

Old Testament Prophets' Timeline

AUDIENCE COLOR KEY: green=Israel; blue=Judah; pink=Exiles in Babylon; tan=misc. nations

note: exact dates approximate as many reputable sources vary, though general history and timeline valid.

Historical setting: After division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, recorded in 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17

Prophet	Audience	Kings who ruled at the same time	Approximate Dates, all BC	Historical happenings at the time of the prophet, plus comments on the content of their books
Elijah	Israel	Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram	870-845	Kingdom split about 930, all sinful kings in Israel through Israel's history, kings a mixture of good and bad in Judah.
Elisha	Israel	Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz	845-800	Disciple of Elijah. Preaches to a sinful people who worshipped idols, not Jehovah God. Some individual (e.g. Naaman) success, no national repentance.
Jonah	Nineveh	Jeroboam II	760-753	Jonah first a prophet of victory to Israel; then called to preach to Nineveh capital of Assyria, a violent and cruel enemy. Finally obeys and Nineveh repents, though it doesn't last.
Amos	Israel	Jeroboam II	765-754	Israel powerful and complacent, pagan worship, neglect of the poor, calls for justice. Restoration after judgement promised which is a pattern in many prophets.
Hosea	Israel	Jeroboam II	758-725	Though his message is of love and forgiveness, Israel does not repent, continues in spiritual decline. Though materially prosperous and religiously active, Israel goes into captivity in 722, conquered by Assyria.

Historical setting: Israel conquered by Assyria, prophecies now warning Judah, recorded 2 Kings 18-2 Kings 25

Additional history of Judah primarily in 1-2 Chronicles; fall of Jerusalem and edict to return in 2 Chron. 36

Isaiah	Judah	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh	760-673	Begins preaching to Judah before Israel falls. Assyria threatens but does not conquer Judah. Book reflects God's eternal view.
Micah	Judah	Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh	738-698	Preaches same time as Isaiah, warns of judgement if no repentance. Defines what God requires in Micah 6:8.
Nahum	Nineveh	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah	658-615	Assyrian repentance under Jonah doesn't last. Final destruction of Assyria/Nineveh by Babylonians.
Zephaniah	Judah	Josiah	640-609	Last revival in Judah under Josiah, but not enough.
Habakkuk	Judah	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin	608-598	Babylon conquered Assyria; Judah in process of its downfall. Questions why God uses pagan nations for His purposes.
Jeremiah	Judah	Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah	650-582	Messages not in order. Records the last days of Judah, the prior series of deportations before final destruction in 587 BC. Wrote at the same time as Ezekiel and Daniel who were deported early on. Writes Lamentations after fall of Judah.
Obediah	Edom	uncertain	?	Judgement of Edom. Date not certain, message timeless. Do not rejoice over or take advantage of the fall of others.

Historical setting: Babylon conquers Judah, a series of deportations, final destruction 607 BC, recorded in 2 Kings 24, 25

Ezekiel	Exiles in Babylon	Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, in Judah; Babylonian rulers there	620-570	Under captivity, God continues speaking to his people; obedience still required, he was a priest and spoke to the people in Babylon. Also numerous future, end-time prophecies.
Daniel	Exiles in Babylon	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah in Judah; Babylonian rulers there	620-540	One of the earliest deported to Babylon, lived there during the destruction, deportation, and return of the people. His prophecies span human history.

Historical setting: Israel allowed to return & rebuild, recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah, captives who stayed in Esther

Joel	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel?	?	Date not certain, message timeless. Restoration promised.
Haggai	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel	520	Returned to the land, Temple rebuilding stalled, preached priority of finishing God's work. Preached with Zechariah.
Zechariah	Judah	Governor Zerubbabel	522-509	Messages, challenges to complete the tasks of God.
Malachi	Judah	not certain, perhaps some overlap with Nehemiah	435	People back in the land, Temple rebuilt. The people persisted in sin. Challenges to repent. Blessings for obedience.

After these books 400 "Silent years" No written word from God, but God at work in history preparing for the Messiah.

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TIMELINE

History

from the Return to the close of the Old Testament

538 BC
1ST RETURN UNDER
ZERUBABBEL

Return of the first group of exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, they begin to build the Temple but soon quit from a combination of fear and distraction.

520-518 BC
PROPHETS HAGGAI AND
ZECHARIAH PREACH

Haggai and Zechariah preach and remind the people that building God's house is the most important thing they are supposed to do and that He will protect them. They finish the Temple.

483-473 BC
ESTHER

The book of Esther takes place back in Persia. She is Queen and is used by God to rescue her people from threatened destruction; challenged by her uncle Mordecai. Purim commemorates this.

458-456 BC
2ND RETURN UNDER EZRA

Ezra the priest, (a descendant of Aaron, the high priest) leads a much smaller group back. His goal is to teach and spiritually restore the people, who were returning to sinful ways, particularly in marrying heathen women.

444-432 BC
NEHEMIAH'S 1ST TRIP

Nehemiah goes to rebuild the wall, which he does in 52 days. Stays as governor for 12 years; various reforms in partnership with Ezra, including spiritual revival, and economic justice. He also stands up to Israel's enemies.

432-430 BC
NEHEMIAH BRIEFLY
LEAVES AND RETURNS

Upon Nehemiah's return, he finds people had resumed neglect of the Temple, marriage to pagan women, and economic sins. Harsh words and discipline follow.

435 BC
PROPHET MALACHI
PREACHES

Prophet Malachi preaches against the same sins Ezra and Nehemiah pointed out. The people not following God in marriage or Temple observances, rob God by not giving as they should. The book ends with challenges.

430 BC
OLD TESTAMENT
ENDS, BEGINNING OF
400 SILENT YEARS

Promise for those who followed God through it all, "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. 'They will be mine,' says the Lord Almighty. (Mal. 3:16-17)"

TIMELINE of the Return from Exile to the Close of the Old Testament

The timeline of events when the Jews return from exile in Babylon can be confusing in that the books that describe them in our Bibles are not in historical order and the prophets who preached during this time are at the end of the Old Testament.

In the historical timeline, the book of Esther takes place near the beginning of the book of Ezra. An initial return to the land took place before her story and another return to the land takes place after it.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah preach approximately 18 years after the first return to encourage the people to finish building the Temple. They had become discouraged and distracted and the prophet's preaching encouraged them to finish the Temple.

Though the Temple was rebuilt, the people needed spiritual rebuilding and God calls Ezra to take a much smaller group back to do that.

His preaching challenges the people, but the walls are not rebuilt, and the city is filled with rubble. God calls Nehemiah to rebuilt and clean up the city of Jerusalem which he does.

The prophet Malachi is preaching either somewhat earlier or at the same time Nehemiah is working and challenging the people.

The Old Testament ends with the people never again serving pagan Gods, though as a nation they are not totally committed to worshipping the God who has cared for them through thousands of years.