

OBADIAH

Date: Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and before the fall of Edom (553 B.C.).

Main Message: Edom descended from Esau (Jacob/Israel's brother). Despite this familial tie, Edom joined forces with Babylon and plundered Israel in 586 B.C. Thus Obadiah prophesies their downfall, as well as the downfall of all arrogant, wicked nations like them. But the book ends with a message of hope because of the coming king who will crush evil and establish justice.

JONAH

Date: Jonah lived in the northern kingdom a few decades before Assyria (whose capital city was Nineveh) wiped them out in 722 B.C.

Main Message: The book of Jonah is designed to prompt readers to marvel at the steadfast love and mercy of God and to reflect upon how far short their compassion for their enemies is compared to God's. This point is made abundantly clear at the end of the book as the prophet (supposed man of God) cares more about the life of a plant than an entire city's worth of people. Upon reflection readers should be (unlike Jonah) thrilled that God loves His enemies (Rom 5:8).

MICAH

Date: Micah's ministry roughly paralleled Isaiah and Hosea in Judah (around 730-700 B.C.).

Main Message: Micah is full of warnings of judgement and hope for restoration. Judgement is coming because Israel has broken the covenant (1-2). Judgement is coming in the form of Assyria and Babylon (3-4). But there is hope because God is like a shepherd who will gather His sheep. Chapters 5-7 continue the pattern of warning and hope with the conclusion that there is hope because God's promises to Abraham and David will never be defeated by Israel's sin. The name Micah means "who is like Yahweh?" The book ends with this rhetorical question (7:18).

NAHUM

Date: The book was probably written 30 to 50 years before Assyria fell to Babylon (612 B.C.).

Main Message: Nahum acts as a sequel to Jonah. Nineveh's repentance didn't stick, therefore their destruction was imminent. The book is a hymn of victory (before the battle had been won) meditating on the character of God (from Ex 34:6-7) and proclaiming the timeless truth that God does not allow wicked nations to stand forever, but He does preserve His faithful remnant.

HABAKKUK

Date: A few decades before Judah fell to Babylon (586 B.C.) around King Josiah's reign (640ish).

Main Message: The book consists of Habakkuk's prayers and God's responses. Prayer 1: "Why are you not doing something about all of Israel's wickedness?" God's Response: "I am. I am

sending Babylon.” Prayer 2: “What?! How is it just to punish us with a nation even more wicked than us?” God’s response: Babylon and all wicked nations like them will be punished. But there is hope because a Davidic King is coming to crush evil and lead a new exodus from slavery to sin.

ZEPHANIAH

Date: After the northern kingdom fell (722 B.C) and before the southern kingdom fell (586 B.C.).

Main Message: The destruction of Israel has done nothing to discourage Judah from its wicked ways. Thus Zephaniah announces God’s coming judgement on Judah and all wicked nations like them. But the book concludes with hope for all nations (think Abrahamic covenant) because Jerusalem will be restored, the people will worship God, and God will sing over them.

HAGGAI

Key Themes: The Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. King Cyrus permitted Joshua (a high priest) and Zerubbabel (line of David) to lead a remnant home in 538. Haggai writes in 520 B.C.

Main Message: Haggai confronts the people for putting all their resources into rebuilding their own houses while the temple remained in shambles. Rebuilding the temple is vitally important because it represents the restoration of the covenant. The people agree, but their morale is low because they were hoping that the messianic promises would have been fulfilled by now. So Haggai encourages them to be faithful because God will be faithful to His promises, and the temple plays a key role in God’s fulfillment of His plans for the world through the Messiah.

ZECHARIAH

Date: Same time as Haggai (520 B.C.).

Structure: The first 6 chapters contain 8 visions. Visions 1 and 8 depict four horsemen who represent God’s rangers who keep watch over the whole earth. Visions 2 and 7 depict Israel’s past sin that led them into exile. Visions 3 and 6 depict the rebuilding of the New Jerusalem with a nation that is purified by the Scriptures. Visions 4 and 5 are about Joshua (the current High Priest) and Zerubbabel (of the line of David). These visions point to the fact that the future Davidic Messiah will be both Priest and King. Chapters 7-8 conclude these visions by talking about when the kingdom will come. Chapters 9-14 introduce a new genre of the book that look forward to the future messianic kingdom. This section reveals that Israel’s leaders will reject the Messiah, but they will not reject Him forever. There will be a day when God’s justice will defeat wickedness once and for all and the New Jerusalem will be a New Eden.

MALACHI

Date: About 100 years after the exiles returned home (roughly 440 B.C.).

Main Idea: The people did not learn anything in exile. They are just as hard hearted as their ancestors. God confronts their idolatry, their defilement of the temple, their divorce, and their lack of tithing (among other things). The people do not respond well. They accuse God of neglecting them and they conclude that it is pointless to serve Him because the wicked prosper and get away with it. The book’s final passage acts as a conclusion to the Torah and the prophets as a whole by pointing to a day where a new Moses and a new Elijah will come.