Latter Prophets

Amos and Hosea
(from the Scroll of the Twelve)

Latter Prophets 1

Major & Minor

- "Major" prophets vs. "Minor" prophets (Scroll of 12)

Major & Minor 2

Nature of Prophecy

- Prophets characterized by *ecstatic* and *charismatic* abilities
  - Ecstatic – similar to shamans in other religious, forming a connection to spirit realm
  - Charismatic – abilities come from God, not taught in conventional sense
- Three types of prophets
  - Cultic – closely associated with Temple priesthood
  - Royal – closely associated with the king, maybe as advisors
  - Bands of prophets, e.g., sons of prophets – traveled together and preached YHWH's word

Nature of Prophecy 3

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Covenant Advocates & Predictors of Future

- Preaching often calls Israel/Judah back to covenant faithfulness and justice
  - Sinai Covenant
  - Davidic Covenant
- Ambassador role focused upon current events
  - Future was usually near future that was the consequence of obedience of disobedience to YHWH, e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - Little interest in distant future, except as general time of judgment/redemption
    - Not a fortune teller

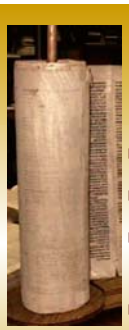
Covenant Advocates & 4

Literary World of Prophets

Originating in Oral Context

- Most common language found in prophets are
  - oracles of judgment
  - admonitions to repentance
  - promise of deliverance
  - lawsuit sayings
- Usually delivered in poetic form
- Use of puns or word plays

Literary World of Prophets 5



Overarching Themes

- Obedience to covenant
- Judgment and mercy of YHWH
- Hope for redemption and/or restoration
- Justice for poor (widow, orphan, foreigner)
  - Judgment on rich oppressor is mercy to poor and oppressed

Overarching Themes 6

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Amos

First of Latter or Writing "Prophets"

- Historical World
  - Amos is first prophet to have a book named after him
  - Preached in Northern Kingdom around 750, about 200 years after Solomon
  - Amos is from Tekoa (1:1), a town in Judah (Southern Kingdom) – he's shepherd and "dresser of sycamores"
  - Relative peace between north and south
  - Jeroboam II is king of Israel – prosperity for rich, but
    - Archaeological evidence of Tirzah shows houses in 10th century about same size, but houses in 8th century showed a few to be large, rest small and crowded

Amos 7

Literary World of Amos

- Some of the literary units in Amos include:
  - Oracles of judgment (e.g., 1:3-5)
  - Admonitions to repentance (e.g., 5:14-15)
  - Call narrative (brief) (7:14-15)
  - Visions (e.g., 7:1-9)
  - Puns (e.g., 8:1-3, qayits and qets like thyme and time)
- Much of Amos consists of oracles of judgment, especially in three areas:
  - Administration of justice in gate
  - Affluent lifestyle of rich
  - Hypocrisy of worship in sanctuary

Literary World of Amos 8

Selected Passages

- 1:3 ff – first of eight oracles of judgment (see Bandstra 356)
  - Starts with Damascus (Syria), then Gaza (Philistia), Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, culminating in
  - **Israel** . . . note the oral strategy of beginning with judgments the people would agree with and ending with judgment on the listeners
  - Crimes include war crimes for neighbors and crimes against covenant for Judah and Israel

Selected Passages 9

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Selected Passages (cont.)

- 4:1 – well fed cows of Bashan (a complimentary comment that he turns negative)
- 4:6-11 – God uses famine, drought, plague, etc., not just to punish but to bring repentance
- 5:7 – justice (*mispat*) and righteousness (*sedaqa*) turned into something bitter and dirty

Selected Passages (cont.) 10

Selected Passages (cont.)

Justice to Monotheism

- 5:21 ff. – condemnation of sacrifice and ritual that lacks foundation of justice
  - "Roll down like waters" refers to rainy season floods
  - "ever flowing stream" refers to streams that do not dry up in dry season
- 9:7 – from henotheism to monotheism
- 9:11 – thought to be from a later editor because of change of tone

Selected Passages (cont.) 11

Hosea

Prophet of Love

Hosea 12

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Historical World of Hosea

- Hosea preached roughly the same time as Amos, but for a longer period, perhaps from around 750-721
- From the northern kingdom and preached in the northern kingdom
- Primary problem is Baalism
  - Baal is a fertility God of Canaanites associated with storm and sky often symbolized by golden bull
  - Fertility rituals involved "sympathetic magic"
  - Had strong appeal to Israelites whose God was invisible and whose rituals were not as "exciting" – idolatry

Historical World of Hosea 13

Literary World

- Hebrew and style is somewhat different from rest of prophets, reflecting northern origin
- One of the worst preserved texts of the Bible
  - No real organization
  - Bad preservation is thought to be the result of Assyrian invasion
- General "structure" of alternation between judgment and restoration

Literary World 14

General Theme – YHWH is Israel's True Husband

- Hosea is first prophet to use the image of husband for YHWH
- Daring image because the name "Baal" means husband
  - The images of marriage and fertility that Israel found attractive in Baalism take on a different meaning in the context of YHWHism
- Hosea's marriage to Gomer acts out his central message
  - If YHWH is Israel's true husband, then Israel has been revealed to be an unfaithful wife who prostitutes herself

General Theme – YHWH is Israel's True 15

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Chapter 1

- Story of Gomer and the three children
  - Use of symbolic names for the children
    - – Jezreel (1:4) recalls valley where the ancestor of Jeroboam II had killed king of Israel
    - – Lo-ruhamah (1:6) means “unloved”
    - – Lo-ammi (1:9) means “not my people”
  - Hope of restoration
    - – Jezreel will take on positive association of “God plants”
    - – Lo-ruhamah will become Ruhamah – “loved”
    - – Lo-ammi will become Ammi – “my people”

Chapter 1 16

Chapter 2

- Unfaithfulness of Gomer (2:2-13
  - The things her husband gives her she claims comes from her lovers
- Just as Hosea proposes to “strip her naked” (2:3) to withhold those things from Gomer so she can come to see who loves her, so YHWH will withhold blessings from Israel so that it will see the true source of its blessings
  - Punishment for the purpose of bringing Israel back
  - Laffey raises important questions about image of co-dependence and abuse this story implies
  - Try reversing genders of Hosea and Gomer and read from the perspective of a “tough love” response to addiction

Chapter 2 17

Chapter 3

- A new woman or Gomer some time later?
- Hosea buys prostitute – apparently a slave – and promises to make her his wife if she quits her adulterous life
- 3:4 – double reference to ideal time of 40 years in wilderness, without king, sacrifice or temple, and to future time of exile. A kind of “honeymoon” period when Israel only had YHWH

Chapter 3 18

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Covenant as Marriage

- Hosea is saying the covenant with YHWH far surpasses the fertility rituals of Baal
  - The relationship with YHWH is one of *love* – *hesed* – not sexual ecstacy of fertility rituals but steadfast love or mercy that includes righteousness, justice, and *shalom* (peace) (2:18-20)

Covenant as Marriage 19

Another Image for YHWH

- 11:1 ff. – what is the image of YHWH?
  - Nurturing parent, whose love is personal and exceptionally forgiving (7-9)

Another Image for YHWH 20

Amos and Hosea

- Both are concerned with faithfulness to the covenant
- Both understand the covenant in terms of righteousness and justice – Hosea goes another step and adds love while Amos emphasizes only justice
- Both saw the time in the wilderness as the ideal time in their relationship with YHWH
- Both see covenant faithfulness as more important than proper sacrifice/ritual (compare Amos 5:21-23 to Hosea 6:6)

Amos and Hosea 21

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Postscript on Historical World of the Prophets

- Assyria conquered Israel around 722 BCE;
- Judah remained intact until the Babylonians conquered them in 598, then destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple around 589 BCE
- Prophets remained active until shortly after the exile – after it was clear there would be no king again, the role of prophets (ambassadors) disappears

Postscript on Historical World of the Prophets 22

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