS						
336 BC	Alexander, son of Philip II begins to reign over Greece and Macedonia					
331 BC	Alexander the Great conquers Persia and kills Darius III					
328 BC	Alexander recruits an army in Babylon and sends his own troops home.					
323 BC	Alexander the Great becomes sick and dies in Babylon (He was 33 years old)					
323 BC	Ptolemy Lagi and Seleucid I reign (Greek kings of Egypt and Syria/Iran, respectively)					
301 BC	Ptolemy gains control of Palestine and Phoenicia					
285 BC	Ptolemy II Philadelphus reigns (Died 246 BC)					
250 BC	Septuagint - Old Testament translated into Greek by Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.					
223 BC	Antiochus III (Called 'the great') reigns (Died 187 BC)					
222 BC	The Seleucids, under Antiochus, conquer Palestine					
221 BC	Ptolemy IV Philopater reigns over Egypt					
217 BC	Antiochus III attempts the conquer of Egypt and is defeated at Raphia					
203 BC	Ptolemy V Epiphanes begins his reign in Egypt					
198 BC	Antiochus III drives Ptolemy V out of Palestine					
192 BC	Rome conquers Hannibal of Carthage and turns on Antiochus III					
190 BC	Antiochus III defeated at Magnesia (Between Sardis and Smyrna)					
189 BC	Antiochus is forced to yield all his territories except Cilicia (He died in 187 BC)					
187 BC	Seleucus IV reigns over the crippled empire of Antiochus III after his death					
181 BC	Ptolemy VI Philometor reigns over Egypt (Died 146 BC)					
175 BC	Antiochus IV Epiphanes reigns (Seleucid king - Died 163 BC)					
168 BC	Antiochus IV Epiphanes successfully conquers Egypt					
166 BC	Mattathias leads the Macabean revolt with his five sons					
165 BC	Mattathias dies and his 3rd son Judas Macabee carries on the revolt					
60 BC	Palestine conquered by Rome under Pompey					
50 BC	Julius Caesar					
38 BC	Herod the Great (Died 4BC)		(Reigned 34 years)			

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