



Prophetic Ministry in the Old Testament

An Undaunted Voice in a Spiritual Wilderness

Adapted from Aaron Chan

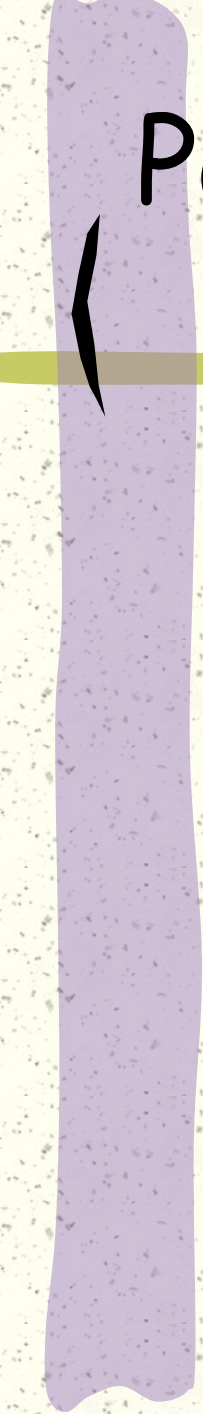
SCOPE

- # The Rise of Prophetic Ministry
- # Types of Prophecy
- # The Prophetic Message
- # A Contemporary Call for an Age-Old Ministry



The Rise of the Prophetic Ministry

Patriarchal Times



- # Israel came under the dynamic leadership of Moses, Joshua and the judges
- # Moses took up the role of prophet (Deut. 18:15)
- # Later prophets found their prototype in Moses

Four terms associated to people with prophetic traits

- # "Man of God" (אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים)
- # "Seer" (רֹאֶה)
- # "Visionary" (חֹזֶה)
- # "Prophet" (נָבִיא)



Relation to Literature & Monarchy

Non-Literary

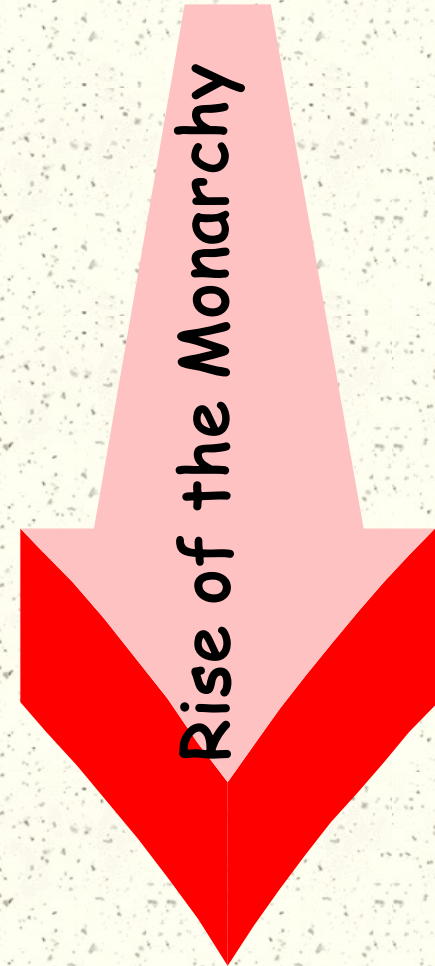
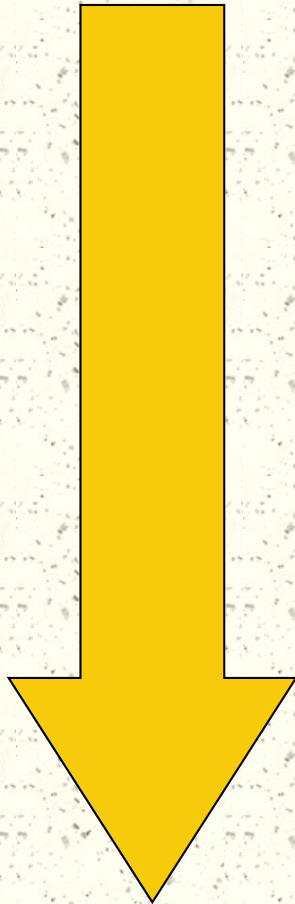
"Man of God"

"Seer"

"Visionary"

"Prophet"

Literary



Prophets from Moses to Samuel



Moses
as prophet

Transiting from days of Judges
to the days of the Kings ...

Samuel
as Israel's
"first" prophet
(1 Sam 9:9)



Israel's monarchy was facilitated by:

The anointed priest

The anointed prophet



The anointed king



{ Types of Prophecy

Non-Literary

- Those whose words have not been preserved in books that carry their names
- Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, etc.

Literary

- Those whose words have been preserved in written form under their names

Literary prophets

Can be divided into three distinct periods.

- Assyrian
- Babylonian
- Persian

Assyrian

810 —————→ 721

Obadiah Jonah Amos
Hosea Micah Isaiah

Babylonian

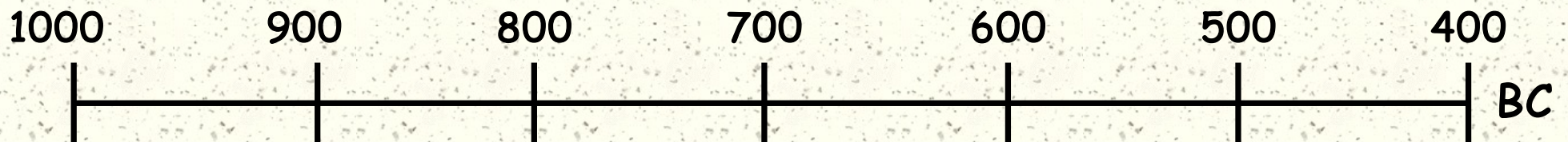
625 —————→ 539

Zephaniah Habakkuk Nahum
Joel Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel

Persian

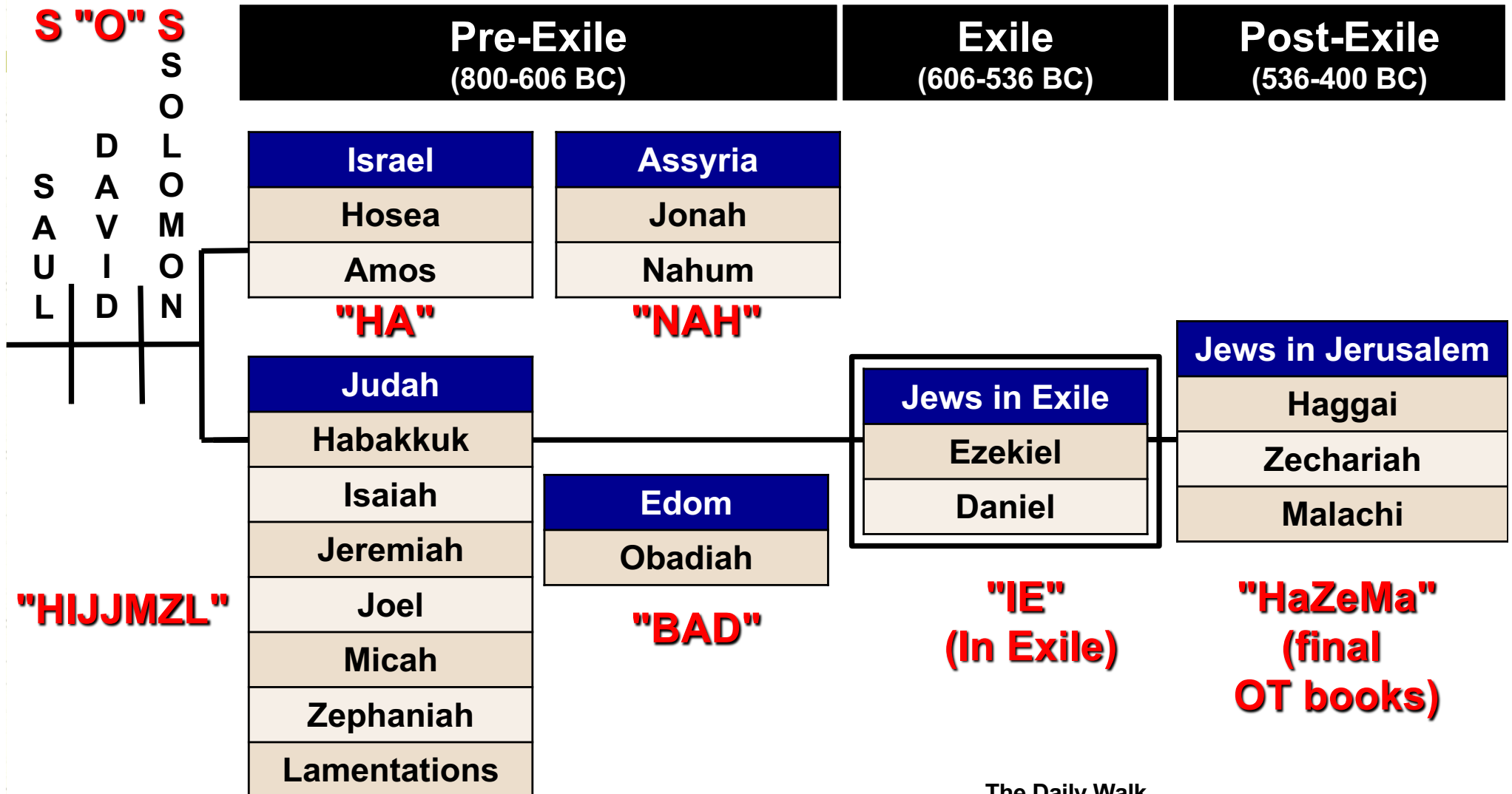
550 —————→

Haggai
Zechariah Malachi



Prophetic Timeline

Placing the Prophetic Books



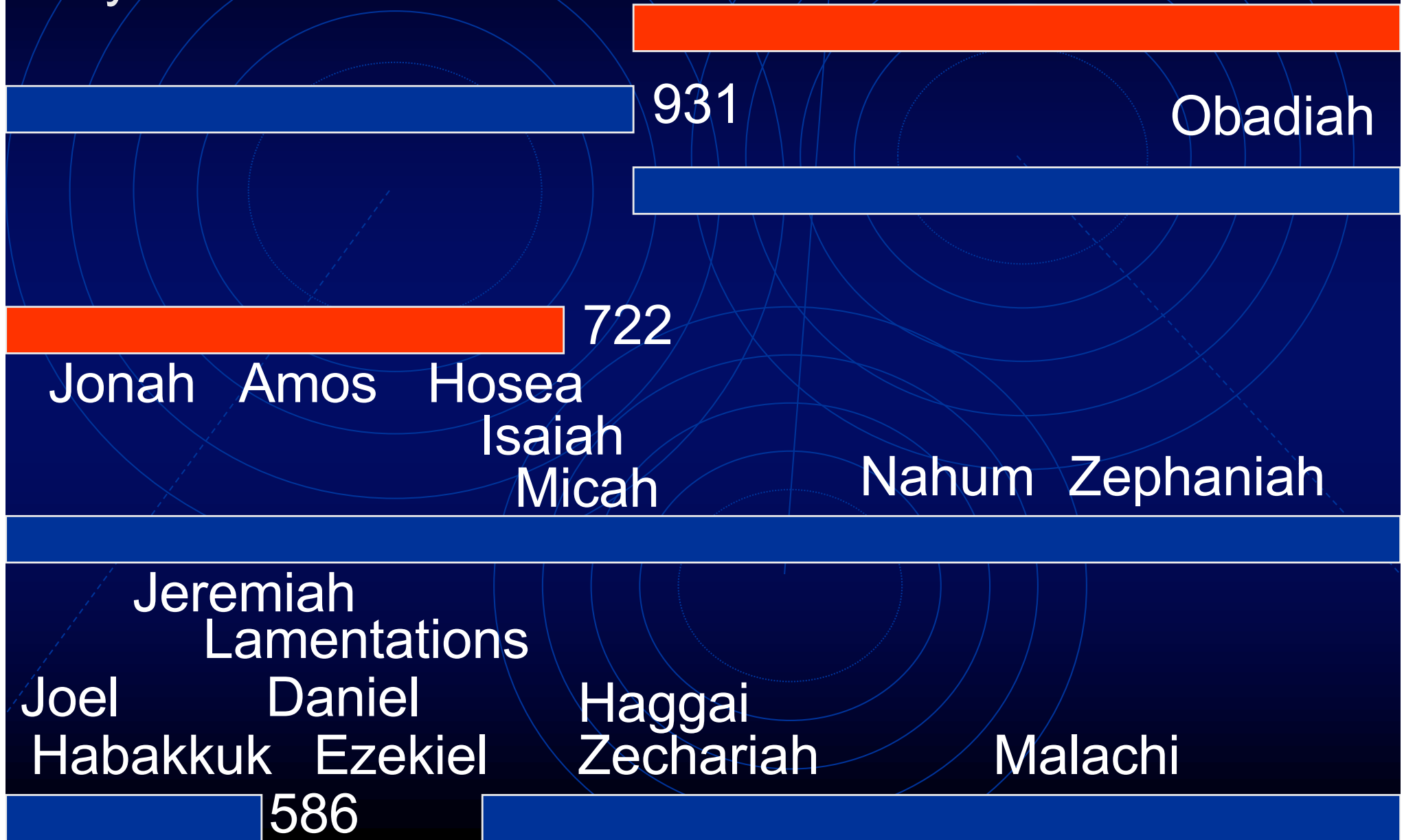
The Daily Walk

Adapted from *Walk Thru the Old Testament*
Walk Thru the Bible Press, 1978

Placing the Prophets

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Key Dates



To Whom the Prophets Ministered



Luther on the Prophets



"The prophets have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail with them or see what they are getting at."

CONTRASTING AMIL & PREMIL VIEWS ON THE PROPHETS

	Amillennial	Premillennial
Time of the Kingdom	Present church age (after Christ's first coming)	Future millennial age (after Christ's second coming)
Interpretive Approach	Symbolic rather than literal view of texts is allowed and even encouraged in prophetic genre	Normal, grammatical sense of language is used (figures of speech all have literal referents)
References to Israel	May mean Israel or the church, which is deemed the "new Israel"	"Israel" always means Israel (the ethnic seed of Jacob)

CONTRASTING AMIL & PREMIL VIEWS ON THE PROPHETS

	Amillennial	Premillennial
Location of Christ's Reign	Either heaven or the new earth in eternal state (= Rev. 21:1)	A renewed earth (but not the new earth of Rev. 21:1)
Political Subjects of Christ's Reign	The church in heaven and earth before the Second Coming, then on the new earth only after this	All people on earth from Jerusalem as the capital of the world (Isa. 2:3)
Spiritual Life	Some see Jews repenting in mass numbers	Israel & Gentiles repentant and cleansed (Ezek. 36)

CONTRASTING AMIL & PREMIL VIEWS ON THE PROPHETS

	Amillennial	Premillennial
Topographical Changes	Apocalyptic upheaval at the return of Christ seen in a symbolic sense (or not addressed at all)	Mt. Olives split (Zech. 14:4-5), temple at highest point (Isa. 2:2) with river flowing from it (Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47)
Geography	The church spreads the gospel throughout the earth	Tribes of Israel allotted new land boundaries with Gentiles among them in equal status (Ezek. 47–48)
Physical Life	The present age has life-spans generally under 100 years with death inevitable for all people	Most people live past 100 years (Isa. 65:20), babies still born (Isa. 44:3), death only for those in mortal bodies but many live in glorified bodies

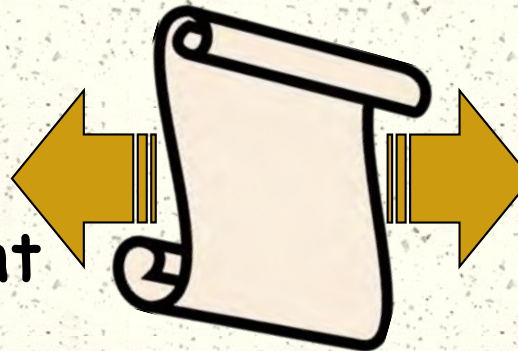
CONTRASTING AMIL & PREMIL VIEWS ON THE PROPHETS

	Amillennial	Premillennial
Social Life (Isa. 11:6-9)	Animals symbolize peace between believers and animals today or in the eternal state (OTS, 473a)	Peace between people and animals on a renewed earth (cf. Isa. 2:4)
Religious Life	A millennial temple and sacrifices viewed as contradicting Hebrews 9 and deemed obsolete	Millennial temple (Ezek. 40–43) with sacrifices memorial of Christ (Ezek. 44–46)
Intellectual Life	Knowledge of God heightened worldwide as the gospel advances	Worldwide knowledge of God where all people are believers at the start of the millennium (Jer. 31:34)
Emotional Life	Christ gives joy now to all believers	Jerusalem a city of joy (Isa. 9:1-4)

Problems & Tips in Interpreting Prophecy

Inaccurate Presuppositions

Ethical
Forthtelling
Mosaic Covenant



Predictive
Foretelling
Abrahamic Covenant

Prophets were mainly covenant enforcers based on the Mosaic law

Difficulties Interpreting Prophets

- D. Incomplete Background Data
- E. Historical Distance
- F. Lack of Appreciation for Poetry
- G. Unfamiliarity with Prophetic Books
- H. Ignorance of Eschatology
- I. Dual Eschatological Viewpoint

Approaching a Summit



Isaiah:

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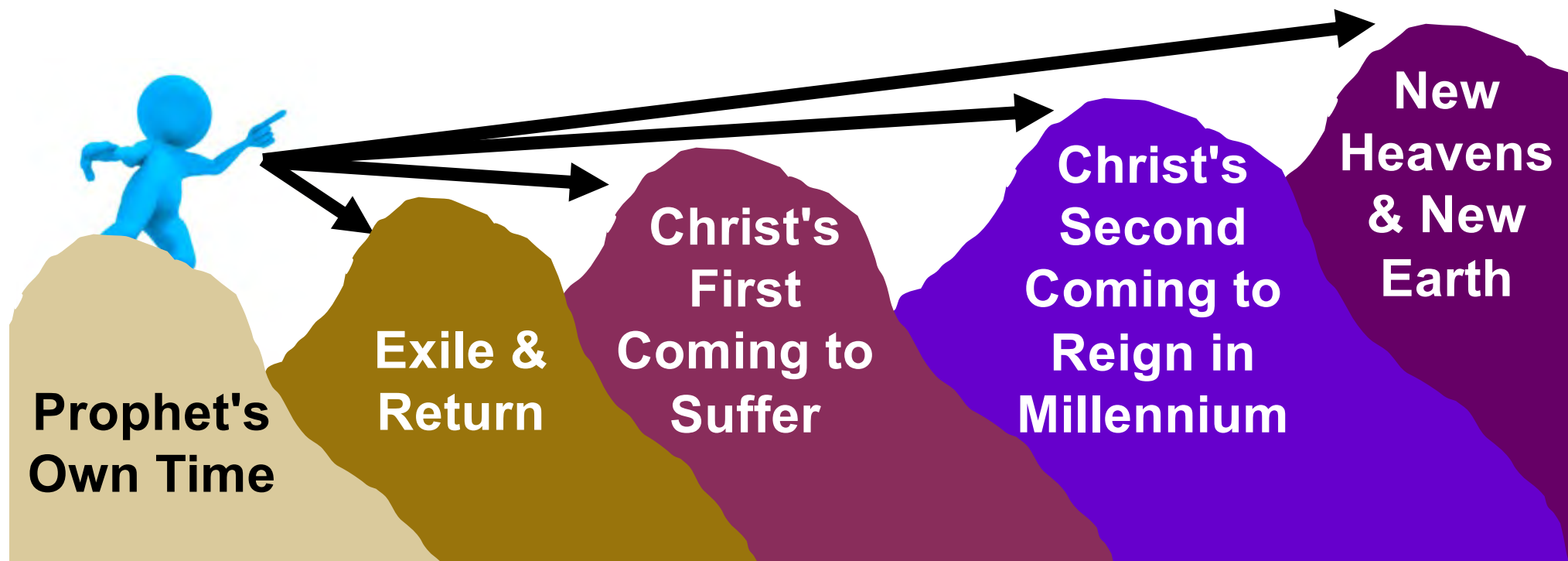
7–8

39–40

52–53

2, 11

25:8



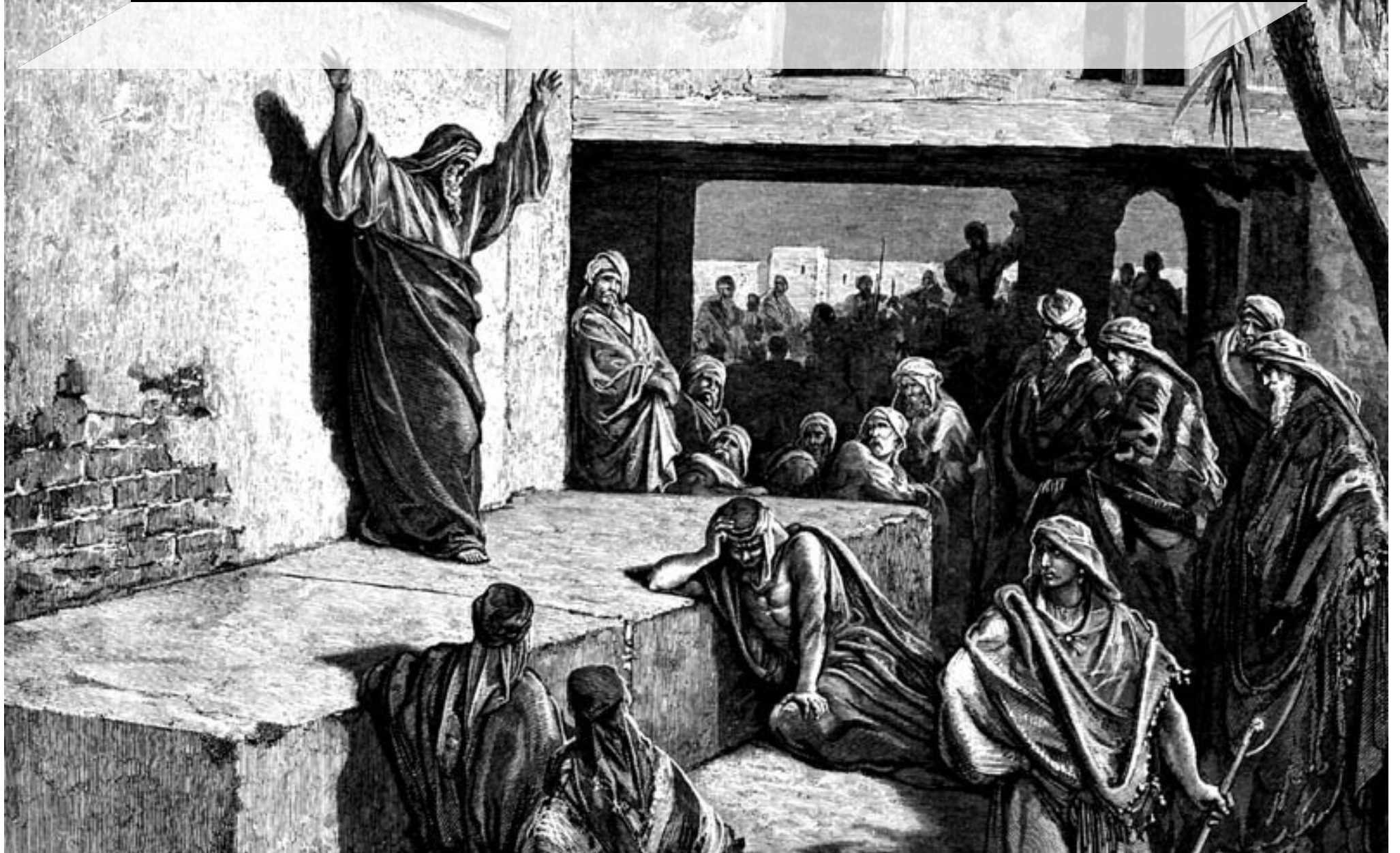
Time Periods of the Prophets

Adapted significantly from Salem Kirban, *Charts on Revelation* (1979), 49

We See the Valleys



The Prophetic Message





Modern False Prophecy

The Prophetic Message

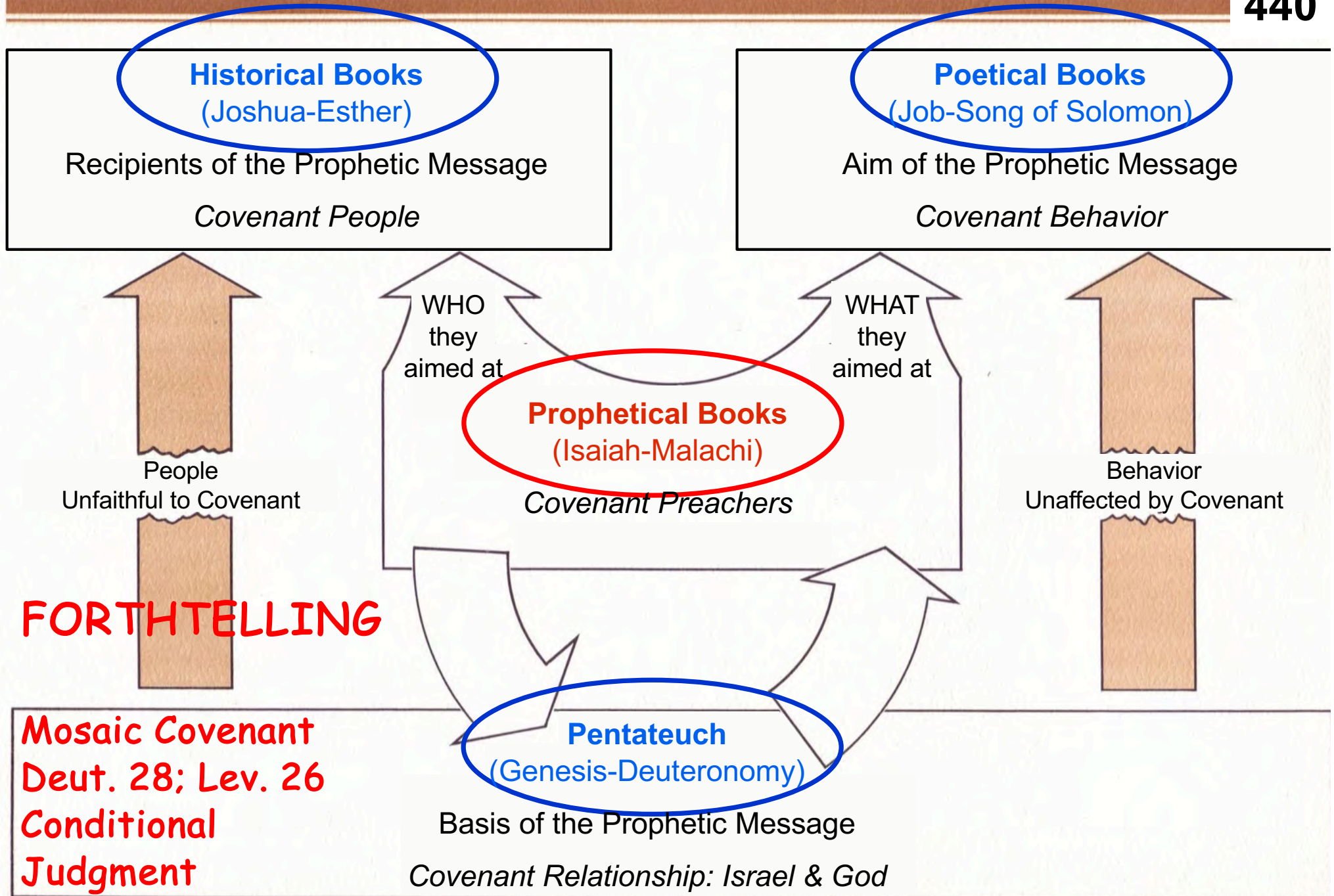
- # The prophets were not pushovers. They went against the tide to preach the word of Yahweh to a rebellious nation.

The Prophetic Message

- # A major concern posed by the prophets was idolatry.
- # But they also had social and economic concerns.
- # They spoke pronouncements of judgments to steer the nation away from the curses.

Purpose of the Prophetic Books

50b
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Deut. 28: Blessings & Curses

**Your towns and your fields
will be blessed (3)**

**Your children and your crops
will be blessed (4)**

**Your fruit baskets and bread-
boards will be blessed (5)**

**Wherever you go and whatever
you do, you will be blessed (6)**

**Your enemies will attack you from
one direction, but they will scatter
from you in seven! (7)**

**You will lend to many nations, but
you will never need to borrow
from them (12)**

**Your towns and your fields
will be cursed (16)**

**Your children and your crops
will be cursed (18)**

**Your fruit baskets and bread-
boards will be cursed (17)**

**Wherever you go and whatever
you do, you will be cursed (19)**

**You will attack your enemies from
one direction, but you will scatter
from them in seven! (25)**

**They will lend to money to you,
but you will not lend to them
(44)**

Prophetic Curses



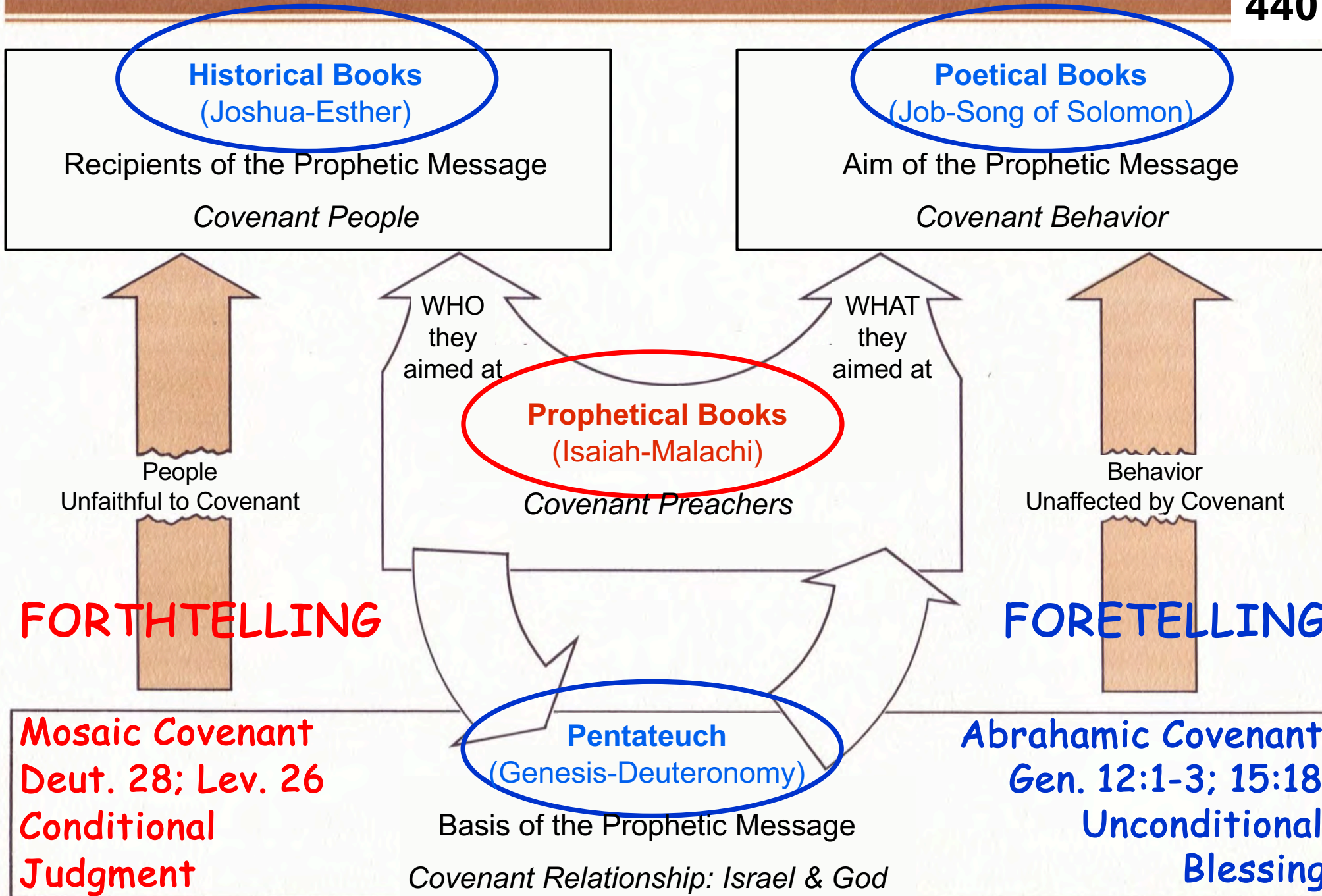
Why?

Deut. 28

Exile

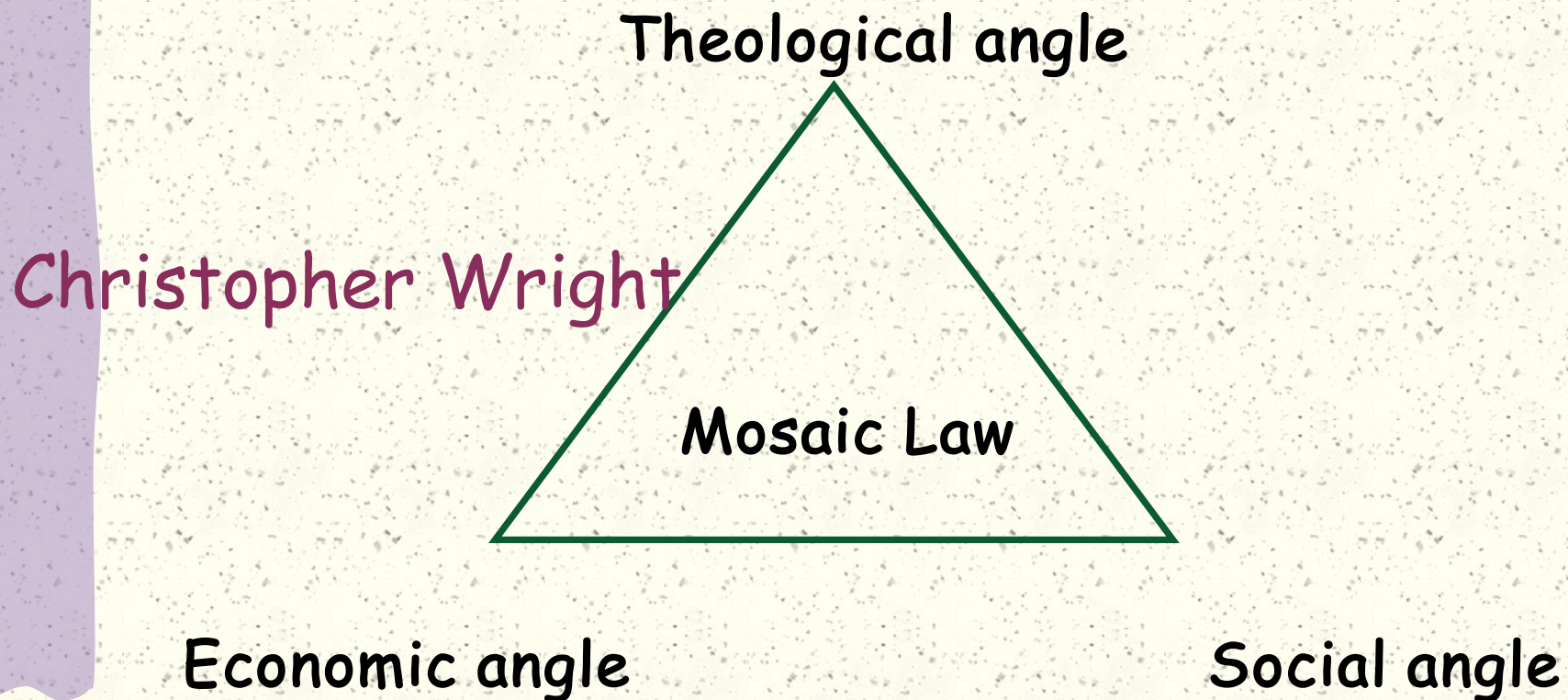
Purpose of the Prophetic Books

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Covenant Ethics in Mosaic Law

Prophets applied the Mosaic law to three dimensions of Israel's life:



The Prophetic Message

- # Against idolatry

- Deut 5:7-10; Isaiah. 40:12-31

- # For Social Justice

- Deut 15 and 17; Micah 6:8; Amos 2:6-8, 5:12

- # Against economic exploitation

- Lev 25:42, 53-55; Micah 2:8; Amos 2:6



A Contemporary Call for an Age Old Ministry

God granted the prophets extraordinary visions forward in time.

The prophets were master exegetes of the signs of the times.

They saw military invasions, locust plagues & famine not as mere natural occurrences...

These were God's razor-sharp punishment from a moral perspective.

And they preached it with all their hearts!!

Contemporary "Prophetic" Voices



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn attributed the massive suffering in twentieth-century Russia due to a society that forgot God.

Billy Graham related the social problems in the US to a spiritual decline.



Timothy's "Prophetic" Role

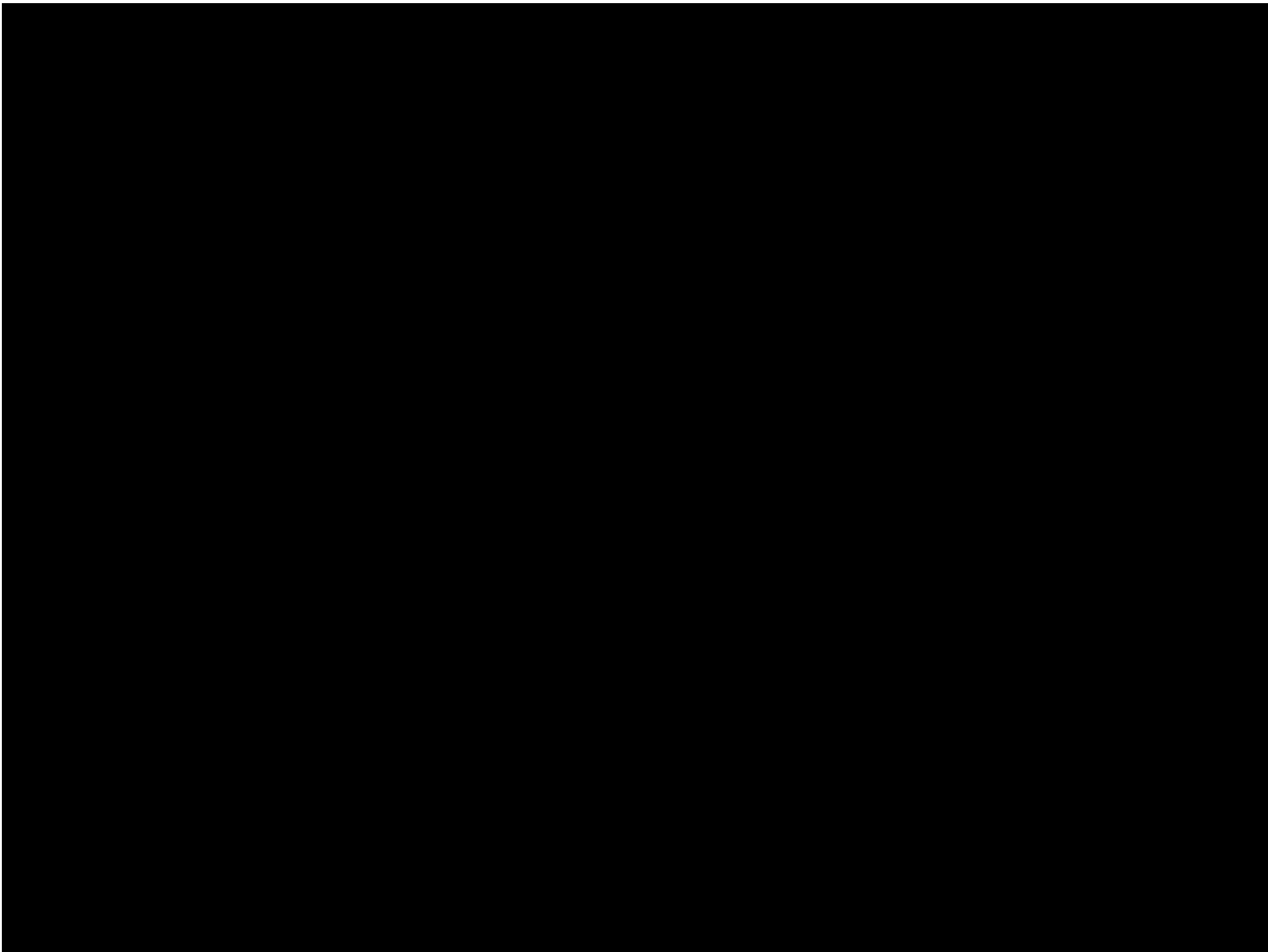


Paul charged Timothy:

"Preach the Word; Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience."

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires."


2 Tim 3:2-3



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