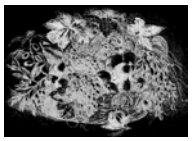
BEL 204 THE BIBLE

Prophetic Literature



Hebrew Poetry

- Words plays
- Primary structural device: *Parallelism*
  - Two (sometimes three) lines
  - Each have the same thought or variations of it in different words

Parallelism in Amos 4:4-5

A Come to Bethel—and transgress;
  A′ to Gilgal—and multiply transgression;
B bring your sacrifices every morning,
  B′ your tithes every three days;
C bring a thank offering of leavened bread,
  C′ and proclaim freewill offerings,
    C″ publish them;
D For so you love to do, O people of Israel!
  says the LORD God.

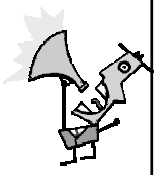
Parallelism in Amos 5:18-20

A Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD!
A′ Why do you want the day of the LORD?
B It is darkness, not light;
C as if someone fled from a lion,
D and was met by a bear
C′ or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall
D′ and was bitten by a snake.
B′ Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light
B′′ and gloom with no brightness in it?

Genres in prophetic literature:

- Poetic oracles
- Poetic liturgies
- Poetic laments
- Prose sermons
- Prose stories about prophets

Biblical prophet's task:



- Isaiah 6:9-13; Jeremiah 1:9-10
- Announce reasons for judgment
  - Economic & social injustice
  - Religious infidelity
- Announce the divine judgment
  - Not for conversion or repentance
  - But to establish that God did it

Prediction

- Prophets not predictors of future, but moral & social conscience of Israel
  - Problems of injustice, immorality, apostasy
  - God's faithfulness to Israel
- Predictions served to:
  - Validate prophet's message
  - Demonstrate God's role in events
- Changing events change predictions

Prophetic conflict

- Prophets often contradicted each other
  - 1 Kings 13
  - Jeremiah 28
- Prophets often uncertain which is true
- Criteria for prophetic truth:
  - Deut 18: predictive accuracy
  - Deut 13: orthodoxy (= agreement with Deut)
- Settled by Biblical canon

Personal cost of prophecy: Jeremiah

- Complains about (laments) his suffering
- Identifies with people while condemning them

Personal cost of prophecy: Hosea

- **Broken marriage is symbol for God & Israel**
- **Hosea's suffering = God's suffering**

Point:

God suffers with Israel