



LOVE INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH FELLOWSHIP

SCHOOL OF TRAINING

'PROPHETS' - Class #3

MINISTRIES OF THE MINOR PROPHETS – Part 2

## THE PROPHET NAHUM – Minor Prophet

### AUTHOR AND DATE:

**The Book of Nahum**, according to its superscription, consists of “The vision of Nahum of Elkosh” (1:1). Nothing further is known about Nahum, nor is he mentioned by name elsewhere in the Bible (except in the long Greek LXX text of Tobit 14:4 preserved in Codex Sinaiticus).

**It is clear from the contents of the book** that he was skilled at writing picturesque and sometimes graphic poetry, but little else about his personality or background can be said with confidence. Not even the prophet’s hometown of Elkosh has been securely identified.

**This book can be dated** between the conquest of Thebes 663 B.C. and the conquest of Nineveh in 612 B.C. The former is mentioned as a past event in 3:8 and the latter is foreseen as a future event in 3:1-7. Pinpointing a specific date within this historical window is difficult. Some estimate that the book was written around 650 B.C. Judgements of this sort are sometimes based on the silence of the book. For instance, the superscription in 1:1 does not synchronize the time of Nahum’s ministry with the reign of any contemporary king of Judah, as do most of the other prophetic books of scripture. This suggests to some that Nahum’s book was written during the days of Manasseh, Judah’s most wicked King, on the premise that a prophet would be unlikely to mention such a godless figure (696-642 B.C.) On the other hand, the book makes no attempt to denounce the sins of God’s people, a feature that is also characteristic of most of the prophetic books. This suggests to others that the Book of Nahum was written during the days of Josiah, Judah’s great reformer king. (This was 640-609 B.C.)

### Notes:

## THE PROPHET HABAKKUK – Minor Prophet

### AUTHOR AND DATE:

**Little is known about the prophet** whose name is attached to this (1:1). It says nothing about his genealogy, his occupation, or his place of residence.

**Fragments of information appear** in the Greek Septuagint translation of Daniel which includes two deuterocanonical chapters that are not part of the Hebrew/Aramaic text of Daniel (chapters 13-14). Here we learn that Habakkuk's father's name was 'Joshua' and that he was descended from "The tribe of Levi" (Daniel 14: LXX= Bel and the Dragon 1).

Daniel chapter 14 also includes the miraculous story of Habakkuk being transported by an angel to Babylon in order to provide food for the prophet Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 14:31-39).

**From evidence within the Book of Habakkuk itself**, we can sketch a profile of the author as both a prophet and psalmist. He was given an "oracle" (1:1) about God's intention to bring judgement on Judah (1:5-11) and eventually on the Babylonians (2:2-20). At the same time he is credited with the lyrics of the hymn or 'prayer' (3:1), which was meant to be sung to the accompaniment of 'stringed instruments' (3:19). This suggests that Habakkuk, besides being a prophet, may have been a Levite who performed sacred music in the Jerusalem temple (I Chronicles 23:1-5; Nehemiah 12:27). Some of these Levitical musicians also prophesied, according to I Chronicles 25:1-6.

### Notes:

## THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH – Minor Prophet

### AUTHOR AND DATE:

**The opening verse** credits the prophecies of the book to “Zephaniah the son of Cushi,” whose ancestry is traced back four generations to “Hezekiah” (1:1).

**If this is a reference to the famous King Hezekiah** who ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah from 729 to 686 B.C., then the prophet was relative of the Davidic Royal Family. The reference to Jerusalem as ‘this place’ in 1:4 further implies that Zephaniah ministered in the Holy City. Beyond that, nothing certain is known about his background.

**The general date for the book** is also indicated in the superscription, which states that Zephaniah prophesied during “the Days of Josiah... King of Judah.” This means that he delivered the oracles of the book sometime between 640 and 609 B.C. These parameters can be narrowed by noting that the fall of Nineveh which took place in 612 B.C. is an event that lies in the future, according to 2:13.

### Notes:

## THE PROPHET HAGGAI – Minor Prophet

### AUTHOR AND DATE:

**Minimal controversy** surrounds the origin of the Book of Haggai. It consists mainly of oracles spoken by “Haggai the prophet” (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20) that are framed by short notices indicating the dates when the prophet received his messages from the Lord. Because these notices refer to Haggai in the third person (he, him, his) instead of the first person (I, me, my), it is possible that a disciple or associate of the prophet preserved Haggai’s saying in writing and compiled them into the book we have today. It is likewise plausible however, that Haggai himself was responsible for its composition.

**Unfortunately**, very little is known about the prophet whose name is attached to the book except that he ministered in Judah and Jerusalem at the same time as the Prophet Zechariah (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Jewish traditions further holds that he was one of the Jewish exiles who returned to Judah from Babylon. The Greek Septuagint version of the Book of Palms credits Haggai with co-authoring Psalms 145 to 148 although his name does not appear in the superscriptions of the Hebrew Psalter, and so the historical value of this tradition is uncertain.

**The date of the book** can be determined fairly precisely. Haggai’s prophecies are all dated in 520 B.C., second year of Darius I Hystaspes, ruler of Persia from 522 to 486 B.C.

### Notes:

## THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH – Minor Prophet

### **AUTHOR AND DATE:**

**The superscription** traces the oracles of the Book of “Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet” (1:1). It is generally thought that the prophet’s grandfather Iddo was one of the leading priests who returned to Judah from Babylon with Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest (Nehemiah 12:4, 16). This would make Zechariah a descendant of Aaron and a member of the tribe of Levi. Little also is known about him, except that he was a younger contemporary of the prophet Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

**Modern scholarship broadly accepts** that chapters 1-8 come from Zechariah and can be dated to the years 520-518 B.C, as indicated by the historical notations in 1:1, 1:7, and 7:1.

**It is also the majority view, however, that chapters 9-12** are the oracles of one or more unnamed prophets who lived after the time of Zechariah. This judgement is based on striking dissimilarities between the book’s two main parts. Chapters 1-9 for instance, attach calendar dates to the prophet’s messages; they are written entirely in prose; they addressed the concerns of Zechariah’s day; they name the leaders of the community in Judah; and they consist of visions, sermons, and short narratives.

**Chapter 9-14, by contrast,** form a collection of undated revelations; they combine poetry with prose, they are said to reflect circumstances of symbolic apocalyptic messages. In view of these differences in style, genre, and presumed audience, many scholars attribute chapters 9-14 to an anonymous prophet conventionally called the ‘second Zechariah,’ whose work is identified with chapters 9-11 and ‘third Zechariah’ another unnamed prophet who is said to have written chapters 12-14.

### **Notes:**

## THE PROPHET MALACHI – Minor Prophet

### AUTHOR AND DATE:

**The book presents itself** as the sayings of the prophet ‘Malachi’ (1:1). Partly because this name is not attested elsewhere in the scripture and partly because the Greek Septuagint translates the name as a phrase (“His messenger”), some scholars hold that the book is formally anonymous.

**However**, this makes Malachi the only prophetic book in the Bible without the name of a specific individual attached to it. The balance of Malachi is the name of the prophet who delivered the oracles of the book.

**Unfortunately**, he provides readers with no genealogy or background information about himself. On the basis of internal evidence, he can be profiled a man of character and courage who spoke out boldly against the religious and social ill of his day, but little else can be said. It is unknown whether Malachi was responsible for writing down his oracles and compiling them into a book, or whether this was done by a disciple or scribal associate.

### Notes:



# SYLLABUS

## Prophets Class #3

### 'MINISTRIES OF THE MINOR PROPHETS' (Part 2)

- **INTRODUCTION** – Spoken by the instructor.
- **Minor Prophets Commentary & Study Questions**
- **The Prophet Nahum**
- **The Prophet Habakkuk**
- **The Prophet Zephaniah**
- **The Prophet Haggai**
- **The Prophet Zechariah**
- **The Prophet Malachi**

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## MINOR PROPHETS COMMENTARY & STUDY QUESTIONS

**Biblical authority** implicit in these doctrines is God's desire to make Himself known to the world and to enter a loving relationship with every man, woman and child He has created.

**God gave us the Scriptures not just to inform or motivate us; more than anything He wants to save us.** This higher purpose underlies every page of the Bible, indeed every word of it.

**In order to reveal Himself, God used what theologians call 'ACCOMODATION.'**

**Sometimes the Lord stoops down to communicate by 'condescension'** – that is, He speaks as humans speak as if He had the same passions and weakness that we do. (For example, God says He was 'sorry' that He made man in Genesis 6:6).

**Other times, He communicates by 'elevation'**—that is by endowing human words with divine power. (For example, through the Prophets.)

**The numerous examples of divine 'accommodation' in the Bible are an expression of God wise and Fatherly ways.** For a sensitive Father can speak with His children either by **condescension**, as in baby talk, or by **elevation**, by bringing a child's understanding up to a more mature level.