

Interpreting Prophetic Writing¹

Overview

- What is the historic context?
- How is the book organized around its oracles?
- What are the main themes or recurrent terms?

Oracle Analysis

- Immediate context
 - What oracle precedes and follows the passage?
 - What narrative, if any, introduces the oracle?
Note historical references, persons
- Structure of the oracle
 - To whom is the oracle directed?
 - What is the main point of the oracle?
(e.g. is it a denunciation, judgment, blessing, promise...?)
 - How is the main point supported?
(i.e. what's the basis for the main point...are reasons offered...imagery used, etc.?)
- Content
 - Language:
Determine the meaning of the language used (symbol, image...)
 - Does the oracle indicate some sort of time frame?
- Theology: In what way does the oracle relate to God's plan?
 - Does it contain judgments for Law breaking or disregard for God's covenant people?
 - Does it contain blessings based on Law or concern for God's covenant people?
 - Does it contain promises associated with God's unfolding plan of redemption, previous blessings, or covenants?
 - Does it reveal new dimensions of God's plans for Israel, nations or humanity?
 - How is this oracle used in other biblical texts? How does this clarify meaning of terms, temporal reference, etc.?
- Application: In what way does this oracle offer concrete hope or warning—what should we do with this prophecy?

¹ Jim Leffel prepared the content of this worksheet for his course on hermeneutics.