

Handout for Lecture 7

Zephaniah – in Judah under Josiah, familiar with the court, indictment of corruption.

1:1–2:1-15 – God’s judgment on Judah & the nations: Philistines 2:4-7, Moab and Amon 2:8-11, Egypt and Ethiopia 2:12, Assyria 2:13-15.

3:1-8 – God’s judgment on Jerusalem for neglecting the Lord and His commandments.

3:9-20 – promise of salvation for those who are humble and submit to the Lord.

Nahum – from Elkosh near Jerusalem; he composed his poetry in 612 just as Nineveh was falling.

1:1–2:1 – a psalm on God’s sovereignty over all nations and His personal qualities

2:2–3:9 – a poetic depiction of the attack on Nineveh and a meditative reflection on the event.

Habbakuk - a visionary psalmist. Written after the Babylonian defeat of Egypt at Carchemish in 605.

1:1–2:4 – a dialogue of complaint against injustice. Habbakuk as Israel’s watchman (2:1-4).

2:5-20 – five woes proclaimed against the Babylonian invaders.

3:1-19 – psalm on the revelation and victory of God (3:1-19)

538 – return from Babylon. Many of the upper classes, however, tended to remain in Babylon rather than face the challenges of starting over amid the ruins of Jerusalem

530 – death of Cyrus II, king of Persia.

529-522: Cambyses II as king of Persia

522-486 – Darius Hystaspes – general of the army becomes king (Darius I). His only military failure comes in 490 against the Greeks on the plains of Marathon.

520 – Haggai and Zechariah urge Zerubbabel (leader of Judah, descendant of David – 1 Chr 3;19) and Joshua (a Zadokite priest) to restart the reconstruction of the Temple. Concern about the prediction (Jer. 25:11, 29:10) about a restoration of the Temple 70 years after its destruction in 586.

515 – re-dedication of the Temple (albeit much simpler a Temple than that of Solomon).

486-465 – Xerxes I, king of Persia

465-423 – Artaxerxes I, king of Persia

458 – beginning of the work of Ezra, priest and scribe, after a period of spiritual stagnation that threatens the survival of the Jewish nation and raises the question: does God have a plan for His people?

336-323 – Alexander the Great and conqueror of the Persian Empire

Ezra 1:1–2:70 – on the return of exiles under the leadership of Sheshbazzar

3:1-13 – erection of an altar and quest for the things needed for offering sacrifices

5:14-16 – work to rebuild the Temple begins but is discontinued because of outside interference from the Persian armies heading to Egypt in 525 and hardships such as drought and crop failure.

With the demise of the Davidic kings, a rise in importance of the Temple and the Priesthood. Judah is hereafter a vassal state, first under the Persians, then the Greeks, and later the Romans.

Haggai – a prophet who worked from August to December 520 trying to motivate the people to resume work on the restoration of the Temple. Note his focus on the clean and the unclean (2:10-14).

1:1-15 – no fruitfulness in the land while the Temple remains in ruins. There is need to repent from self-concern, as David was embarrassed by dwelling in a house while there was yet no Temple.

1:15–2:9 – the Temple will be restored with unprecedented splendor – the glory of the Lord

2:10-19 – then will come an end of misery, for the Lord will bless the land

2:20-23 – the Lord’s special plans for Zerubbabel

Zechariah – a prophet with affinity to Ezekiel, the son of a priest Iddo who came back from exile with Zerubbabel and Joshua. He received visions and encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple, working from

October 520 through December 518 (chs. 1-8). Chapters 9-14 are apocalyptic material about end-times.

1:1-6 – summons to repentance

1:7-6:15 – eight visions of God’s active dealings with Israel and the nations

7:1-14 – Zechariah’s instruction about Israel’s ritualism in the past

8:1-23 – the future promise of the Lord’s return to Zion

God’s presence to Judah is like a wall of fire. A servant unable to measure the city because of the abundance of its population. The power of God: chariots, horses, winds. The scroll of judgment.

God’s work among the nations: in bringing about a reversal of fortune, the angelic smyths break the power of the nations (horns). A plan of salvation that extends to the nations (8:16-17, 20-23).

God’s plan for the priesthood, especially linked to Joshua (3:1-10, 9:1-14, 6:9-14). Zerubbabel and Joshua as the two olive trees – cooperation of David’s descendant and a Zadokite priest.

The visions here are like those found in apocalyptic literature: events in the present world are interpreted by reference to what is taking place in heaven. See *Revelation* on the Temple and the two witnesses.

Malachi – literally, “my messenger” (c. 475)

1:1-5 – the Lord’s love for His people

1:6-2:9 – concern for the standards of ritual and sacrifice – priestly infidelity

2:10-16 – the Lord’s opposition to divorce in Judah and marriage with foreigners

2:17-3:5 – the Lord will purify His Temple and the Levites

3:6-12 – a return to honest tithing at the Temple will bring about prosperity

3:13-21 – those who fear the Lord will receive salvation on the day of judgment

3:23-24 – Moses and Elijah

Each of these discourses is a debate (a question from the people, a prophetic response) as illustration of the darkened human heart justifying spiritual complacency and lack of zeal for God and His commands. There is reference to the monotonous ritual and the loss of devotion and personal reverence within the context of Judah’s infidelity to God in the covenants regarding marriage and the Levitical priesthood.

Obadiah – a vision of history that emphasizes God’s plan for Israel

1:1-15 – God’s judgment on Edom, the descendants of Esau. Like earlier prophets such as Amos 1:11-12, Jer 49:7-22, etc.)

1:16-18 – proclamation of the salvation of Zion, the Day of the Lord

1:19-21 – the promised land of the end-times.

Joel – love for the Temple, concern for priests and ministers, the offering of sacrifices; the need to correct clerical conduct (in light of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah).

1:1-2:27 – the plague of locusts. A summons to prayer and fasting (1:1-20). The Day of the Lord is foreshadowed by the locusts (2:1-17). A call to repentance (2:12-17): a deep rending of the heart so as to replace superficial regret. The Lord’s response (2:18-27) by removing the enemy army and by making the land abundant.

3:1-4:21 – the Day of the Lord, in which the Lord pours forth His spirit (3:1-5), judges the nations and vindicates His people (4:1-17) while casting judgment on the nations and everlasting salvation to Judah (4:18-21).