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The Prophets Podcast:

Uplifting Prophetic Voices for Our Times

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

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Dedicated to my siblings, Jacob, Micah, and Eden, who inspire me with their prophetic words and deeds.

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Introductory Materials

Statement of Problem:

On a giant wooden plank that sits above the fireplace in my childhood home are the words of Micah, famously quoted by George Washington, Lin Manuel Miranda and others. As I considered this quote, taken out of context, out of the mouths of a prophet about whom I knew little when I began this project, I wondered: who are the prophets, really? What was their message in their own time and what is their message today?

Prophets appear not only in my dad's living room. From singing "*eliyahu hanavi"* at a campfire *havdalah* to the reverberations of Isaiah's famous words, "is this the fast I desire?" on Yom Kippur to sharpie scrawls of Amos's call to "let justice roll down like a mighty stream" on a protest sign to a b mitzvah student's English reading of their *haftarah* portion, the stories and voices of the *nevi'im* are woven throughout the fabric of Jewish life.

In Progressive American Jewish life today, *Nevi'im* often sit in the shadow of Torah. Yet, Jews and their coreligionists often invoke "prophetic" justice, calling, voices, messages, and traditions, especially in the realm of social justice. Reform Jewish leaders, for example, invoked the prophets in the platforms of 1976 and 1999, writing in the latter, "We affirm the מצווה (mitzvah) of צדקה (tzedakah), setting aside portions of our earnings and our time to provide for those in need. These acts bring us closer to fulfilling the prophetic call to translate the words of Torah into the works of our hands."[1] In gathering and editing a new volume, *Prophetic Voices: Renewing And Reimagining Haftarah,* Rabbi Barbara Symons and all who contributed to this work are also responding to this problem that I was noticing in my own experience and in the Reform Jewish community. As Rabbi Symons noted at the Zoom book launch on March 14, 2023, if Reform Jews truly want to claim to be adherents of "Prophetic Judaism," which so often they say they are, then they must actually study and understand the prophets.

This project is one way to narrow the gap between the identification with "Prophetic Judaism" and real, deep engagement with prophetic texts. I have delved deeper into the narratives and messages of the prophets in their own contexts as well as uplifted their voices and calls for our contemporary ears. I have highlighted a selection of powerful and prominent stories, quotes, and prophets that represent a range of important and relevant themes. Leaning toward depth over breadth in a podcast format, I will explore a specific topic in a prophetic book with each episode.

Significance of the Study:

"Half-full, Half-cracked"
by Shirah Kraus

Knowledge without *kavanah* is soulless
It has forgotten its purpose to serve God and the world
It is like a beautifully crafted vessel, empty of wine

Kavanah without knowledge is shallow
It has nothing to stand on, nothing to hold it with authenticity
It is like wine without a cup, spilled on the table cloth
It cannot be enjoyed, it is a stain

But knowledge with kavanah is like a cup overflowing,
kosi revaya

[1] Gary P. Zola, "The Four Ideological Pronouncements of Reform Judaism in America," Cincinnati, OH: The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, n.d.

It is full and delicious and beautiful

And yet, even as we aspire to be overflowing cups
Some days we are reminded that the vast ocean of wisdom is so much bigger than we
Who is bold enough to claim that they have knowledge?

And some days we struggle to be present,
to direct our hearts and focus our minds
Who is bold enough to claim that they are one with the spirit?

And so perhaps all we are are vessels half-full, half-cracked
We have some knowledge
We have some kavanah

And every day that we learn,
our vessels become more whole and beautiful

And every day that we yearn deeply,
Our cups fill up just a little more

I wrote this poem after feeling agitated to seek both spiritual connection and deep knowledge. I am grateful to those who have helped to make Judaism more accessible and relevant today. And I am grateful to those who have kept Jewish knowledge and tradition alive. Albeit imperfectly and incompletely, I aspire to do both. The stories of our prophets demand deeper engagement than a quote on a protest sign or a reference in a *havdalah* song. Yet, the fact that they continue to speak and live in our times is also essential. I believe that the deeper we go to understand the *nevi'im* in their own stories, the more powerful their voices can shine in our stories.

In addition to deepening the Reform Jewish engagement with prophets in order to join others in elevating "Prophetic Judaism," this project also provides an opportunity to deepen connections and collaboration with others who live in our multi-faith, multi-racial, multi-ethnic society. A commitment to and inspiration from the prophetic tradition especially links Jews with Christians and Muslims who also include prophets in their sacred canon and aspire to heed their call for justice. For example, Cornel West, a Black Christian philosopher, educator, and justice leader, who speaks often on the prophetic calling for justice holds deep resonance for me.

Methodology:

For this project, I studied and researched the primary texts of *nevi'im*, focusing on the literary prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah etc. and excluding Kings, Samuel etc.) as well as relevant secondary literature, including creative media besides written texts. I consulted my advisor, Dr. Garroway, as well as other scholars of prophets and prophetic Judaism, including Rabbi Barbara Symons and Rabbi Andrea Weiss, PhD. I also investigated methods for creating a podcast through online research and consultation with experienced colleagues, including Joey Taylor and Andrew Mandel. This project required consideration of both content and aesthetics, visual and auditory.

Due to the limited scope of this project and my podcasting skills, I decided to fully record two episodes and then map out in written form another six episodes. Thus, if I or someone else wanted to record an episode at a later date, all of the needed questions and research would be ready. I also chose to narrow my focus to the literary prophets (those with books named after them such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah) and even then still only scratched the surface!

For each episode, I conducted focused research on the topic and the prophetic book. I have included in this document recordings of the first two episodes, outlines and Q&A for the latter six episodes, and annotated bibliographies for all eight episodes. I draw on a consistent outline (though it is open to variation) and include some of the same questions in each episode. This is the blueprint for the episode outline:

1. (30 sec) Introductory Song
2. (2 min) Framing
3. (approx 30 min) Discussion
4. (2 min) Closing
5. (30 sec) Outro Song

For this project, I wrote a song to use for the intro and outro for each episode (1 and 5). The music creates a consistent container for the podcast. For the framing (2), I introduce the topic, guests, and include an excerpt from the conversation to "hook" in the listener. During the discussion (3), I interview 1-2 guests on the topic and prophet with both prepared questions and spontaneous follow-up questions. The discussion segment could also be more conversational, with me as the host offering both insights and questions. The closing (4) is an opportunity to offer gratitude and share take-aways from the episode. The title and topic of each episode is included in the Table of Contents above. I have included notes on the technical side of the podcast as well as consent forms from my guests in the appendix below titled "Podcasting Notes."

Gratitude

I am incredibly grateful to my capstone advisor, Dr. Krisine Garroway, who encouraged me at every step along the way. Dr. Garroway gave me the space to work independently and provided helpful guidance, resources, and feedback. I would also like to thank Rabbi Barbara Symons, Father Chris Slane, and Rabbi Andrea Weiss, PhD, for joining as guests on the podcast. They offered precious time and insights based on years of study and thinking and I am so grateful that they said, "yes." I also want to thank Rebeca Orantes for sharing her beautiful voice chanting the Haftarah blessing in episode one. I am grateful to Joey Taylor and Rabbi Andrew Mandel, incredible friends and co-conspirators, for generously providing some pro-tips and insights into making a podcast. I also owe gratitude to Rabbi Beth Lieberman for her support on setting a timeline and to Rabbi Dvora Weisberg, PhD, for making it possible for me to be where I need to be as I complete this project and for encouraging the idea from the beginning. Finally, I'd like to thank my family and friends for their love and support and for being people I can come home to after a long day at the library.

I have driven deeper into the prophets with this project and I hope that it is accessible, engaging, relevant, and meaningful to anyone who wishes to read and listen.

Episode 1: The Prophets Podcast
An Introduction

Framing

In "Episode 1: The Prophets Podcast, An Introduction," I introduce the podcast and investigate the idea of "prophetic tradition" with two guests, Rabbi Barbara Symons and Father Christopher Slane. Together, we explored what it means to be "prophetic," the place and accessibility of the Hebrew prophets in both Jewish (Reform) and Christian (Episcopal) religious life, and the question of modern prophets. Here are the queries that I introduced to frame the conversation:

1. What is prophetic religion and where does it come from?
2. What is compelling about prophets and prophetic tradition?
3. Why study the prophets and uplift their voices today?

Music Choices

1. Original Song ("*Nevi'im Tovim"*) by Shirah C Kraus
2. "1234" by Feist
3. "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen
4. Haftarah Blessing, chanted by Rebeca Orantes
5. "Ain't About What You Got" by Star Cast

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. Share your personal connection to the prophets. What do the prophets mean to you? Why are they important to you?

Content - Episode Specific

1. How would you define a prophet? What are some examples of prophets that fit that definition?
2. How can others connect to prophetic voices and their message?
3. Where do the prophets appear in your liturgical tradition and religious life?
4. How would each of you speak to the question of modern prophets?
5. What is prophetic witness, prophetic tradition, prophetic Judaism? How would you define prophetic or prophetic tradition?

Conclusion

1. What is a prophetic message you would like to leave with our listeners today?

Recording

The recording of episode one can be accessed here on Descript (includes rough transcript) or here on soundcloud.

- Descript Link: https://share.descript.com/view/SVriW8b6umQ
- Soundcloud Link: https://on.soundcloud.com/uYXJp
- Note: I do not have rights to some of the music included, so please do not distribute commercially or otherwise.

Episode 2: Prophetic Poetry in Isaiah

Framing

In "Episode 2: Prophetic Poetry in Isaiah," I draw on Isaiah 58 as a case study to explore the poetic nature of the prophetic books with my esteemed guest, Rabbi Andrea Weiss. Together, Rabbi Weiss and I discussed the different aspects and impacts of the poetry of the Hebrew prophets. As my teacher, Rabbi Weiss often put the questions back to me so it was more conversational than the first episode. Here are some of the queries that I introduced to frame the conversation:

1. If the medium is the message, what is the message conveyed by the poetic medium?
2. What is the significance of poetry as the prophets' primary medium?
3. What power do poets and poetry have?
4. What can we learn from looking at Isaiah as an exemplar of prophetic poetry?

Music Suggestions:

1. *"Lo Yisa Goy"* by Debbie Freidman
2. "Peace Train" by Cat Stevens
3. "We Are One in Harmony" by Sun Drum Forest
4. "Dream On" by Aerosmith
5. "I Dreamed a Dream" from *Les Miserables* by Claude-Michel Schonberg
6. "And the Youth Shall See Visions" by Debbie Friedman
7. "One Last Time" from *Hamilton* by Lin Manuel Miranda

Discussion Questions

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic poetry and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book(s) of Isaiah and any important points. Listeners can later vote for the person they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

1. How would you define "prophetic poetry"? What are some of the defining elements of this genre?
2. If the medium is the message, what is the message conveyed by the poetic medium? What is the significance of poetry as the prophets' primary medium?

3. The writers and theologians, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Minister Walter Brueggeman, both highlight the imaginative quality of poetry and specifically of poetic poetry. For example, Heschel writes in his book, *The Prophets*, "Prophecy is the product of poetic imagination. *Prophecy is poetry,* and in poetry everything is possible."[2] Why is this poetic or prophetic imagination important?
4. There is rich poetry in all of the prophetic books, but one of the best examples is Isaiah, perhaps the most well-known of the literary prophets.
    a. What are some of the poetic devices that appear in Isaiah 58?
    b. What is the message conveyed by the medium?
    c. Isaiah could have presented the same message in prose or narrative form. So why poetry? How does the poetry of these verses help drive the point home?

Conclusion

1. What power do/can prophets and prophetic poetry have? Does it still have power?
2. What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times?

Recording

The recording of episode one can be accessed here on Descript (with a rough transcription) or here on soundcloud.

- Descript Link: https://share.descript.com/view/EUaDMjW4G2p
- Soundcloud Link: https://on.soundcloud.com/UEauq

[2] Abraham J Heschel, "Prophecy and Poetic Inspiration," In *The Prophets,* pp. 367-389 (New York: JPS of America, 1962), 368.

Episode 3: Prophetic Calling in Jeremiah

Music Suggestions:

1. "From My Mountain (Calling You)" by Peter Rowan
2. "Ghostbusters" by Ray Parker Jr.
3. "You've Got a Friend" by Carol King
4. "Payphone" by Maroon 5
5. "Hineini" by Alan Goodis and Campers from Camp Eisner

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic calling and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book of Jeremiah and any important points. Listeners can later vote for the person they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

Q1: *What is a prophetic calling? What does it mean to be called?*

A1: In some ways the term, "prophetic calling" is redundant, because to be a prophet is to be called. So what does it mean to be a prophet, what does it mean to be called? In his book *Understanding the Prophets*, Sheldon Blank offers some language for understanding what this means. He says, about a prophet's calling, that they become "aware of a mission… [of] being *sent*,"[3] that this person is a "*meshullach"* which is Hebrew for one who is sent, someone "with a mission to others" and that we have actually inherited this idea, that a person or a people could be "divinely sent."[4] So to be called means that God, YHWH, the divine has sent for you, has asked you to fulfill a divine mission. And that experience, that fact of being called makes a prophet a prophet.

Q2: Can you say more about the significance of "calling" for the Hebrew prophets?

[3] Sheldon H. Blank, *Understanding the Prophets* (New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983), 35.

[4] Sheldon H. Blank, *Understanding the Prophets* (New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983), 38.

A2: As varied as the prophets are, one of the unifying, essential experiences of the prophet is that they are called by God. As Jack R. Lundbom writes in *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction*, "To be a prophet, in the first place, is to be someone who has received a divine call."[5] In other words, being called is the defining feature of a prophet. Some scholars even believe that the Hebrew word, *nabi*, comes from an Akkadian word and means "one who is called."[6] Whether or not we know the story of the moment the prophet receives this divine call, the fact that they are called is essential to their credibility as a prophet of YHWH. So to be called is to be ordained, commissioned, selected by God to speak God's truth to the people. God is the subject, the prophet is the object, a vessel through which YHWH acts in the world.

Q3: *How might these definitions of "prophet" and "calling" compare to prophets in other traditions?*

A3: Several years ago, I had the opportunity to travel to Delphi, in Greece, the site where the Oracle would offer prophecies of the future. As I understand it, these oracular figures, often women, were struck with some kind of ecstatic inspiration and offered cryptic messages to individuals seeking insights into their fate. The Hebrew Prophet, on the other hand, receives a call from God that then defines their whole identity. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel explains:

> The prophet does not speak of a resolution or a purpose, framed by himself, to devote himself to his vocation, but describes a decisive moment in which he received a call. He thinks of himself as "a messenger of God" (Hag. 1:13), sent by Him to His people (Jer. 26:12-14; Isa. 49:5 f.). Moreover, he does not speak on the strength of a single experience or sporadic inspirations. His entire existence is dedicated to his mission.[7]

There are ecstatic and perhaps magical elements within Hebrew Prophecy (especially with Elijah), but the Hebrew Prophet is not *defined* by "sporadic inspirations" as much as a total relationship with the divine. Their entire existence becomes the fulfillment of God's will, not only to deliver prophetic messages like a mail courier who does their job only when they are "on the clock." The prophet becomes an extension of the divine; the prophet's will is secondary to the divine will.

Q4: *How do prophets respond to divine calling?*

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[5] Jack R. Lundbom, *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 9.
[6] Jack R. Lundbom, *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 9.
[7] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1969), 427-8.

A4: Jack R. Lundbom writes, "No two of these calls are alike… [and he adds] Human responses also vary."[8] So, the responses of different prophets vary. One common response, as we see with Moses, Jeremiah, and Jonah, is for prophets to react reluctantly. We will dive more deeply into this reluctance in a later episode with Jonah. Jonah's story demonstrates that once God decides to make someone a prophet, they cannot escape their calling. The only possible response to a call from God is "yes," is "*hineini*, here I am." Even if the prophet wants or tries to say "no" initially, they always come back to God. As J. Philip Hyatt writes in *Prophetic Religion,* "A burden was placed upon them which they had to bear, willingly or upon compulsion. They were not self-appointed, but God-chosen."[9] So a calling is also a command, an inescapable obligation and a burden. In his commentary on Jeremiah, Walter Brueggemann speaks to the question of why prophets are often resistant to the divine call but ultimately yields to divine will. He writes: "It is no wonder that the prophet resists, for who wants to bear such a burdensome and unwelcome word! But the word overrules its bearer. The message requires the messenger… We must not be unduly preoccupied with the person of the prophet who here is the way of God's specificity. In this unit the person of the prophet is not a subject but an object of God's overriding verbs."[10]

Q5: *Can you speak to the place of "calling" in prophetic literature? What is a "call narrative"?*

A5: Not every prophetic book includes a call narrative, but being "called" is a common motif in prophetic literature. Some examples of the call *narrative*, i.e. places where we actually read the story of the moment God called to the prophet to be a prophet, are Moses at the burning bush (though this is in Torah, not Nevi'im, in Exodus 3), Samuel (I Samuel 3), Isaiah (6), Ezekiel (1-3), and of course, Jeremiah (6). Although these call narratives differ from prophet to prophet, there are some common motifs or what we might call "literary stations." Different scholars have divided up the literary arc differently, but it basically looks the same. If you are interested in seeing a visual of this, check out the podcast notes. So Victor Matthews, David Petersen, Walter Brueggemann, and Sheldon Blank each identify 4-5 stages or stations in the call narrative. They use different terms, but basically the first station is the divine encounter, confrontation, or initiative -- this is the moment when God calls out to the prophet. The second step is an "introductory word" though Brueggeman and Blank don't count this as its own step. The third is human resistance or objection -- this is when the prophet questions if they are worthy or able or willing to heed God's call. The fourth station is the actual commission, wherein God tells the prophet what they must do. And the fifth stage involves some kind of reassurance, perhaps a talisman or sign, that signifies God's support as the prophet goes on to carry out their mission.

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[8] Jack R. Lundbom, *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 16.
[9] J. Philip Hyatt, *Prophetic Religion* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1947), 31.
[10] Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile & Homecoming* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 23.

And again, please look at the podcast notes to see the breakdown scholar by scholar. It is color-coded by stage so you can see how they each compare.

	Matthews	Petersen	Brueggemann	Blank
1	Divine Encounter (theophany)	Divine Confrontation	Divine Initiative (v. 5)	Prophet becomes aware of Mission, God tells him to go
2	Introductory Word or greeting	Introductory Word	Human Resistance (v. 6)	Prophet must overcome natural sense of inadequacy or unwillingness
3	Objection or Demurral	Commission	rebuke and reassurance (vv.7-8)	Prophet understands his business is to communicate, to speak for God
4	Commissioning Statement	Objection	physical act of commissioning (v. 9a)	Prophet becomes aware of the magnitude and difficulty of the task
5	Sign or talisman empowering the chosen person	Reassurance	substance of commission (vv. 9b-10)	

Q6: *What is the purpose of the call narrative? What is its place in prophetic literature?*

A6: One of the contradictions or tensions that prophets hold is that they are human beings, they are all different people with different personalities and contexts and what not, they are not angels or deities, right. But at the same time, their biography is secondary to their mission, their role as God's mouthpiece and vessel. So they live and suffer and experience joy as human beings, yet their lives are oriented toward a higher calling. This is important for understanding the "call

narrative" within the literature, because, as Victor Matthews, Norman Habel, and David Petersen argue, this "calling" exists not to give us information about the person of the prophet, but to establish their credibility. Matthews writes: "Call stories imitate the installation of an ambassador… the intention… is to confer authority on the prophet, not to provide biographical information."[11] Habel goes even deeper, writing, "The prophetic call narratives are much more than autobiographical records. They are traumatic public proclamations in which the prophet announces his divine commission and thereby commits himself openly to the secret, inner compulsion from God."[12] So it is not only rhetorical, but also really vulnerable for the prophets. And we talked a little bit about the prophet's reluctance, but we can get into that more, what Habel might mean by "traumatic" when we dig deeper into Jeremiah. But I also want to add what Petersen says about the call narrative as a literary construction. He writes: "these [call narrative] texts are not biography but instead highly theologized accounts, each one influenced by imagery and ideas important to the prophetic book of which it is a part."[13] Petersen here helps us to understand how and why call narratives differ from prophet to prophet and reflect some of the specific details of that prophet's message. And we will get to see an example of what that looks like with Jeremiah. So all three of these scholars--Matthews, Habel and Petersen--argue that call narratives are not so much biography as they are something else. Matthews emphasizes the way call narratives confer authority on the prophet, Habel focuses on the personal, emotional experience of the prophet, and Petersen highlights the imagery in the narrative that connects to the rest of the prophet's book.

Q7: *Describe the moment or experience of Jeremiah's calling. What are some of the key, common, and unique features? How does Jeremiah respond?*

A7: Now that we have all this context, let's take a look at the call scene in Jeremiah and we can show how it reflects what we have been discussing. So first let's just read the text. This is Jeremiah 1:4-10, and I pulled the translation from 929.org.il with some edits:

(4) The word of YHWH came to me:
(5) "Before I created you in the womb, I selected you; Before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations."
(6) I replied: "Ah, Lord YHWH! I don't know how to speak, For I am still a boy."
(7) And YHWH said to me: "Do not say, 'I am still a boy,' But go wherever I send you and speak whatever I command you.

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[11] Matthews, Victor H. Matthews, *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 27.
[12] Norman C. Habel 1965, "Form and Significance of the Call Narratives" (Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 77 (3): 297–323. https://search-ebscohost-com.huc.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000708989&site=ehost-live), 306.
[13] David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 20.

(8) Have no fear of them, For I am with you to deliver you" —declares YHWH.
(9) YHWH put out a hand and touched my mouth, and YHWH said to me: "Herewith I put My words into your mouth.
(10) See, I appoint you this day over nations and kingdoms: To uproot and to pull down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.[14]

So first, let's go through and identify each of the stages we discussed as part of the call narrative:

I. The Divine Encounter - this is pretty clear and simple, in verse 4, "The word of YHWH came to me." Then we have something that is more unique: "Before I created you in the womb, I selected you; Before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations." Jeremiah is actually chosen *before* he is even born. There are some interesting analyses of this verse and what it might mean, but it is certainly somewhat strange and mysterious.

II. Objection - Jeremiah's first reply is "I don't know how to speak, For I am still a boy." This rejection is reminiscent of Moses at the burning bush, who also fears that his inability to speak well will inhibit his prophesying. For Moses, though, many understand him as having a speech impediment or perhaps growing up in the Egyptian palace made his Hebrew limited, whereas Jeremiah objects because he feels he is too young.

III. Commission - God tells Jeremiah to "go wherever send you and speak whatever I command you" (v. 7) and then God says "I appoint you this day over nations and kingdoms: to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (v. 10). In these verses, God makes it clear that Jeremiah is to do as God wills and follow God's instructions. Another unique feature of this scene for Jeremiah, is that he is called to be a prophet to "nations and kingdoms," and not only to Judah or Israel. This establishes Jeremiah as a prophet to a wide audience, which becomes more clear throughout the book.

IV. Reassurance/Sign - There is a little bit of back and forth here between commission and reassurance. In v. 8, God reassures Jeremiah, telling him, "Have no fear of them, for I am with you to deliver you" and then in v. 9, we read that YHWH touches Jeremiah's mouth and says "Herewith I put your words in my mouth." David Petersen points out that Jeremiah's call narrative, and especially this symbolic sign of God's reassurance emphasizes language, foreshadowing "the prominence of the word" throughout the book.[15] And while this may be especially prominent in Jeremiah, all of the prophets (except perhaps Jonah), are masters of language who use words as their weapons, their tools, their currency to bring the divine into the world. Therefore voice, language, words become highly valued and significant.

[14] Translation from 929.org.il
[15] David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 20.

Conclusion

Q1: *What power do/can prophets and prophetic* ***calling*** *have?*

A1: One of the prophets' enduring gifts to us is this concept of being called -- and the burden that a calling carries. Even though we live in a post-modern world wherein many of us are skeptical of a divine ruler who acts in human affairs, we can still find meaning in the concept of prophetic calling. One thing we haven't mentioned is the relationship between prophets, priests, kings, and other leaders. The prophet is not a king, not the ruler of the people. Rather, the prophet is a divine authority who checks the power of the king and the religious establishment. We continue to rely on courageous people in our world who are open and ready to hear the call, to bear the burden of speaking truth to power and imagining what the world could be -- the artists, the poets, the orators, the activists, the writers.

Q2: *What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times, that is relevant for us right now?*

A2: The call is there. We will hear it if we listen. And even if we are afraid or hesitant or self-doubting, we are not alone. We can bear the burden. The prophetic call was once reserved for a select few, but I believe we each have the potential to be called toward a unique mission for our lives.

Episode 4: Prophetic Imagination in Ezekiel

Music Suggestions:

1. “Pure Imagination” by Gene Wilder
2. “Imagine” by John Lennon
3. “Dem Dry Bones” by The Rhythm Boys
4. “Dry Bones” by Willie Watson
5. “The Bone Dance” by Hannah Montana
6. “Bones” by Imagine Dragons
7. “Radioactive” by Imagine Dragons

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic imagination and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book of Ezekiel and any important points. Listeners can later vote for the person they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

Q1: *What is prophetic imagination?*

A1: “Prophetic Imagination” is a term that I first encountered with Walter Brueggemann, who wrote a book called *Prophetic Imagination.* He also speaks about this idea on an episode of *On Being* with Krista Tippet. Brueggemann highlights the fact that prophets have this incredible ability to imagine and put into language a reality that is different from the current reality, whether that is an upturning of the social order wherein those who are in power and abusing it are finally held accountable or whether that is a world in which there is peace and prosperity even if the prophet is speaking during a moment of tragedy and destruction. There is always a possibility of something different. The prophets are not complicit or compliant: they hold fast to a vision of how the world could and should be. This is why prophets tend to use the language of poetry, which we discussed in episode two, because poetry is imaginative and creative. In poetry, anything is possible. Prophetic Imagination, then, is counter cultural, because, as Brueggemann notes on *On Being:*

> Our consumer culture wants somehow to narcoticize us so that we just settle in on things. I think Kafka maybe said that a poet or a novelist is like a pickaxe that attacks the way we've got things arranged. And I think these poems are like pickaxes that are not welcome among us, but we're going to miss out on the reality of our life if we are narcoticized both about the loss and about the newness.[16]

Q2: *Can you give us some context for the book of Ezekiel?*

A2: Ezekiel contains "some of the most theologically challenging and dynamic material among the prophets of the Bible, and some of the most difficult and bizarre passages. His literary style is intricate, with striking imagery and extended metaphors. Many of his oracles are in prose, unlike the other classical prophets. Some of his visions border on the apocalyptic… [such as] Dry bones."[17]

Q3: *We are going to zoom in on Ezekiel 37:1-14 today as a case study for exploring this concept of prophetic imagination. I selected this section from Ezekiel, because it is one of the most well-known verses in prophetic literature and because it reflects the poetry and imagination of prophetic text. So let's first read this section and then we can analyze what it means and how it connects to this idea of prophetic imagination. Here is the translation from Sefaria.org:*

GOD's hand came upon me. I was taken out by the spirit of GOD and set down in the valley. It was full of bones.
[God] led me all around them; there were very many of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry.
I was asked, "O mortal, can these bones live again?" I replied, "O my Sovereign GOD, only You know."
And I was told, "Prophesy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of GOD!
Thus said the Sovereign GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again.
I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am GOD !"
I prophesied as I had been commanded. And while I was prophesying, suddenly there was a sound of rattling, and the bones came together, bone to matching bone.
I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had grown, and skin had formed over them; but there was no breath in them.

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[16] Krista Tippett, "Walter Brueggemann - the Prophetic Imagination," The On Being Project (The On Being Project, July 1, 2020), https://onbeing.org/programs/walter-brueggemann-the-prophetic-imagination-dec2018/.
[17] Marvin A. Sweeney "Ezekiel" in *The Jewish Study Bible* edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1042.

Then [God] said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, O mortal! Say to the breath: Thus said the Sovereign GOD: Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again.”
I prophesied as I was commanded. The breath entered them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast multitude.
And I was told, “O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.’
Prophesy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Sovereign GOD: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel.
You shall know, O My people, that I am GOD, when I have opened your graves and lifted you out of your graves.
I will put My breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil. Then you shall know that I, GOD, have spoken and have acted”—declares GOD.

Q4: *This scene is often called “Dry Bones.” Can you help us understand what this passage is saying?*

A4: As was mentioned earlier, this “Dry Bones” scene is quite significant and well known in religious circles, but of course has been interpreted in different ways. One of the first questions to consider is whether or not this is all meant literally. So at face value, it seems possible that Ezekiel actually breathed life into dead bodies and perhaps this vision is predicting a day in which the dead will literally be revived. It’s definitely giving… zombie. But most scholars agree that this vision is metaphorical and allegorical and not meant literally. Moreover, Ezekiel’s prophecy concerns the entire community of Israel, not individual dead. As John Collins explains, “Ezekiel uses the vision of resurrection only metaphorically… not… individual dead… only that ‘the whole house of Israel’ will be restored” and only later do interpreters claim that this resurrection is literal and individual.[18] The idea of “eschatological resurrection” likely did not even exist in the time of Ezekiel, but Ezekiel 37 “was bound to be understood in that way as soon as the notion of resurrection was formed” as Johannes Tromp points out.[19]

Q5: *Okay, so if the “Dry Bones” scene is metaphorical and allegorical, what are some interpretations of what the passage is trying to convey?*

A5: Most scholars tend to believe that Ezekiel was prophesying while the people were in exile and so this message of resurrection was reassurance that the people would be restored to the land. So it’s not that individual dead will come back to life, but that the “House of Israel” would

[18] John J. Collins, “The Exilic Period: Ezekiel and Obadiah” in *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 371.
[19] Johannes Tromp, "Can These Bones Live?" in *The Book of Ezekiel and its Influence* edited by Henk Jan De Jonge and Johannes Tromp (University of Leiden, The Netherlands: Ashgate, 2007), 62.

revive. This fits into the prophetic promise which is repeated in several books, that even though the people will face devastation and destruction, they will not be completely wiped out. It's kind of like an endangered species that is able to repopulate and is promised not to go into extinction.

Q6: *So where do these images and metaphors come from? What are some reasons why Ezekiel might have chosen these particular images of dry bones reviving?*

A6: While we do not know for certain, different scholars have attempted to answer these questions. One suggestion comes from John Collins who writes that the Dry Bones imagery might come from a Zoroastrian custom "of laying out the dead to be picked clean by vultures."[20] In *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*, Kerry M. Sonia analyzes this scene in the context of ancient Israelite burial rituals and ideologies more broadly. Sonia points out the importance of place, peoplehood, and repatriation of the dead. She writes:

> Several biblical texts attest to care for the dead in the form of protection and repatriation of human remains. This protection entails preserving the physical integrity of the corpse and/or burial site, while repatriation is the transportation of human remains to the territory associated with one's family or tribe… texts such as… Ezek 37:11–14 depict the repatriation of human remains to their ancestral lands."[21]

So we can look at Ezekiel 37 in a larger context in which it was important for the buried dead to be taken care of and at times repatriated into the familial or tribal territory. For example, Moses takes the bones of Joseph with the Israelites as they leave Egypt and march toward Israel, honoring his ancestor's dying wish (Ex 13:19). Thus Ezekiel 37 actually shows YHWH caring for the dead as humans care for the dead, thus as Sonia writes, "the depiction of YHWH exhuming and repatriating the dead in this passage is a striking example of a deity performing ritual care for the dead."[22] This act is significant and, Sonia explains, it "articulate[s] the ongoing covenantal relations between YHWH and Israel."[23] The Dry Bones episode demonstrates that YHWH has not abandoned the people, though they may question God's enduring covenantal presence. YHWH provides hope and reassurance, that even the dead are in God's care.

Q7: *I can see a little bit how this connects back to where we began, with the concept of "prophetic imagination," but can you make it explicit?*

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[20] John J. Collins, "The Exilic Period: Ezekiel and Obadiah" in *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 371.
[21] Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel* (The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv190k9vw, 54.
[22] Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel* (The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv190k9vw, 184.
[23] Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel* (The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv190k9vw, 186.

A7: Right so Ezekiel 37 is a prime example of a prophetic text, that although later interpreters have taken it more literally, is a metaphor, an allegory, a vision. It reflects the idea I shared earlier that in poetry, anything is possible. Right, in real life we cannot raise the dead. But in poetry, we can. And this vision, rich with imagery, draws in the imagination and provides hope to a people in exile, reassures and encourages them that YHWH has not abandoned them and that in the future, the people will be restored. There is a recurring theme I think that reflects this idea that "we are not waves, we are water." In other words, even though individuals are born and live and die, they are connected to something bigger, to a *people*, and that *people* will not die out. I am reminded of a poem by Clint Smith, which goes like this:

> **When people say, "we have made it through worse before"**
>
> all I hear is the wind slapping against the gravestones
> of those who did not make it, those who did not
> survive to see the confetti fall from the sky, those who
>
> did not live to watch the parade roll down the street.
> I have grown accustomed to a lifetime of aphorisms
> meant to assuage my fears, pithy sayings meant to
>
> convey that everything ends up fine in the end. There is no
> solace in rearranging language to make a different word
> tell the same lie. Sometimes the moral arc of the universe
>
> does not bend in a direction that will comfort us.
> Sometimes it bends in ways we don't expect & there are
> people who fall off in the process. Please, dear reader,
>
> do not say I am hopeless, I believe there is a better future
> to fight for, I simply accept the possibility that I may not
> live to see it. I have grown weary of telling myself lies
>
> that I might one day begin to believe. We are not all left
> standing after the war has ended. Some of us have
> become ghosts by the time the dust has settled.[24]

Conclusion

Q1: *What power do/can prophets and prophetic* ***imagination*** *have?*

[24] Clint Smith, "When people say, 'we have made it through worse before,'" In *Above Ground* (United States: Little, Brown, 2023).

A1: Prophetic imagination is something we can carry on today, by putting forth into words and into the world a vision of a better world. This feels particularly relevant to me as an almost-rabbi who sees herself as an inheritor of the prophetic tradition and a student trying to understand what it means. One way of thinking about what Walter Brueggemann calls "prophetic ministry" is this: "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[25] In other words, prophetic ministry is an ongoing commitment to bearing witness and giving voice to an alternative to the pervasive, oppressive reality. In this way, prophetic ministry, according to Brueggeman, unites criticizing the dominant structures of society with energizing people to imagine and create a better reality.

Q2: *What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times, that is relevant for us right now?*

A2: Some people are critical of the prophets for being ineffective and angry people who stood on their soap boxes waxing poetic and wagging fingers. We do not know, for most of the prophets, to what extent they were able to actually move people, to what extent people actually heeded their warnings and listened to their pleas. But I think before we jump on the "prophets were not strategic" bandwagon, we should acknowledge that first, we don't really know how strategic most of them were and second, I believe we should rethink what "strategic" or "effective" means for the prophets. If we look at them as poets, as imaginers, as people who spoke words that are timely and timeless, then the prophets were and are incredibly effective. Prophets are not necessarily the people who are going to take action to change the world, but they are the people who are going to imagine a vision for what the world could look like -- and that is an important role to play, too.

[25] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (United Kingdom: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

Episode 5: Prophetic Theology: Hosea (with Feminist Readings)

Music Suggestions:

1. "God is In" by Billy Jonas
2. "Jolene" by Dolly Parton
3. "I Write the Sings Not Tragedies" by Panic! At the Disco
4. "I Know I'm Not the Only One" by Sam Smith
5. "Brave" by Sara Bareilles
6. "Survivor" by Destiny's Child
7. "Lose You to Love Me" by Selena Gomez

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic theology and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book of Hosea and any important points. Listeners can later vote for the person they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

Q1: *Tell us about Hosea. What makes this book unique and what is the primary message?*

A1: The quintessence of Hosea, what makes Hosea unique and sits at the center of this prophetic book, is the dominant metaphor of a marriage to an unfaithful wife. This metaphor has three layers: the archetypal layer - a man and his adulterous wife -; the sociological layer - God and Israel -; and the personal layer - Hosea and his wife, Gomer.

Q2: *So let's uncover each of these layers, their elements, and their meanings. Can you tell us more about these layers and what they represent?*

A2: To my understanding, there is a relative degree of consensus around the connotation of the "unfaithful wife" in Hosea as a metaphor for Israel vis-a-vis YHWH. In other words, YHWH is the husband and Israel the promiscuous wife. Essentially, the metaphor serves to highlight Israel's sin of idolatry. According to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, this idolatry is primarily Israel's alignment with foreign nations and their deities. Another scholar, Gale A. Yee, argues

that Hosea's critique also includes Israel's abandonment of God's moral laws concerning equitable social structures and sustainable agricultural practices. The God of the bible can be very emotional. The God of Hosea is angry and hurt by this abandonment and is prepared to punish the people. Yet at the same time, God's love for the people transcends this anger. And the common theme in the prophetic literature is that even though the people turn away from YHWH again and again, there is never complete hopelessness. Usually, the people have a chance to repent and return. Sometimes, when this is no longer possible, hope comes in the form of a future generation experiencing peace, prosperity, and a second chance to do better. In Hosea, God's love and forgiveness triumph. So in the metaphor, a wife is unfaithful to her husband. She is punished, but then the two reconcile. As Dr. Kristine Garroway pointed out to me, "There is something uncomfortable about the fact that the woman must be punished before they can reconcile… [and] There is something unique about God's just nature that demands a consequence for idolatrous actions." In our own times, we have very different ideas about adultery and how to respond. In the Biblical context, a girl's sexuality belonged to her father and then to her husband. Adultery occurred when a woman had sex outside of the permitted relationship. A man was considered adulterous only when he had sex with a woman who was not his wife and primarily if that woman was another man's wife. If she was unwed, he could retroactively marry her. In our current context, 2024 America, adultery tends to be seen more as a betrayal of trust which someone of any gender could commit. Adultery is taboo and frowned upon, but it is not a legal crime in this country. In Hosea, Gomer's actions are considered sinful. And YHWH, though merciful, is also compelled to carry out justice. In general, the God of the Bible is considered both merciful and just. There are consequences for bad behavior. But the main idea is that even though Israel has been unfaithful and will experience the consequences, YHWH will not abandon them. They will reconcile.

Q3: *How do God's actions in response to Israel's metaphorical adultery compare to the laws about adultery that we read in the Torah?*

A3: This is an important question, because many scholars who read Hosea are doing this intertextual analysis and trying to unpack to what extent does this metaphorical narrative align with the literal laws about adultery. These laws appear in a few places, and don't all say the same things. In Leviticus 20:10, we read "If a man commits adultery with a married woman—committing adultery with another man's wife—the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death." Both the unfaithful woman and the man she is unfaithful with are punished, put to death. In Hosea, the focus remains on the unfaithful wife. In other context, Numbers 5:12, a lot more detail, ritual, and legal process is provided about what to do if a woman is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. This kind of sin would have been difficult to prove or witness, so there's actually this whole process where the accusation is made and then the priest performs some rituals and the woman has to drink this bitter drink and basically how her body responds

gives the answer as to whether or not she is guilty. We don't really know what her punishment is, though the text says that she "will become a curse among her people" (Nu. 5:27) and "will suffer for her guilt" (Nu. 5:31). Neither of these scenarios fit exactly with Hosea -- the metaphorical unfaithful wife has many lovers, not just one, and she is neither executed nor investigated. Some scholars have suggested that God's merciful response not to destroy the offending party, is at odds with the Biblical law dictating the death penalty. There is some truth to this, as God's act of reconciliation demonstrates that God's love eventually triumphs over anger and sin. It will also be important to explore feminist readings which call into question the reading of God as benevolent.

Q4: *And how does Hosea and his wife fit into this metaphor?*

A4: Hosea's own personal story parallels the marriage metaphor. Essentially, at the very beginning of the book, God tells Hosea to marry a "woman of harlotry" *eshet-zenunim*. He marries a woman named Gomer, they have three children with symbolic names, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhammah, and Lo-Ammi, which translate to "God sows," "Not-Pitied," and "Not-My-People" respectively. So these names map out a trajectory from God's providence to the Israelites' abandonment. But also, imagine if these really were the names given to the kids -- talk about embarrassing! Why should children suffer for their parents' actions? Just as in the archetypal metaphor, Hosea's wife is unfaithful. Hosea banishes her, but then reconciles. It is not uncommon for prophets' biographies to serve a literary or symbolic purpose. But Hosea's case is somewhat unique and its interpretation is contested among scholars. One of the questions that arises is if this *actually* happened to Hosea. It is very difficult to know if anything in the Bible actually happened and that is not really my primary interest. Some interpreters, after undergoing intertextual analysis and trying to reconcile Hosea's story with laws about adultery -- namely that the law stipulated the death penalty for adulteresses -- believe that Hosea's marriage was merely symbolism or a vision or a dream. Then there is what some call the "historical approach."[26] Abraham Joshua Heschel sits in this camp and adds a sort of psychological perspective. Heschel argues that Hosea's personal experience of marrying a woman is unfaithful to him, then punishing her, then reconciling with her, sensitizes him to the relationship between God and Israel. He writes, "Only by living through in his own life what the divine Consort of Israel experienced, was the prophet able to attain sympathy for the divine situation. The marriage was a lesson, an illustration, rather than a symbol or a sacrament. Its purpose was… to educate Hosea himself in the understanding of divine sensibility."[27] In other words, Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful wife was a didactic experience meant to condition him to the emotional experience -- both the anger and the boundless love of God. I think Abraham Joshua Heschel's analysis from a

[26] Eugen J. Pentiuc, *Long-Suffering Love : A Commentary on Hosea with Patristic Annotations* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002), 13.
[27] Abraham J. Heschel, "Hosea" In *The Prophets* (New York: JPS of America, 1962, 39-60), 56.

psychologized literary perspective is particularly compelling, but I don't agree with his complete rejection of the symbolism. I also think there is another important interpretive frame. There are a lot of literary markers in the Bible that frame God as the omniscient, omnipotent deity who sets everything in motion. But I'm not convinced everything is a part of God's plan. I think if we deconstruct this idea and ask the "which came first, the chicken or the egg" question, we can gain further insight. In other words, another way of looking at all this is simply that we use the metaphors that make sense to us, to our lives, to our contexts. First we have experiences, then we draw on that life experience to craft metaphors for larger phenomena. So for Hosea, that was primarily the metaphor of husband and wife. But he also draws on a parent-child metaphor in later chapters. We use what we know.

Q5: *You talked about feminist readings and the importance of context -- can you say more about the implications of these insights? Why does interpretation matter?*

A5: The scholar, Gale A. Yee, whom I mentioned earlier, draws our attention to the patriarchal violence that emerges from Hosea. For example, in Hosea 2:5, the "husband" threatens to "strip her [the unfaithful wife] naked and uncover her as in the day of her [giving] birth. Then I shall set her like a wilderness and put her as a dry land and kill her by thirst."[28] We might be tempted to emphasize the poetry of this text, and suggest it is merely exaggeration. However, some have taken these violent words out of context and turned them into fodder or justification for domestic violence, sexual abuse, patriarchal patterns, and the like. Yee writes, "This metaphor makes its theological point at the expense of real women and children who were and still are victims of sexual violence."[29] It is important to recognize aspects of our sacred texts that are problematic[30] and try to understand them in context. As Yee, Susan E. Haddox, and other feminist scholars have argued, the content and language of Hosea present an image of an abusive husband,[31] not a husband who has a healthy love for his wife. So we have to be careful about what images we hold up as models for human relationships, because I don't think it's healthy for a woman to return to a man who has threatened her. And then the question arises, do we need new metaphors for our relationships with God or is there something about our relationship with God that is separate from how we should exist in our human relationships? One other important thing is to not get too caught up in the metaphor and forget what the point is. As Yee argues, the focus on

[28] My translation
[29] Gale A. Yee, "Hosea" In *Women's Bible Commentary,* edited by Carol A Newsom, Sharon H Ringe, and Jacqueline E Lapsley, 299-308 (3rd ed., twentieth anniversary ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 305.
[30] Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet : Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective*, of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 212* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 12.
[31] Susan E. Haddox, *Metaphor and Masculinity in Hosea*, of *Studies in Biblical Literature, V. 141* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 13.

the marriage metaphor has sometimes come at the expense of the original intent -- to call attention to Israel's sins of idolatry, elitism, and land abuse.

Q6: *In our own context, the extended metaphors of Hosea might not "work" or hold up in the same way that they perhaps once did. But if we situate this book in its original context, what are some thoughts as to why the metaphor worked for its readers?*

A6: Right, the thing about metaphors is that they usually come from what is familiar to us. I remember actually when I was in high school on a field trip to a farm and we actually got to herd some sheep. And I know this isn't the same as being a real, full-time shepherd, but being the precocious teenager that I was, my take-away from this experience was that I felt I could understand and relate to the shepherd metaphors that are all over the Bible and liturgy and theology. One explanation is that the primary reader would have been a man in a society that considered a woman's unfaithfulness egregious and shameful, and in the Ancient Near East, the death penalty was not an uncommon response. Thus, Hosea's metaphor both indulges the drive to punish the offense while also tempering that vengeance and encouraging reconciliation. Similarly, the Israelites actions have been egregious, shameful, and might even merit annihilation. God both incurs consequences and shows mercy. And as grotesque as much of this book is, I think Hosea is also giving the people hope and comfort -- even though God gets angry and the Israelites suffer, that does not mean God will abandon or annihilate them.

Q7: *Many scholars note that Hosea, with his use of these extended metaphors, presents a particular conception of God. Can you say more about the God of Hosea, Hosea's contribution to theology, and the "theological point" being made?*

A7: Theology can mean both the study of God and the systematic belief or theory of God. In this case, our focus is on the latter definition. Hosea's contribution to theology is this idea of God as a husband, a lover, an anthropomorphised deity who can experience pain and anger just like humans, but also who is merciful, forgiving, and in love with the people of Israel. These ideas appear in other texts as well, such as in the interpretation of Song of Songs also as a metaphor for God and Israel as male and female lovers respectively, and of course there are many other instances of God's anger. But I think Hosea really underscores God's love, which also appears in the parent-child metaphor. God's love is a recurring theme in Hosea that many scholars have picked up on. To give an example, in 11:1 we read, " כִּֽי־נַ֣עַר יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וָאֹהֲבֵ֑הוּ וּמִמִּצְרַ֖יִם קָרָ֥אתִי לִבְנִֽי׃ … When Israel was a youth, I loved him; and from Egypt, I called to my son."[32] Another important element of theology is not just the definition of God, but also the relationship between God and the people. Just as God is described as loving and providing for Israel as a parent or husband, Hosea exhorts the people to reciprocate that love in devotion. In Hosea 6:6, we read: " כִּֽי־חֶ֥סֶד

[32] Author's translation

חָפַצְתִּי וְלֹא־זֶבַח וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים מֵעֹלוֹת… For it is lovingkindness that I seek, not burnt offering, and knowing God more than sacrifices."[33] Echoing similar sentiments in Isaiah and other prophetic texts, Hosea challenges the people not merely to go through the motions in offering sacrifices, but to actually show love and devotion to God. The idea of "*daat elohim"* or "knowing God" is a recurring motif. This phrase is ambiguous, but seems to suggest a personal encounter, a deep relationship. This root is also used often to connote sexuality -- that's where we get the whole "knowing someone in the biblical sense" idea. These ideas inform Abraham Joshua Heschel's analysis. He writes, "*daath elohim* does not connote a knowledge *about* God, but an awareness *of* God, a sensitivity for what concerns Him, a concern for the divine person, not only for the divine will; a concern that involves inwardness as well as action."[34] From this perspective, theology is not about defining God but about encountering God. And I think there is a parallel here to Martin Buber's ideas about the I-Thou relationship and striving to cultivate meaningful encounters with God and other people, to know each other in the sense of awareness and care rather than to know *about* one another. I could know something *about* you, like that you enjoy baseball or ride your bike to work or hate shopping. But that is different from knowing you, being aware of you as a whole person, what animates you and concerns you.

Conclusion

Q1: *What power do/can prophets and prophetic* ***theology*** *have?*

A1: I think, very simply, that when we look at "the God of the prophets" and the relationship between God and Israel, it can better help us understand both the context from which these texts emerged as well as clarify our own beliefs and ideas about the divine.

Q2: *What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times, that is relevant for us right now?*

A2: The main take-aways that are coming up for me are: 1) I think it's a bit of a stretch to draw this from the text, as Heschel does, but I do like the *idea* of seeing God as unconditionally loving of the Israelites, of us. And in some ways, that can also be a model for our human relationships. Just because we get angry at someone doesn't mean we end the whole relationship. 2) On the other hand, it's also important to recognize texts in context and challenge violent, patriarchal norms and language. When we actually look closer at the relationship between God and the Israelites, between Hosea and Gomer, is it really the model we want for our human relationships? I don't think so. 3) Metaphors can be really helpful, but they are also limited and say a lot about us and where we are coming from 4) There are lots of different ways to analyze and look at these

[33] Author's translation

[34] Abraham J. Heschel, "Hosea" In *The Prophets* (New York: JPS of America, 1962, 39-60), 59-60.

sacred texts, but often the process is more valuable than the conclusion -- and how we interpret texts says a lot about who we are and what matters to us.

Episode 6: Prophetic Burden in Jonah

Music Suggestions:

1. “Runaway” by KAWALA
2. “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers
3. “Great Escape” by Boys Like Girls
4. “Born to Run” by Bruce Springstein
5. “Going Going Gone” by Maddie Poppe
6. “God sent Jonah to Ninevy land” - Slave Song from *All Saints Parish, Ga.*
7. “The Cat Came Back” by Harry S. Miller
8. “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” - Traditional African-American Spiritual
9. “If It Takes a Lifetime” by Jason Isbell

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic burden or the burden of prophecy and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book of Jonah and any important points. Listeners can later vote for who they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

Q1: *Can you provide some context for the book of Jonah?*

A1: When I think of the book of Jonah, I think of Yom Kippur afternoon. This is the traditional *haftarah*, or prophetic text, that is read on this annual day of atonement. And pretty much every year, growing up and into adulthood, I would be at synagogue and my dad would read this short book for the congregation, switching between Hebrew and English, dramatically inflecting words like *nehepachet*, a key word which means “overturned.” *Nehapachet*. Yeah, that’s how he says it.

Jonah is a unique book, because compared to other books named for prophets, it’s a completely different genre. It’s a short story. It’s narrative. Probably in a satirical genre. And yet, Jonah is clearly a prophet. As David Petersen writes, “Jonah is truly the odd book out in the Book of the Twelve. It is a short story, not a collection of sayings/oracles, vision reports, or accounts as we find in all eleven other books. Yet the first verse of the book identifies Jonah implicitly as a prophet, that is, as someone who receives God’s words directly. Moreover 2 Kings 14:25 identifies Jonah, son of Amittai, explicitly as a prophet… read as part of the prophetic literature

of the Hebrew Bible."[35] So yeah, Jonah is strange. I mean, Jonah gets eaten by a fish! And cries about a plant dying! There are a lot of inverses of the typical prophet: Jonah runs away from God's call instead of following; he is remarkably successful with very few words; the focus is on non-Israelites who are shown in a somewhat positive (albeit unintelligent perhaps) and humanizing light. And though we don't really know anything about Jonah before or after the book, we learn a lot about him and his character, a lot more than what we know about most of the other prophets. Jonah does not give long, winding poetic speeches like Isaiah or Jeremiah. He engages with God and others in short dialogue, offers a prayer while stuck in a fish, and makes a very simple proclamation to the people of Nineveh.

Jonah has always been a puzzling character to me as well. Why did he run away from God? Why doesn't he want to warn the people of Nineveh to repent? Why is he upset when the city is saved? Why does he care so much about a plant, and less about his fellow human beings? After a few years of rabbinical school, I have also learned to look at these questions from a contextualized literary perspective. Why did the authors create a prophetic character who runs away from God, doesn't want the Ninevites to repent, is upset when the city is saved, and cares more about a plant than other human beings? There are a lot of responses to these questions from different perspectives -- Medieval rabbinic sages, Christian commentators, modern scholars, psychologists, laypeople.

Drawing on my own context, and other stories to which I am familiar, I want to focus on Jonah as a representative human being who is uncomfortable with the burden of prophecy, the burden of leadership. It's hard not to compare Jonah to the main character of Avatar the Last Airbender. 11-year-old Aang is the "Avatar, master of all four elements, charged with bringing balance to a world on the brink of war." But Aang doesn't want to be the Avatar. He doesn't have a choice, he was born the Avatar, but like Jonah he runs away and eventually gets swallowed by the ocean until he is ready to emerge. Like Jonah, Aang also hides his identity, saying: "I didn't tell you I was the Avatar, because I never wanted to be." Also like Jonah, Aang's flight turns out to be futile: eventually he must accept his fate and fulfill his destiny.

Even though most of us are not chosen to be prophets or avatars, heroes with the entire world balanced on our shoulders, resisting responsibility and feeling burdened by leadership are something a lot of us can relate to. So even as I continue to puzzle over Jonah, as I've grown older, he does make more sense to me. Being a prophet is not so glamorous and not for the faint of heart. You know, when I was younger I romanticized civil rights leaders and organizers, people who bravely stood up for what is right. But as an adult, I am much more aware of the

[35] David L. Petersen, "Jonah," In *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 191-3), 192.

risks and the costs, the difficult choices and the high stakes. I would much rather live in a world of justice and peace than have to be someone who has to face danger to fight for that world.

Q2: *Jack R. Lundbom, J. Philip Hyatt and others have discussed the "perils" and "burdens" of prophetic calling. What do you think this means? What are some of the perils and burdens of prophetic calling?*

A2: In his book, *The Burden of Prophecy*, Albert Cook writes, "The Hebrew prophet, [is someone] whose voice is raised and whose freight of duty is indeed hard to carry."[36] Cook draws on both English definitions of the word, "burden," -- load and substance. The burden of prophecy, then, connotes both the weight of responsibility and the intentions of their words. In this episode, we are going to focus more on "burden" as a heavy load. We touched on this a little bit in episode three, when we discussed "prophetic calling" in Jeremiah. Jeremiah, Moses, Jonah, and others recognize that being called upon to be a prophet is not exactly a dream come true. It's a huge responsibility. It means putting yourself out there, taking risks, saying things that might be unpopular. The burden of prophecy reminds me of the Greek Titan, Atlas, holding the weight of the world on his shoulders. The prophets hold a huge weight. Unlike Atlas though, their burden is not the world, but the word, not the worldly, but the other-worldly. And Jonah in particular demonstrates that no matter how hard they might try to shirk their responsibility, it will keep coming back like a boomerang or the cat in that song, "The Cat Came Back." I think this is a kind of sobering realization, because, like I mentioned, we often romanticize the prophets and what it means to carry on the "prophetic tradition." But we have to acknowledge the difficulty of being prophetic. I am also reminded of this idea of "the burden of leadership" more generally. In some cultures and communities, when a person takes on leadership, the ceremony is actually quite solemn. Instead of congratulating the new leader, the people actually acknowledge the difficulty and burden of being in such a position. Being a leader can be lonely, frightening, miserable, and exhausting. Prophecy is a kind of leadership not to be taken lightly.

Q3: *Can you tell us more about the prophet as a person and how Jonah fits into that?*

A3: In most of these episodes, we have focused more on the literature, message, and disposition of the prophets and less on their psychology, character, personality, and such. In part this is because we do not know a lot about the prophets as people, their biography and narrative, and what little we *do* read about them tends to be understood *literarily* rather than *literally*. For example, when we discussed Hosea and his marriage -- we don't know whether or not there was a historical Hosea who married a "harlot" or if this was all just a literary construction. And these literary prophetic texts -- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zephaniah, etc. -- read as poetic speeches

[36] Albert Cook, *The Burden of Prophecy: Poetic Utterance in the Prophets of the Old Testament* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 2.

more than as narratives. As I mentioned earlier, Jonah is an exception. We still do not know much about him before and after the story written in the chapters of the book of Jonah, but I think we get a clearer sense of Jonah's character and personality than we do with other prophets.

Q4: *The writer, Erica Brown, calls "Jonah the reluctant prophet… [she explains that] Reluctance carries with it a sense of hesitation, the nod of the unwilling, the disinclined, the resistant, the oppositional, the unenthusiastic… [Brown adds] Jonah is the far-away prophet, always on the escape even when he is physically present."[37] How does Jonah's reluctance manifest in his narrative? How is he "on the escape even when he is physically present?"*

A4: The Hebrew prophets, in general, carried many burdens. They were responsible for representing God's honest voice to the people and often bore the brunt of critique and unpopularity for it. Yet, prophecy was a burden they had no choice but to bear. Most prophets did not exactly seem to be jumping for joy at the chance to have this role. Jeremiah describes the day he was made a prophet, in his mother's womb, as "wretched" and is even jailed. Moses is afraid the people will not heed him when he tells them to flee Egypt and later has to deal with the constant barrage of complaints in the desert. Hosea and Amos lament their ordination as prophets as well. So it is not unusual for prophets to complain about being prophets or think themselves worthy of the role. But as Rabbi Steven Bob notes in his book *Jonah and the Meaning of Our Lives*, Jonah is the only prophet to actually run away.[38] Like other prophets, Jonah is reluctant to heed God's call. But in his narrative, it is made explicit that he cannot hide or run away from God -- harkening back to Adam and Eve hiding their nudity and Cain hiding his fratricide. When Jonah tries to run away, God causes a storm to ravage his ship, then sends a fish to swallow him and bring him to Nineveh. Instead of celebrating the city's recovery, Jonah is "grieved" and "displeased" (Jonah 4:1). He dramatically wishes for death and prays to God saying:

אָנָּה יְהוָה הֲלוֹא־זֶה דְבָרִי עַד־הֱיוֹתִי עַל־אַדְמָתִי עַל־כֵּן קִדַּמְתִּי לִבְרֹחַ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אַתָּה
אֵל־חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְנִחָם עַל־הָרָעָה׃

"Please GOD! Isn't this just what I said when I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah explains here that his hesitation to follow God's command was due to his dissonance and disagreement with God. This is an example of Brown's description of Jonah as "on the escape

[37] Erica Brown, *Jonah : The Reluctant Prophet*, First ed. of *Maggid Studies in Tanakh, Stone Edition* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2017), xv.
[38] Steven M. Bob, *Jonah and the Meaning of Our Lives: A Verse-By-Verse Contemporary Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2016), 15.

even when he is physically present."[39] Even though Jonah ultimately does what God tells him to, he is not happy about it. Unlike other prophets, Jonah does not seem to share God's pathos and mercy. Rather he is a character foil to God. He wants punishment where God shows mercy. Jonah is callous about human life where God values it.

Q5: *In Jonah 4:2, Jonah reveals why he ran away in the first place, but we are still left with many questions. What are some explanations for Jonah's flight? And what can we learn from God's response?*

A5: Many rabbis and scholars have sought to explain why Jonah ran away. His flight is peculiar, a surprising reaction when one of the first things we learn about Jonah is that he is a prophet, *navi*. But as unique as he is, in his extreme response, Jonah exemplifies the burden that all prophets bear. Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz offers some interpretations in his commentary on Jonah. He writes, "Perhaps Jonah feels that prophecy should only be spoken in and to Israel… Perhaps he feels that the people of Nineveh should not profit from God's care. .. Jonah may flee… out of self-preservation. Maybe he… [has] a reasonable fear [of the Ninevites]."[40] The reasons behind Jonah's flight are many and varied and it seems impossible to zero in on one explanation. One interpretation that I find compelling comes from Yanklowitz himself. He notes that Jonah means dove in Hebrew, "Which might suggest that Jonah's reason to run away from his mission… might be his fear of conflict and violence… What he is called to do is not necessarily what he wants to do… [He continues] Jonah 1:3 offers insight into the human condition: when called to accountability, it is our instinct to hide or flee. Yet when we run away from God, we run from… our true mission as human beings."[41] Like Jonah, we may often feel called to do what we do not want to do. We often struggle to overcome our fear and callousness. Yet where Jonah shows reluctance and callousness, God imposes courage and compassion. When Jonah tries to run away, God sends a storm and a fish. When Jonah complains about the Ninevites being saved, God rebukes, "Should not I care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons…?" (Jonah 4:11).

Q6: *Reluctance to hold power can be a desirable leadership trait -- consider the ancient Roman Cincinnatus who voluntarily gave up being a wartime dictator in favor of returning to life as a farmer or the biblical Moses who doubted his capacities when God called out to him at the Burning Bush. Do you think Jonah's reluctance is a positive or negative trait? How does he compare to other prophets who express hesitation at their nomination?*

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[39] Erica Brown, *Jonah : The Reluctant Prophet*, First ed. of *Maggid Studies in Tanakh, Stone Edition* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2017), xv.
[40] Shmuly Yanklowitz, *The Book of Jonah: A Social Justice Commentary* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2020), 9-10.
[41] Shmuly Yanklowitz, *The Book of Jonah: A Social Justice Commentary* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2020), 11.

A6: I agree, reluctance can be a positive character trait for leaders. However, Jonah takes it too far, actively fleeing from God's call. I think it's easy to relate to Jonah, but difficult to admire him. At best, I could probably feel sympathetic toward him and try to understand where he is coming from. One interesting way of thinking about Jonah is as a "comic dupe." We read in the Anchor Bible: "Jonah comes to be a tool by which to drive home profound ideas as well as homespun truths. As such, he represents the *comic dupe*, a character (by no means always humorous) that is still known to Middle Eastern folklore."[42] Basically, Jonah doesn't really know what is going on and is set up to look ridiculous and get angry. As the comic dupe, perhaps Jonah's grief about Nineveh is not that they were saved, but that he felt God was being dishonest. Jack M. Sasson explains: "Because he never grasps the double-edged meaning behind the message he communicates, Jonah perceives God's change of mind as breach of proper etiquette obtained between God and prophets, so he feels misused. I have sought to suggest that it is this perceived indignity, and not Nineveh's deliverance, that drives Jonah to grieve and complain."[43] This is an interesting way to look at Jonah, but I have a hard time letting go of my reading of Jonah as pretty callous and disobedient of God. I see Jonah as a cautionary tale: you can be reluctant, but you can't outright run away from God's call. It's not going to end well for you.

Conclusion

Q1: *What power do/can prophets and prophetic <u>burden</u> have?*

A1: Where prophetic calling has the power to wake us up, and prophetic imagination has the power to hope for a better world, the idea of prophetic burden has the power to sober us, to bring us back to earth a little bit. The burden of prophecy is real and heavy and if we want to truly understand the prophets and walk in their ways, we have to acknowledge the challenges, risks, and sacrifices that entails.

Q2: *What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times, that is relevant for us right now?*

A2: As an "emerging adult," I often find myself torn between being a child and being an adult. At times, I reminisce about being a kid again and being taken care of. At other times, I crave self-sufficiency and independence. Or on a larger scale, when it comes to responding to the questions and crises of our times, we may often feel torn between stepping up to the challenge and retreating to focus on our own needs. We all have different reasons for avoiding the prophetic call and burden in our own times, as Yanklowitz writes, "Some people flee from their mission

[42] Jack M Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. of *The Anchor Bible, V. 24b* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 347.
[43] Jack M Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. of *The Anchor Bible, V. 24b* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 346.

because they feel inadequate to the task. Others… prioritize comfort, routine, and conformity over what they know is right or good. But [he continues] to be religious means to be outraged… Whatever we are running from, we have to stop running… We need to learn that we cannot save ourselves as others perish."[44]

[44] Shmuly Yanklowitz, *The Book of Jonah: A Social Justice Commentary* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2020), 13-14.

Episode 7: Prophetic Fire in Zephaniah

Music Suggestions:

1. "This Girl is on Fire" by Alicia Keys
2. "Fire Burning on the Dance Floor" by Sean Kingston
3. "Fire and Rain" by James Taylor
4. "Words" by Train (after question 2)

Discussion Questions:

Introduction

1. What is your connection to prophets and the idea of prophetic fire and what do they mean to you personally? [tell a story!]
2. 30-second summary competition: guest(s) and host will each have 30 seconds to summarize the book of Zephaniah and any important points. Listeners can later vote for the person they think did it better.

Content - Episode Specific

Q1: *What is prophetic fire?*

A1: This term "prophetic fire" has appeared in a few different examples of literature about or derived from the Hebrew prophets. In 1951, a scholar by the name of Rolland Wolfe published a book on prophets that he titled *Men of Prophetic Fire*. Megan McKenna's 2001 book about the Hebrew Prophets subtitled "Words of Fire." And more recently, in 2015, the intellectual and activist Cornel West published a book about modern Black prophets called *Black Prophetic Fire.* So this idea of prophetic fire is not necessarily the overwhelming feature of secondary literature on the prophets, but it helps to highlight certain aspects of the prophets: their fieriness. What does this mean? Each of these writers interprets this idea a little differently. Cornel West writes about the "fire of the soul and an acknowledgment of the power of the spirit that fortifies us in order to fight."[45] He talks also about a "fire for justice"[46] that signified a refusal to accept injustice and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "moral fire."[47] I think for West, prophetic fire is about passion, power, and spirit directed toward a higher vision of collective justice and morality. Megan McKenna emphasizes the fieriness of the prophets' language, its divine source, and the impact that language can have on igniting us. She writes: "The words of the prophets… are 'black fire on white fire.' [quoting the Talmud] May these words on this paper make our hearts

[45] Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (United States: Beacon Press, 2015), 121.
[46] Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (United States: Beacon Press, 2015), 54.
[47] Cornel West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (United States: Beacon Press, 2015), 120.

burn as the scripture are opened to us and the message of the prophets echoes in our minds and ears. May we remember that these words are born in the furnace of God's heart and these words of fire are but breaths and intimations of God's own love for all of us."[48] So for McKenna, I think prophetic fire is very much rhetorical and Godly. Rolland Wolfe also emphasizes the element of fire in his understanding of the prophets, calling them "Religious pioneers who set the world on fire with a new spirit."[49] Prophets shook things up, disrupted their communities. Drawing on West, McKenna, Wolfe, and others, I would say that prophetic fire is divinely-inspired, courageous rhetoric that has the power to wake people up. And for this context, I also want to draw on the connotation of fire with anger and wrath and rebuke. I did not grow up with "fire and brimstone" preaching and whenever I try to write a fiery sermon, I kind of chicken out. But we definitely find some of this really harsh, fiery rhetoric among the prophets. They were bold and passionate and willing to call out their contemporaries. And we might even learn something from the Hebrew prophets about how and what to preach in our own times. As J. M. Hobson writes, "bold prophetic preaching… [is] the type that challenges worldviews and places the comfort of the assembly at risk in favor of a vision that is radically different and uncompromisingly faithful to our biblical roots."[50]

Q2: *In its brief three chapters, there are two mentions of "fire" (or aish in Hebrew) in the book of Zephaniah. How might we understand the meaning and significance of this fire, in the context of Zephaniah and prophetic speech writ large?*

A2: So first of all, the word for fire in Hebrew, אש (aish), is pretty ubiquitous. Fire is a common element and pretty important for survival and life and whatnot, right? It is also invoked metaphorically and idiomatically often. It is almost too common of a word to really do a full intertextual analysis, so let's' zoom in on the two appearances in Zephaniah. We read in Zeph. 1:18:

בְּיוֹם עֶבְרַת יְהוָה וּבְאֵשׁ קִנְאָתוֹ תֵּאָכֵל כל־הָאָרֶץ {ס}

On the day of wrath of YHWH,
In the fire of His passion,
All the earth shall be consumed;

And then in Zeph. 3:8, we read:

כֹּל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי כִּי בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֵּאָכֵל כל־הָאָרֶץ׃

[48] Megan Megan, *Prophets: Words of Fire* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 10.
[49] Rolland Wolfe, *Men of Prophetic Fire* (United States: Beacon Press, 1951), 13.
[50] J. M. Hobson, "Fire in the Pulpit: Envisioning and Encouraging Prophetic Preaching," Order No. 3568452 (Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2012), https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/fire-pulpit-envisioning-encouraging-prophetic/docview/1426177350/se-2, 116.

All My blazing anger.
Indeed, by the fire of My passion
All the earth shall be consumed.

So the word אש is used in the same idiom in both places. In chapter one, in the third person, and in chapter three, in the first person, *aish kinato* and *aish kinati*, respectively. The literal translation is the fire of His or My passion, or jealousy with the root קנא. And then paired with this other image of the whole earth being consumed. From the biblical parallelism, we can glean that God's fire is wrathful, angry, powerful, and destructive. The literal word, fire, connotes a fiery rhetoric and imagery, passion and power, anger and punishment. We find similar language in a few other places in the Hebrew Bible. In Deut. 4:24, we read:

כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קַנָּא׃ (פ)

For your God יהוה is a consuming fire, an impassioned God.

This is part of Moses' speech warning the Israelites not to turn to idolatry lest they incur God's wrath. And the consuming nature of fire (which is inverted in the burning bush scene, where remarkably the fire burns but does not consume) is repeated here, too, with the same root אכל. The image of the burnt forests I have seen in my travels to California come to mind. There is something about fire -- it can get out of control and can wipe out everything that is living and breathing in its vicinity. In Ezekiel 36:5, we find the same idiom. God's anger is directed toward the Edomites, rather than the Israelites in this scenario and we also have an explicit reference to speech. We read:

בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי דִבַּרְתִּי

In the fire of My passion, I spoke…

This verse really brings all the threads together: fire, passion, anger, destruction, and then -- speech.

Q3: *If we go back to Zephaniah 1:18, there is a reference to יוֹם עֶבְרַת יְהוָֹה or "The Day of the God's Wrath" which is a recurring theme in the book and then echoed in 3:8. Can you say more about this "Day of God's Wrath"?*

A3: This term, and variations of it, appears a few times in Zephaniah. Sometimes it's "The Day of God's Wrath," sometimes "The Day of the Lord," sometimes "the Day of the Lord's sacrifice." This use of different words to describe the same thing is a literary device called anaphora.[51]

[51] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 90.

Scholars put all of these descriptors under one general term, "The Day of the Lord," which appears numerous times in prophetic texts and nowhere else in the Bible except twice in Lamentations (which bears a lot of resemblance to prophetic texts). So what does this term mean? In the *Zephaniah Anchor Study Bible*, Adele Berlin writes: "In most prophetic texts it appears to be a time, near at hand, when God will alter the current situation… The Day of the Lord… includes judgment both upon Israel and upon nations… either Israel or the other nations could be emphasized, depending on the rhetorical needs of the speaker."[52] The Day of the Lord is a Day of Judgment in which the world order will change. This overturning hearkens to Jonah 3:4, where the prophet announces that in 40 days, Nineveh will be *nehepachet* נהפכת, which in Hebrew can mean overthrown, overturned, transformed, or reversed. It has a double meaning: if the people transform, they will not be destroyed. If they don't repent, the city will be violently overthrown. The choice is theirs. Going back to Zephaniah, another important thing to note is that "day" is likely not meant literally, but rather could refer to a long, ambiguous period of time.[53] Zephaniah describes this period of time in gory, graphic detail. Jerusalem is ruined. Adele Berlin highlights the sounds and sights that characterize this destruction. She writes: "The destruction is characterized by its sound-- wailing and crashing. Sound is also a feature of the day itself (v. 14), a day of trumpet blast and siren (v. 16). Along with sound comes sight, or the absence of clear sight--darkness and gloom, clouds and fog, and finally people walking like the blind. In contrast to this black and gray is the bright and multicolored effect of splattered blood (v. 17), gold and silver (v. 18), and the fiery conflagration. Chapter 1 ends as it began, with the destruction of the whole earth…"[54] It is impossible to know the precise context from which this text originated, but Berlin suggests that, if we agree with the book's claim that it was written in the time of Josiah, then it is likely that these images and sounds of war are "referring to a momentous historical event that the prophet seeks to interpret theologically… [and] then the overarching momentous event [that occurred in the time of Josiah] is the deterioration of the Assyrian empire… The decline and fall of a great empire is a time of turmoil, of the upsetting of the world order, of a realignment among other world powers…"[55] This would have been a tumultuous time -- the Judeans were vulnerable and could either end up better or worse in the wake of these geopolitical shifts. And Zephniah's prophetic response was to both provide a theological analysis of the reality and to exhort the Judeans to repent and pursue justice, lest they be swallowed up in the conflagration of the whole earth.

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[52] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 78.
[53] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 92.
[54] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 92.
[55] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 92.

Q4: *I cannot help but think about how unappetizing this angry, violent, and punitive God is. And I bet a lot of our listeners might struggle with this image as well. Can you help us make sense of wrathful deity and the destructive "Day of the Lord"?*

A4: We find different conceptions of God and the universe in the Bible, but one pervasive theme is that God enacts judgment and punishment against sinful people. And thus, a lot of suffering is explainable and deserved. Many contemporary (and even ancient, even other biblical authors) readers struggle with this idea. Good people suffer and evil people prosper. The world is just too big and unpredictable to explain every good and bad thing as a reward or punishment. On the other hand, it is hard not to think about climate change, not necessarily as God's punishment and not as something we all deserve -- those who have caused the most damage will not experience the worst impact, but rather marginalized communities and future generations will bear the brunt. But climate change is a direct result of collective human action and inaction. Going back to the text, though, I think it is also important to note the historical and literary context. The prophet was not predicting doom, but rather describing what *would* occur, unless the people changed their ways. Zephaniah gives the people the opportunity to repent and offers hope for redemption. So, I think this book was meant to be rousing and reassuring -- God promises that repentance is possible and peace and prosperity would come. Scholars disagree about whether or not the term "Day of the Lord" originated with Amos, with the prophets, or if the prophets reinterpreted a common concept.[56] According to the latter theory, people might have been more naive about what was to come. In Amos 5:18, we read:

הֹוי הַמִּתְאַוִּים אֶת־יֹום יְהוָה לָמָּה־זֶּה לָכֶם יֹום יְהוָה הוּא־חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹור׃

Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light.

So one way of reading this verse is that Amos is inverting a common conception that the Day of the Lord is going to be some wonderful, light-filled thing. He begins with the Hebrew word that introduces laments, *hoi*, and then in keeping with even some texts in the Torah, he describes all the terrible things that will happen in response to the people's sins.

Q5: *This "Day of the Lord" sounds kind of apocalyptic. Can you help us understand the connection?*

A5: Berlin and others have argued that "The Day of the Lord" was a localized, temporary phenomenon. But this language also lends itself to eschatological or end-of-days interpretations. So even though there is this idea that there will be one final end of all time, there are other temporary moments of destruction and judgment along the way that can also be considered "The

[56] Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994), 78.

Day of the Lord." I think Richard D. Patterson, in the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary gives a clear and helpful description. He writes, "Zephaniah declares that the Day of the Lord is near… and coming quickly… In describing that time Zephaniah uses apocalyptic-like themes and subject matter that occur elsewhere in prophetic passages and also utilizes a vocabulary frequently associated with them."[57] The fire, the consuming of the land, these are all linguistic signifiers of apocalyptic language. And we just looked at excerpts of two verses that are kind of vague about God's anger, but some of the language gets pretty brutal. For example, in 1:17, we read:

וְהַצֵּרֹתִי לָאָדָם וְהָלְכוּ כַּעִוְרִים כִּי לַיהוָה חָטָאוּ וְשֻׁפַּךְ דָּמָם כֶּעָפָר וּלְחֵמָם כַּגְּלָלִים׃

I will bring distress on the people,
And they shall walk like the blind,
Because they sinned against GOD;
Their blood shall be spilled like dust,
And their fat like dung.

Scholars have actually designated a whole field of study on apocalyptic literature. The term apocalypse comes from Greek and there were these books written about the end of days called *apocalypses*. Zephaniah and other prophetic texts are not apocalypses but they could be described as apocalyptic. This could be its own podcast, but I will do my best to give a brief overview. First of all, we should acknowledge that in many ways our categorization of genre is an anachronistic phenomenon. In other words, simply delineating some biblical literature as "apocalyptic" reflects our own contemporary ways of viewing the world. And a lot of the interest in the apocalyptic themes in the Bible came from seeing this rise in millennial groups, you know those people predicting doom and the end of days, especially leading up to the turn of the millennium. Putting that aside for a minute, let's talk about this literature. The person with the greatest contribution on the field, historically, is a scholar named John Collins. In his foundational book, *The Apocalyptic Imagination,* Collins sets out a framework, distinguishing "between apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalypticism as a social ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology as a set of ideas and motifs"[58] and then carving out his focus as being literary. So he is making a separation between, for example, ideas like "the Day of the Lord," a book describing the End of Days, and a cult counting down the days until fire rains down. One of the questions Collins, and another scholar, Stephen Cook, whom I will discuss in a moment, seeks to answer is: what social conditions led to the creation of apocalyptic literature. There is no consensus on this question, and it is difficult to answer because of our limited knowledge about the anthropological conditions of the texts' authors. However, Cook lays out some common theories

[57] Richard Duane Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, of *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 320.
[58] John J Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination : An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. of *The Biblical Resource Series* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

that scholars have proposed. Many scholars see this type of literature as out of place within the biblical canon, so they argue that it came from fringe groups or foreign influences.[59] Another common conception is that "Apocalypticism is a religion of the oppressed or powerless… [But Cook believes that apocalyptic literature is not marginal and is] more than mere coping mechanisms of the psyche."[60] Cook points out that a lot of apocalyptic literature came from organized groups, rather than isolated individuals, draws on the same images, themes, and myths as other biblical texts, and is often promoted by privileged people rather than the marginalized.[61] Cook notes that someone could be disillusioned with reality or experience "dissonance" without being "deprived."[62] For example, a person who witnesses poverty might feel affected by it even if they themselves are upper class. As I was reading Cook's books, I kept asking myself, "Okay, so I get what you are saying the social context is *not*, but what is your alternative proposition?" Cook's critique is more clear and laid out than his explanation, but I think basically apocalyptic literature emerges from groups of people, whether or not they benefit from the status quo, who feel a dissonance between the way the world *is* and the way they think it *should be.*

Q6: *Okay, so bring us back to the prophets and Zephaniah. How does this all connect?*

A6: So this actually makes a lot of sense for the prophets, who, in other episodes of this podcast, are characterized by three important characteristics. 1) Their "prophetic imagination," to use the words of Walter Brueggmann, i.e. their ability to imagine a different reality than the current one.[63] 2) Their commitment to justice and righteousness and morality. And in the biblical world, justice meant not only mercy but also retribution. It's kind of karmic in that way. And 3) Their theological alignment. They bring God as an active, emotive force into their world. Thus, to take it back to Zephaniah and the "Day of the Lord," there is a sense that even though right now, the wicked prosper and the good suffer, there will be a day when reality aligns with morality -- and of course it will all come from the one, all-powerful God.

Conclusion

Q1: *What power do/can prophets and prophetic fire have?*

A1: Today, we discussed two related, but different, understandings of prophetic fire. The first is prophetic fire as inspiring, passionate rhetoric. The second, is the apocalyptic wrath of God. Both

[59] Stephen L Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature*. of *Interpreting Biblical Texts* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 31-2.
[60] Stephen L Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature*. of *Interpreting Biblical Texts* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 31-2.
[61] Stephen L Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism : The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 2.
[62] Stephen L Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism : The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 16.
[63] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

are powerful, and in the verses from Zephaniah which we looked at today, and can even be the same sentence. The content and the style is fiery. I think prophetic fire has the power to wake us up, kick us into action, to be courageous, to uplift collective justice over individual success, perhaps to comfort us after a difficult experience, and to help us see our own lives as part of a transcendent reality.

Q2: *What is a prophetic call or message for today? I.e. What can we learn from prophets, from this conversation, for our times, that is relevant for us right now?*

A2: We don't have to be marginalized or deprived to feel dissonance in the world we live in. We can be courageous and powerful in our language in ways that have an impact. And for those of us who may have dismissed apocalypticism as fringe or unhinged, I'm not saying we should all become doomsdayers, but we shouldn't entirely dismiss it either. One take-away for all of us is recognizing this dissonance, no matter our social class, and believing in and working for justice, for a world that is more closely aligned with what is good and right.

Episode 8: The Prophets Podcast

Reflections

Music Suggestions:

1. "A Whole New World" from *Aladdin* by Alan Menken (music) and Tim Rice (lyrics)
2. "Turn Up" by Mike Posner, The Futuristics
3. "Stick to the Status Quo" from *High School Musical* by David Lawrence and Faye Greenberg
4. "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go" by Wham!
5. "Resilient" by Rising Appalachia
6. Excerpts of songs from prior episodes

Discussion Questions:

A Reflective Q and A with the Podcast Host

Q1: *What are the major take-aways you gained from this project?*

A1: For one, I feel like I only scratched the surface. I mean the term, "prophet" or *navi* is applied to a really wide range of characters in the Hebrew Bible, from Miriam to Elijah to Jonah to Malachi… They are a motley crew. I decided to narrow my focus to the literary prophets, those with books named after them, and even then only examined small selections of six of them. So all that to say, it is difficult to define what unifies the prophets or their message. That being said, the prophets inspired some enduring understandings and values to live by:

1. The prophets tend to emphasize society over the individual, collective experience and responsibility over the personal.
2. The prophets look big and wide. They can see beyond the moment and beyond their own community to the world beyond. They catch a glimpse of the divine purview and timeline that transcends time and place.
3. The prophets are called by God. This gives them legitimacy and decenters their own identity. Yet at the same time, they draw on their humanness in their prophecy. To be called is also a burden. It is not easy to be a prophet.
4. The prophets emphasize universal justice and ethics over ritual. They are not necessarily anti-ritual, but they believe ritual is empty and futile if not paired with righteous action.
5. The prophets are bold, honest, imaginative, poetic, effective, and powerful speakers. We often do not know to what extent they were heeded, yet the endurance of their words preserved in scripture is a testament to the power of their speech.

Q2: *What is the volume of the prophetic voice today?*

A2: I am not a historical expert, but I get the sense that the volume of the prophetic voice has been turned town today. In the earlier decades of Reform Judaism, the prophets and prophetic tradition were invoked often. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. invoked prophets frequently in his speeches. What happened? Are religious leaders still studying the prophets and sharing their message and in what ways? So I think we need to turn up the volume of the prophets.

Q3: *How do you think prophetic texts should be read in the modern world?*

A3: We have to go deep into the texts, draw on scholarly and religious insights, and then we have to bring the texts alive in our own day and age. In some Christian circles, the prophets are invoked in narrow ways, to legitimize "literal" predictions of Jesus and apocalypse and whatnot. But this is not what I think prophetic tradition and the words of the prophets are really about. Studying them can wake us up to what really matters -- justice, courage, hope, responsibility, poetry. The prophets are models for standing up with vision and courage for the important things, often alternative to the status quo.

Q4: *Where do you see prophetic voices reverberating today?*

A4: This is a difficult question to answer. Who am I to say? Most of us are not prophets and cannot say with certainty, "This is God's will." But as I am writing this, I can't help but think of Gaza and Israel and the violence that continues to rage in the region. The prophetic voices are those that speak truth to power, even though it is unpopular. The prophetic voices are those that offer a vision of peace, even though it seems impossible. The prophetic voices are those that advocate for justice, even though they are undermined.

Appendix A: Podcasting Notes

Recording Checklist

- Pre-Recording
    - Set up zoom meeting
    - Make sure recording setting is “single and multi track”
    - Initiate “original sound” (for me and guests)
    - Make sure yeti nano microphone is plugged in and in use by zoom
    - Do a sound check
    - Choose guests who have “a voice for radio”
    - Confirm verbal consent of guests
    - Ask guests how they want to be addressed and introduced

- During Recording
    - Mute when not talking
    - Avoid talking over each other
    - Repeat sections if needed for better sound quality
    - Try to keep volume consistent and be as clear as possible in speaking
    - Try to avoid dead space (but this can be edited out)

- Post-Recording (Editing)
    - Make sure to save often and back up
    - Import multiple audio files into Garageband
    - Round one editing: add in open space at the top for music and “hook,” match volume of different speakers, start to cut dead space and irrelevant sections, re-record and/or add additional content as needed
    - Round two editing: save as one single file, pick out a snippet to duplicate and use as hook, and add in music
    - Round three editing: save again as a single file, import to Descript, edit with written word as needed including organize sections in final order, and proofread transcript (time allowing)
    - Submit draft
    - Make any further adjustments as needed based on feedback
    - Add/include any additional citations that arise

Appendix B: Consent Forms

Consent Form - Rabbi Barbara Symons

HUC-JIR
Advisor Kristine Garroway
Rabbinic Capstone
Shirah Kraus
2023-2024

Consent Form for Prophets Podcast Interviews

1) Title of Study: The Prophets Podcast

2) Purpose and General Description of the Study

My name is Shirah Kraus and I am a rabbinic student at the Hebrew Union College. I am creating a podcast for my rabbinic capstone project. For the podcast, I will be conducting interviews with various guests who have interest and expertise on the topic. My adviser is Dr. Kristine Garroway, a professor at HUC-JIR. I began this project in the Spring of 2023 and will complete it April 2024, although previous and future projects have or may carry some resemblance.

3) What does participation involve?

Data will be collected through recorded interviews, usually on zoom but may be in person or over the phone with consenting individuals. I will interview each interviewee once and follow up if necessary. Interviews will be approximately 30-60 minutes and will be edited. Questions are not particularly sensitive. Some sample questions are here:

1. What is your connection to prophets and what do they mean to you?
2. How would you define "prophet"? Who do you consider to be a prophet, both in the Bible and today?
3. There are prophets in Christianity, Islam, Ancient Greece. How do you understand prophets and "prophetic" uniquely within your own tradition and in comparison to other traditions?
4. We also use other forms of the word, prophet, like prophetic and prophecy, and in Hebrew, we have the word navi. How would you explain the nuances of some of these terms?
5. Some people talk about "prophetic tradition" or "prophetic Judaism" or "prophetic Christianity." How would you define "prophetic tradition" and its historical origins?
6. What is compelling about prophets and the prophetic tradition?
7. Why study the prophets and uplift their voices today?
8. What would you say is the prophetic call, or a prophetic call, for today? What can we learn from prophets about how to be and behave in our own times?

4) Confidentiality

As this project is inspired by the field of Oral History and serves also to make a record of individuals' experiences, I will maintain the data, by each interviewee's consent. Much of the information in the interviews is already public and specific details make for more thorough, high-quality research. If any interviewee wishes to choose or be assigned a pseudonym and have their identifying information removed, I will do so. Data will be stored in my personal Google Drive and on my personal computer. I also plan to edit and publish the episodes and will do so representing the guests' views as faithfully as possible. If a guest requests that information be changed or deleted, I will honor that request.

5) Risks of participating in the study

There is ostensibly no significant risk in this study. The risks of participating are no greater than those experienced in everyday life. You may experience some temporary discomfort (anxiety, sadness, etc.), if it persists, then be in touch with me and I will provide some suggestions about who to talk to.

6) Benefits to participants or others

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, you may find it interesting to talk about the issues addressed in the research and it may be beneficial to the field and to future clients or individuals who have experienced similar concerns.

7) Compensation

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

8) Deception

There is no deception used in this study.

9) Voluntary participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty loss of any benefits for not participating.

10) Questions about the research and rights of research participants

If you should have any questions about the research, please feel free to call or email the Principal Investig Shirah Kraus (shirah.kraus@huc.edu).

I am 18 or older: Yes ✓ No_____

I have read this consent form or it has been read to me: Yes ✓ No_____

I have had all of my questions about the study answered to my satisfaction. Yes ✓ No

I have been given a copy of this consent form. Yes ✓ No_____

I agree to participate in this research. Yes ✓ No_____

I give permission to audiotape my interview. Yes ✓ No___

I give permission for any identifying information to be revealed. Yes ✓ No_____

Name (please print): Barbara Symons

Signature: Barbara B Symons

Date: 10/20/23

Interviewer Name (please print) Shirah Kraus

Signature Shirah C Kraus 02/27/2024

Consent Form - Father Christopher Slane

HUC-JIR
Advisor Kristine Garroway
Rabbinic Capstone
Shirah Kraus
2023-2024

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I agree to participate in this research. Yes_____ No_____

I give permission to audiotape my interview. Yes__ No___

I give permission for any identifying information to be revealed. Yes_____ No_____

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer Name (please print) _____

Signature Shirah C Kraus

02/27/2024

Consent Form - Rabbi Andrea Weiss, PhD

HUC-JIR
Advisor Kristine Garroway
Rabbinic Capstone
Shirah Kraus
2023-2024

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I agree to participate in this research: Yes ✓ No_____

I give permission to audiotape my interview: Yes ✓ No_____

I give permission for any identifying information to be revealed: Yes ✓ No_____

Name (please print): Andrea Weiss

Signature: Andrea L. Weiss

Date: 2/27/24

Interviewer Name (please print): Shirah Kraus

Signature: Shirah C Kraus 02/29/2024

Annotated Bibliographies

Episode One Annotated Bibliography

Brooks, Geraldine. *The Secret Chord: A Novel.* United States: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015.

Geraldine Brooks' *The Secret Chord* is a biblically-inspired novel about King David. It is a compelling, creative, and imaginative story which adds emotional depth to the contemporary understanding of the biblical ruler and the events of his life. One of the prophets featured in the book is Nathan, and Brooks writes a beautiful description of what it means to be a prophet. Both of the guests (Reverend Slane and Rabbi Symons) on episode one of the podcast are familiar with the book and have used it in their teaching of prophets. Reverend Slane quoted this passage about the prophet in the podcast, bringing poetry and depth into the conversation.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination.* United Kingdom: Fortress Press, 2001.

Walter Brueggemann is a well-known Christian writer and theologian who has written and spoken extensively on the prophets. *The Prophetic Imagination* is one of his most famous and inspiring works. In addition to highlighting the poetic nature of prophetic text (which is especially relevant for episode two), Brueggemann offers a definition of "prophetic" which inspired this first episode. Specifically highlighting "prophetic ministry," Brueggemann argues that to be prophetic is to offer truth that challenges dominant narratives, to bear witness, and to not only critique the present, but also imagine a better future. These ideas informed my thoughts and questions in developing the episode and align with Reverend Slane's articulation of "prophetic."

Garroway, Kristine Henriksen. "The Disruptive Prophets: Linking Action and Intention." In *Re-forming Judaism: Moments of Disruption in Jewish Thought,* edited by Stanley M. Davids and Leah Hochman, 3-16. New York: CCAR Press, 2023.

In this book chapter, "The Disruptive Prophets: Linking Action and Intention." Kristine Garroway highlights the ways in which prophets "disrupt" the status quo. Not confined to the prophets of *nevi'im*, she highlights the covenant at mount sinai (Moses) and then the changes to the covenant around the time of exile (*nevi'im* prophets). Both of these historical moments were "disruption points" in which significant paradigm shifts took place. Garroway closes by drawing connections to the contemporary, highlighting the legacy of "prophetic Judaism." Important for this episode, Garroway notes the *nevi'im* prophets' emphasis on ethical behavior over sacrifice. This argument underscores the understanding of prophets and prophetic religion as emphasizing ethics over ritual observance.

Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets*. New York: JPS of America, 1962.

In this seminal work, Abraham Joshua Heschel poetically enumerates the Hebrew prophets and important themes, drawing connections to other important literature and ideas. Heschel emphasizes the *dispositions* which distinguish prophets from ordinary people, particularly their capacity to see and imagine what others cannot. Heschel's thoughtful, modern, and faithful analysis of the biblical prophets provides deep insights which have shaped this field of study.

Hyatt, J. Philip. *Prophetic Religion.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1947.

J. Philip Hyatt is a Christian scholar and theologian who outlines the elements of "prophetic religion" in this book by the same title. Hyatt analyzes some of the major prophets and key themes that appear in prophetic texts. He also highlights the plurality of prophetic

voices, characters, styles, and schools, advocating for an exegetical rather than eisegetical approach. There are many different prophets and they do not all fit one mold. Of particular relevance to this episode, Hyatt offers a definition of prophetic religion that highlights ethics and contrasts with priestly or popular religion.

Isaacs, Ronald H. *Messengers of God: A Jewish Prophets Who's Who.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998.

Ronald Isaacs' *Messengers of God* provides a simple and accessible description of the biblical prophets. The chapter, "Literary Prophets," includes definitions and descriptions of the biblical prophets in context. Understanding the mission, role, and responsibilities of the biblical prophets informed the creation of this first episode.

Knopf, Carl Sumner. *Ask the Prophets.* New York: The Abingdon Press, 1938.

Carl Sumner Knopf takes a populist Christian bible study approach in *Ask the Prophets.* Though he takes more liberties in his scholarship than some more academic scholars, his perspective helps to illuminate popular understandings of the prophets. For example, he notes that the Hebrew prophets did share visions of the future, but also did more than simply offer oracles or fortunes. This important insight informed this episode, namely in our discussion of the Hebrew prophets and their role transcending fortune-telling.

Lundbom, Jack R. *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Jack R. Lundbom analyzes the essential aspects of the Hebrew prophets and situates them in their Ancient Near Eastern context. He identifies the messages of each of the prophets in *Nevi'im,* illuminates prophetic rhetoric, and explains what it means to be an authentic prophet. In this foundational work, Lundbom emphasizes the prophet's divine inspiration and the contextual elements that legitimized these ancient figures.

Matthews, Victor H. *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets.* Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

In *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets,* Victor H. Matthews analyzes the position of the Hebrew prophets in their socio-cultural context. He compares them to other Ancient Near Eastern prophets and identifies key characteristics, such as prophetic speech and ecstatic experiences. Matthews identifies the role of the prophets as ambassadors for God. His writing supports Rabbi Symons' sentiments about uplifting the "person" of the prophet, and not losing the actual prophets in our understanding of what it means to be prophetic.

Nissinen, Martti. *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives.* United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.

In this book, Nissinen engages in a serious, well-researched cross-cultural comparative analysis of the phenomenon of ancient prophecy. Nissinen analyzes the idea of prophecy as a social-intellectual construct, arguing that our understanding of them is shaped by our own paradigms. She also underscores that ancient Hebrew prophets were more than simply foretellers, which other scholars have also pointed out

Petersen, David L. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

In *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction,* David L. Petersen analyzes the genre of prophetic literature, emphasizing the *books* of the prophets and explaining how they emerged in their contexts. Petersen provides another frame for categorizing and understanding prophets, not only as characters, but as literary works. His analysis helped to shape the discussion in the podcast about who and what are the prophets. I noted, in this episode, that there are different perspectives and traditions for listing the prophets or *nevi'im*, and is informed by the literary divisions of the bible.

Symons, Barbara AB. *Prophetic Voices: Renewing and Reimagining Haftarah*. New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), 5783.

In *Prophetic Voices,* Barbara Symons (one of the podcast guests), offers a curated selection of contemporary prophetic readings and analysis. This anthology serves as a companion to the weekly liturgical prophetic readings, *Haftarah*, in Jewish practice. This project includes a plethora of different writers and aims to enliven and uplift the voices of the biblical prophets for contemporary "Jews in the pews." Symons, as editor of this work, certainly drew on this project and all of the work she has performed related to it, in the podcast.

Tuell, Steven. ". . .until justice rolls down like waters." *The Bible Guy.* January 15, 2018. https://steventuell.net/until-justice-rolls-down-like-waters/

Steven Tuell is a professor at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In this blogpost, he articulates a sentiment which Rabbi Symons cited in the episode: prophetic witness. Rabbi Symons argues that although she believes there are no new *prophets* (prophecy ended with the biblical prophets), there are those who act as contemporary prophetic *witnesses* (to use Tuell's language) to call for social change.

West, Cornel. *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity.* United Kingdom: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Cornel West is one of the preeminent thinkers and activists today. In *Prophesy Deliverance!*, West synthesizes the best of Marxist thought, Anti-racism, and Prophetic Christianity, offering a revolutionary perspective. West argues that "prophetic Christianity" emphasizes the value of every human, regardless of their identity. His analysis resonates with other scholars' emphasis on the prophets as disruptors and truth-tellers, those who offer a critique of the current reality and hope for a divinely-inspired transcendent future.

Episode Two Annotated Bibliography

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. United Kingdom: Fortress Press, 2001.

In this seminal work, the theologian, minister, and writer Walter Brueggemann analyzes the disposition of the prophets and the way of seeing that they offer the world. Of particular relevance, for episode two, Brueggeman highlights the importance of poets writ large, and biblical prophets as poetic exemplars. Poets and prophets are uniquely situated to criticize the world order, imagine a different world, and help others see this vision. While some have argued that many of the prophets were "ineffective" in terms of getting the kings and laypeople to stop sinning, Brueggemann offers another perspective: the effectiveness of poetry lies not solely in its ability to move people to act differently in the era in which it was written, but to move people emotionally and to sustain the tests of time. Thus, even though it seems many of the prophets' rebukes fell on flat ears, the prophets offered hope and imagination and in their own way threatened the structures of power. This is why, Brueggemann notes, totalitarians always fear poets.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Using God's Resources Wisely : Isaiah and Urban Possibility*. 1st ed. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

In this book, Brueggemann primarily focuses on the content of Isaiah and its implications for socio-economic justice. In his analysis of Isaiah 58:1-14 (chapter five), Brueggemann also notes some of Isaiah's rhetorical strategies, such as the play on words with the root חפץ (delight, to draw near, interest) in 58:2-3. Analyzing the multiple meanings and uses of this word supports his claim that the sin of Israel, in this context, is confusing their own self-interest with the will of God, focusing on their own delight at the expense of

God's, engaging in ritual for self-serving purposes while hypocritically ignoring the plight of the most vulnerable.

Gray, Mark. "The Depth and Dimensions of Social Justice in Isaiah 58:6-10: Solidarity, Self-Giving, and the Embrace of Pain." In *Rhetoric and Social Justice in Isaiah,* pp. 72-117. of *Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 432*. New York: T & T Clark, 2006.

In this chapter of his book, *Rhetoric and Social Justice in Isaiah*, Mark Gray analyzes the poetry and rhetoric of Isaiah 58 to draw conclusions about the content and message of this chapter. Drawing on other secondary sources, Gray articulates the different rhetorical impact of infinitives, rhetorical questions, and other verbal constructions. The very language of the text adds to its forcefulness.

Gunkel, Hermann. "The Secret Experience of the Prophets." In *Die Grossen Propheten*. 1923.

In "The Secret Experience of the Prophets," Hermann Gunkel hypothesizes about the performative nature of prophetic utterance, which may have included music, ecstasy, and dance. Gunkel also calls attention to the orality of the prophets, noting that originally they were heard and not read (in translation). This is a key element of poetry -- not only the ideas on the page, but the sound that resonates in our ears. Each impacts the other.

Heschel, Abraham J. "Prophecy and Poetic Inspiration." In *The Prophets,* pp. 367-389. New York: JPS of America, 1962.

Abraham Joshua Heschel's chapter entitled "Prophecy and Poetic Inspiration" in his essential work, *The Prophets*, significantly informed episode two. Heschel argues that prophetic texts are poetry and prophets are poets. Like poets, prophets are inspired by the divine, are vessels for the expression of a will outside of their own, and are able to

imagine a world different from their current reality. One difference between the poet and the prophet, however, is that a poet does not necessarily know from where their inspiration derives. Whereas, a prophet is conscious that they are inspired by God and called to speak God's word to human ears.

McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message." In *Communication Theory*, pp. 390-402. Routledge, 2017.

Marshall McLuhan's essay simply inspired the framing in episode two around the idea of the medium being the message. McLuhan, in his analysis of television and radio, draws a universal conclusion: the form in which content takes has a profound impact on the message. Thus, the poetic form of prophetic literature is itself a message.

Paul, Shalom M, Frank Moore Cross, and Frank Moore Cross. *Amos : A Commentary on the Book of Amos*. of *Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

I have included a citation for Shalom Paul's Commentary on Amos, because Rabbi Weiss quoted the work in episode two. Paul points out that prophets, like Amos, emphasize moral behavior over ritual action.

Petersen, David L. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

In his literary analysis of the prophetic books, David Petersen uplifts the importance of the poetic genre as emblematic of the biblical prophets. Even though, he notes, some of the text is in prose, poetry is the primary and essential language of the prophets.

Weiss, Andrea L, and Lisa M Weinberger, eds. *American Values, Religious Voices : 100 Days, 100 Letters*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 2019.

I have included a citation for Rabbi Weiss' *American Values*, since she cited this work in episode two. Rabbi Weiss quoted the letter she wrote for the volume, the very first letter, as an example of ways in which ancient prophetic voices continue to reverberate today. The core values which the prophets taught remain the values we ought to follow today: pursue justice, peace, and kindness.

Episode Three Annotated Bibliography

Blank, Sheldon H. *Understanding the Prophets.* New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983.

Sheldon Blank offers a scholarly-based Reform Jewish approach to prophets in *Understanding the Prophets*. In the chapter, "What Makes a Prophet," Blank highlights the call to prophecy, using Jeremiah as the exemplar and integrating other prophets to demonstrate other evidence and explicate differences. Blank highlights four elements of the prophetic call narrative and pays special attention to the mission and communication of the prophets. According to Blank, to be a prophet is to be a mouthpiece for God.

Brueggemann, Walter. *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile & Homecoming.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.

Walter Brueggemann has made a significant contribution to the field of prophetic studies and to this project. His analysis is both rooted in serious scholarship as well as accessible and meaningful to religious practitioners. In this work, Brueggemann offers a commentary on the book of Jeremiah which emphasizes themes that are relevant today. Brueggemann's analysis of the different literary stations of Jeremiah's call narrative as well as his insights into the psychological burden of prophecy are particularly relevant for this episode.

Habel, Norman C. 1965. "Form and Significance of the Call Narratives." Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 77 (3): 297–323. https://search-ebscohost-com.huc.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000708989&site=ehost-live.

In this foundational work, which is quoted by Brueggemann, Norman Habel analyzes several biblical call narratives, highlighting their similarities, differences, and literary meaning. Habel identifies six divisions in the call narrative and provides important insights into the literary idea of the prophetic call as well as the psychological experience which underlies it.

Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets*. New York: JPS of America, 1962.

In this seminal work, Abraham Joshua Heschel poetically enumerates the Hebrew prophets and important themes, drawing connections to other important literature and ideas. Heschel emphasizes the *dispositions* which distinguish prophets from ordinary people, particularly their capacity to see and imagine what others cannot. Heschel's thoughtful, modern, and faithful analysis of the biblical prophets provides deep insights which have shaped this field of study. Of particular relevance for this episode, Heschel emphasizes the totality of the prophetic call: prophets are called by God with their entire being.

Hyatt, J. Philip. *Prophetic Religion.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1947.

J. Philip Hyatt is a Christian scholar and theologian who outlines the elements of "prophetic religion" in this book by the same title. Hyatt analyzes some of the major prophets and key themes that appear in prophetic texts. He also highlights the plurality of prophetic voices, characters, styles, and schools, advocating for an exegetical rather than eisegetical approach. There are many different prophets and they do not all fit one mold. Of particular relevance to this episode, Hyatt offers insight into the unique elements of Jeremiah's calling and general insights into the burden of being called.

Isaacs, Ronald H. *Messengers of God: A Jewish Prophets Who's Who.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998.

Ronald Isaacs' *Messengers of God* provides a simple and accessible description of the biblical prophets. The chapter, "Principles of Jewish Prophecy," includes a list of the common qualities and experiences of the biblical prophets. Of relevance to this episode and the calling of Jeremiah, Isaacs notes that prophets are chosen by God, often to their surprise and reluctance.

Lundbom, Jack R. *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Jack R. Lundbom analyzes the essential aspects of the Hebrew prophets and situates them in their Ancient Near Eastern context. He identifies the messages of each of the prophets in *Nevi'im,* illuminates prophetic rhetoric, and explains what it means to be an authentic prophet. In this foundational work, Lundbom emphasizes the prophet's divine inspiration and the contextual elements that legitimized these ancient figures. Of particular relevance for this episode, Lundbom points out "calling" as a defining quality of prophecy while also acknowledging the variety of prophetic calls and responses.

Matthews, Victor H. *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets.* Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

In *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets,* Victor Matthews analyzes the context and literary themes of the prophetic books. In the chapter, "Defining and Describing the Prophet," Matthews highlights the centrality of the prophetic call. He uses Isaiah 6:1-10 as his primary example, but includes references to other prophets as well, such as Moses and Jeremiah. Matthews identifies five literary elements, which can be compared to Petersen, Brueggemann, and Blank's categories. Like Petersen, he emphasizes the literary purpose of the call narrative to

legitimize the prophet rather than describe their personal life history. Matthews also includes character analysis, noting how prophetic ordination intersects with the person of the prophet.

Petersen, David L. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

David Petersen's *The Prophetic Literature* analyzes the prophetic texts from a literary perspective. One of the literary elements that Petersen identifies is "the commissioning report," of which Jeremiah 1:4-10 is a prime example. Petersen identifies the literary stations of such a report and argues that these narrative blocks are theologized accounts rather than biographical exposition. Calling narratives (what Petersen calls "commissioning reports"), according to Petersen, are literary elements that legitimize the prophet as divinely called.

Rochester, Kathleen M. *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.* Leuven: Peeters, 2012.

In *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*, Rochester offers a close reading and textual analysis in order to illuminate key points. In her analysis of the call of Jeremiah, Rochester highlights the poetic devices used in Jer. 1:5-10 and comparative analysis with other biblical texts and ANE sources, highlighting specific images and their literary impact. Rochester's intertextual analysis of the Hebrew words adds a nuanced understanding of this text. Her close reading leads to broader meanings.

Scott, R. B. Y. *The Relevance of the Prophets.* London: The Macmillan Company, 1968.

R. B. Y. Scott offers a comparative analysis of the prophets in *The Relevance of the Prophets*, highlighting key themes in each chapter. In chapter five, "The Prophetic Word," Scott discusses the prophetic call narrative, drawing on Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and others, but giving special attention to Jeremiah. Scott reiterates the common understanding that the call and

commission is an essential element of biblical prophecy. He also describes the positionality of the prophets and highlights their human character in the context of their divine ordination.

Episode Four Annotated Bibliography

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. United Kingdom: Fortress Press, 2001.

In this seminal work, the theologian, minister, and writer Walter Brueggemann analyzes the disposition of the prophets and the way of seeing that they offer the world. Rooted in deep analysis of the prophetic texts, Brueggemann also offers meaningful insights into their legacy today, noting that to be prophetic is to continue to imagine and envision a better world.

Collins, John J. "The Exilic Period: Ezekiel and Obadiah" in Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004.

In "The Exilic Period: Ezekiel and Obadiah," Collins provides helpful context and background information on Ezekiel 37. Collins emphasizes that this text is metaphorical and was only later interpreted through a literalist resurrection lens.

Smith, Clint. "When people say, 'we have made it through worse before.'" In *Above Ground.* United States: Little, Brown, 2023.

Clint Smith's poem "When people say, 'we have made it through worse before,'" offers a contemporary example of prophetic imagination, prophetic poetry, and the same issues that Ezekiel 37 is grappling with. In his poem, Smith acknowledges the tension between individual lives and the life of a group of people. Like Ezekiel, Smith speaks to an audience holding personal loss and looking for transcendent hope.

Sonia, Kerry M. *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*. The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv190k9vw.

In this important book, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*, Kerry M. Sonia analyzes the practices, ideologies, and cults of ancient Israel regarding care for the dead. Drawing on this larger body of work and context, Sonia provides important insights into Ezekiel 37, noting how the imagery and metaphor may have come from "the cult of the dead" and reinforce Yahwistic covenant theology.

Sweeney, Marvin A. "Ezekiel" in The Jewish Study Bible edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014.

In an introductory essay to Ezekiel in *The Jewish Study Bible,* Marvin Sweeney outlines the character, composition, reading guide, and content summary for the biblical book of Ezekiel. Sweeney explains that this prophet is particularly known for his identity as a priest, his strange writings (especially the Dry Bones passage), and his challenging theology. Ezekiel appears in *Nevi'im* following the "historical" books (Joshua, Judges, Kings I and II, Samuel I and II) and then Isaiah and Jeremiah. Ezekiel provides another example of the prophetic genre, stretching the definition of prophet and prophetic literature in new directions, which will be explored in this episode.

Tippett, Krista. "Walter Brueggemann - the Prophetic Imagination." The On Being Project. The On Being Project, July 1, 2020. https://onbeing.org/programs/walter-brueggemann-the-prophetic-imagination-dec2018/.

In this podcast episode, Walter Brueggemann discusses the ideas which shaped his book, *The Prophetic Imagination.* Drawing on his extensive analysis of prophetic texts, Brueggemann offers wisdom that is relevant for our own day and age. He highlights the poetic nature of prophetic imagination and its power to wake us up and imagine a different world other than the one in which we live.

Tromp, Johannes. "Can These Bones Live?" in The Book of Ezekiel and its Influence edited by Henk Jan De Jonge and Johannes Tromp. University of Leiden, The Netherlands: Ashgate, 2007.

Like Collins, Johannes Tromp in "Can These Bones Live?" points out that the original intent of Ezekiel 37 was metaphorical reassurance for a people in exile. Yet, those who believe in literal resurrection naturally have been drawn to this text as proof of their ideology.

Episode Five Annotated Bibliography

Haddox, Susan E. *Metaphor and Masculinity in Hosea*. of *Studies in Biblical Literature, V. 141*. New York: Peter Lang, 2011.

In this book, Susan E. Haddox does not mince words as she asserts the patriarchal origins and intentions of Hosea. Drawing on cognitive anthropology, Haddox analyzes the ways in which the metaphors and other literary elements of Hosea construct and reflect male identity. Haddox analyzes the interpretive history, metaphors, and imagery in Hosea and then synthesizes her findings to draw conclusions about the role of masculinity in the text. Haddox makes an important contribution to feminist biblical study and masculinity studies, deconstructing language and images that people often take for granted.

Heschel, Abraham J. "Hosea." In *The Prophets*. New York: JPS of America, 1962, 39-60.

In his chapter on Hosea, Abraham Joshua Heschel identifies Hosea's unique contribution to and place in the prophetic books. Especially in drawing comparisons to Amos, Heschel argues that Hosea's primary aim is to proclaim God's enduring love for Israel. Hosea's focus is on God's sensitivity and interiority, God's anger and longing for Israel's return. The use of the marriage metaphor underscores the primacy of the loving relationship and the pathos therein. Moreover, Heschel challenges those who claim Hosea's marriage to an adulterous wife is simply symbolic, arguing instead that it sensitizes Hosea to God's experience of feeling abandoned by the "politically promiscuous" Israel.

Pentiuc, Eugen J. *Long-Suffering Love : A Commentary on Hosea with Patristic Annotations*. Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002.

In this book, Eugen J. Pentiuc offers a sophisticated analysis of Hosea, summarizing significant interpretations, evaluating them, and then offering his own perspective. Pentiuc accepts that there are many symbolic elements in the book, but aligns himself with the historical camp. Drawing on Hebrew analysis, Greek and Latin bible translations and commentaries, and Christian interpretations, Pentiuc offers compelling insights into the book of Hosea, its meanings, and its metaphors.

Petersen, David L. "Hosea." In *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 176-181.

In this brief literary analysis, David L. Petersen summarizes the literary style, context, and message of Hosea. In contrast to Heschel, Petersen aligns with other interpreters who argue that Hosea's marriage is one example of prophetic symbolic action. The metaphor of promiscuous marriage is not itself the message, but the vehicle used to convey the message: Israel has strayed from YHWH and YHWH is angry, yet possesses an eternal, unbreakable love for Israel. Petersen also supports continued analysis, especially from feminist perspectives, though that is beyond the scope of this work.

Sherwood, Yvonne. *The Prostitute and the Prophet : Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective*. of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series, 212*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

In this work, Yvonne Sherwood argues that although the form and content of Hosea are contested, everyone seems to agree that this book is problematic, challenging, and disturbing. Sherwood analyzes Hosea as a "problem text" analogous to Shakespeare's "problem plays." Sherwood feminism informs her analysis throughout the book and

especially in chapter four, where she offers an explicitly feminist analysis of Hosea 1-3. Key to this analysis is uplifting women's perspectives, both the characters in the narrative (e.g. Gomer) and the interpreters of the text (e.g. Gale A. Yee). Sherwood and other feminist scholars consider the perspectives, personality, power, and powerlessness of Gomer, Hosea's wife, the archetypal woman in the metaphor, and even Israel. There are no easy answers, but it is essential to highlight women as subjects while recognizing the ways they have been objectified.

Yee, Gale A. "Hosea." In *Women's Bible Commentary,* edited by Carol A Newsom, Sharon H Ringe, and Jacqueline E Lapsley, 299-308. 3rd ed., twentieth anniversary ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

In this book chapter, Gale A. Yee analyzes Hosea's use of the marriage/promiscuity metaphor to describe God's relationship with Israel. Yee notes that in Hosea 1-3, the prophet describes three stages of God's reactions to Israel's "promiscuity": first, isolate the unfaithful wife; second, punish her for her disloyalty; and third, forgive and return to her. Hosea's marriage and children are also symbolic representations that parallel this metaphorical marriage between God and Israel. Yee contends that these metaphors are simply metaphors which reflect the patriarchal context from which they emerged but should not serve as justification for abusive, violent, patriarchal relationships. Rather, interpreters should focus on the target of the metaphor: the idolatry, mistreatment of the poor, and exploitation of the land by the Israelite elite.

Episode Six Annotated Bibliography

Bob, Steven M. *Jonah and the Meaning of Our Lives : A Verse-By-Verse Contemporary Commentary*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2016.

In *Jonah and the Meaning of Our Lives,* Steven M. Bob offers close-reading commentary on Jonah as well as contemporary meaning. Like others, Bob points out that Jonah is not only a reluctant prophet, but is the only prophet to actually flee from God's call.

Brown, Erica. *Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet*. Firsted. of *Maggid Studies in Tanakh, Stone Edition*. New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2017.

In *Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet*, Erica Brown provides insights and interpretations of the prophet, Jonah. Brown's explanation of Jonah's reluctance helped to inform episode six and one of the questions asked in the episode. Like other scholars, Brown notes that Jonah is defined by his lack of eagerness to bear the burden of prophecy.

Cook, Albert. *The Burden of Prophecy : Poetic Utterance in the Prophets of the Old Testament*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

In *The Burden of Prophecy,* Albert Cook offers a definition of "burden" of prophecy as both referring to the weight of responsibility as well as the substance of speech. This provided helpful framing for episode six.

Petersen, David L. "Jonah." In *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 191-3.

David Petersen's *The Prophetic Literature* analyzes the prophetic texts from a literary perspective. In this section on Jonah, Petersen provides helpful context and background on the book, explaining how it is a unique yet important addition to the prophetic canon.

Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. of *The Anchor Bible, V. 24b*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

In *Jonah : A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. of *The Anchor Bible,* Jack M. Sasson provides scholarly insight into the book and character of Jonah. Of particular relevance for this episode, Sasson analyzes Jonah as a comic dupe and offers a more sympathetic reading of his character as someone who was more ignorant than he was callous.

Yanklowitz, Shmuly. *The Book of Jonah: A Social Justice Commentary*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2020.

In The Book of Jonah: A Social Justice Commentary, Shmuly Yanklowitz offers a contemporary homiletical approach to Jonah. Drawing on the original text, traditional rabbinic commentaries, and contemporary voices, Yanklowitz provides insight and inspiration for how we ought to think about and take action to address contemporary issues.

Episode Seven Annotated Bibliography

Berlin, Adele. *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. First ed. of *The Anchor Bible, 25a*. New York, New York: Doubleday, 1994.

In this biblical translation and commentary, Berlin offers both close text study and thematic synthesis of the book of Zephaniah. She highlights literary devices, provides definitions of ambiguous terms, and draws intertextual connections, situating this prophetic book in its context. Berlin explains the meaning and context of "The Day of the Lord" and offers a humble contextual analysis of what Zephaniah may have been communicating to the Judeans in the time of King Josiah and the fall of the Assyrian empire.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

In this seminal work, the theologian, minister, and writer Walter Brueggemann analyzes the disposition of the prophets and the way of seeing that they offer the world. In this episode, I made a small reference to his highlighting of the prophetic ability to imagine a different world order.

Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2nd ed. of *The Biblical Resource Series*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

John Collins is the foundational scholar of apocalyptic literature. The framework he offers about the distinction between apocalyptic literature, motifs, and groups informs the analysis of Zephaniah and "The Day of the Lord." Zephaniah includes apocalyptic images that may have provided inspiration for more explicitly apocalyptic literature.

Cook, Stephen L. *The Apocalyptic Literature*. of *Interpreting Biblical Texts*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.

In *The Apocalyptic Literature*, Stephen Cook critiques scholars who claim that apocalyptic literature is an aberration, either the product of foreign influence or fringe groups. Cook claims that apocalyptic literature draws on the same themes and motifs as other biblical books and should be viewed as fitting easily within the canon.

Cook, Stephen L. *Prophecy & Apocalypticism : The Postexilic Social Setting*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

In *Prophecy & Apocalypticism*, Cook offers a critique of the theory that apocalyptic literature and ideas come from marginalized groups. He points out that many privileged groups have promoted apocalyptic thinking. Rather, he argues that "dissonance" is more important than "deprivation" for tracing the contextual source of apocalypticism.

Hobson, J. M. "Fire in the Pulpit: Envisioning and Encouraging Prophetic Preaching." Order No. 3568452, Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2012. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/fire-pulpit-envisioning-encouraging-prophetic/docview/1426177350/se-2.

In this essay, J. M. Hobson highlights the fiery rhetoric of the Hebrew prophets and encourages contemporary clergy to draw on their legacy. Hobson emphasizes boldness, courage, and morality in his use of the metaphor of fire. Like the prophets, preachers should not be afraid to unsettle their listeners, to wake them up and call them out.

McKenna, Megan. *Prophets: Words of Fire*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001.

Megan McKenna highlights the emphaticness of the prophets' language in *Prophets: Words of Fire.* She also notes their divine origins and the power of prophetic language to ignite those who hear or read them.

Patterson, Richard Duane. *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*. of *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991.

In this commentary, Richard D. Patterson explains the significance of Zephaniah's reference to "the Day of the Lord." He notes both the immanence of Zephaniah's warning and the connection between this theme and other prophetic texts. Patterson also highlights the apocalyptic resonance of Zephaniah's language and imagery.

West, Cornel. *Black Prophetic Fire.* United States: Beacon Press, 2015.

In *Black Prophetic Fire,* Cornel West offers a critique of contemporary Black leaders who have failed to uphold the prophetic tradition of people like MLK and Malcolm X. For West, prophetic fire is about rhetoric, content, *and* person. West believes that leaders with prophetic fire are those who have an internal fire for justice and morality which pervades what they do, what they say, and how they say it.

Wolfe, Rolland. *Men of Prophetic Fire.* United States: Beacon Press, 1951.

In *Men of Prophetic Fire*, Rolland Wolfe analyzes the prophetic books. For Wolfe, prophetic fire refers to the prophets' ability to shake up the world and challenge the status quo. This book provides just one more example of the rhetorical connection between fire and prophets.