

Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 1, Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Wilson, Prophets, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Marv Wilson's introductory lecture on the Biblical Prophets explores the nature and interpretation of prophetic literature. The lecture emphasizes understanding the prophets' messages within their historical context, rather than focusing solely on predicting the future. **Wilson stresses the importance of reading primary sources, like the prophets' writings themselves, to grasp their original intent.** He also introduces key resources such as Abraham Joshua Heschel's work, highlighting the prophets' concern for social justice. **The course will examine six minor prophets and Isaiah, incorporating hermeneutics to properly interpret prophetic texts.** Wilson cautions against sensationalized views of prophecy, advocating for a balanced approach that emphasizes ethical living in the present. **He encourages students to critically assess the prophets' messages and to recognize their role as social reformers.**

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Wilson, Prophets, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Major Prophets → Prophetic Literature).**



**Wilson_Prophets_S
ession01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Wilson, Prophets, Session 1, Introduction

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Wilson_Prophets_EN_Session01.pdf":

Briefing Document: Dr. Marv Wilson's "Prophets" Session 1 - Introduction

I. Overview

Dr. Wilson's introductory lecture sets the stage for a course focused on engaging directly with the biblical prophetic texts. He emphasizes the importance of returning to the primary sources (the writings of the prophets themselves) rather than relying solely on secondary interpretations. He advocates for a deep, personal struggle with the text, encouraging students to understand the prophets' message in its original context. The course will cover six minor prophets and Isaiah, utilizing the NIV and RSV translations, alongside supplementary texts, particularly focusing on the work of Abraham Joshua Heschel. Wilson also aims to correct popular misconceptions about prophets as mere predictors of the future, emphasizing their roles as social reformers and messengers of God's justice and compassion.

II. Key Themes and Ideas

- **Importance of Primary Sources:**
- Dr. Wilson strongly advocates for reading the prophets' texts directly, rather than just relying on summaries or interpretations. He draws an analogy to other fields: "Don't palm yourself off as a psych major if you haven't struggled with Freud, Jung, Adler, or whoever it is. Don't say you're a historian if you've never struggled with the Iliad and the Odyssey, or Herodotus, or Josephus, or whoever it is, as they wrote it, rather than reading secondary sources."
- He believes the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself, encouraging a deep dive into the literary style and structure of prophetic writings, especially the use of parallelism in Hebrew poetry.
- **Focus on Social Justice and the Heartbeat of God:**
- The prophets are presented as figures deeply concerned with the "heartbeat of God for issues of society and people." Wilson asserts that they focused on the "poor and the have-nots" not the early church, that it was a Jewish concept from the prophets.

- He highlights the connection between the prophets and the concept of "tzedakah" – righteous, fair, and just living. The prophets cared deeply for the poor, widows, and marginalized.
- Wilson states, "The prophets take us to the slums and they rave as if the whole world were a slum. What to us is a misdemeanor, what to us is a miscalculation in business. To the prophets, it was an unmitigated disaster."
- **Correcting Misconceptions about Prophecy:**
- Dr. Wilson is keen to debunk the popular view of prophets as primarily predictors of future events. He notes that popular culture often portrays them as doomsayers focused on end-times prophecies.
- He contrasts this with his own view, stating, "Less than 10% of what you read in the prophets of the Bible concerned events to come. Most of what the prophets had to say dealt with the here and the now. They were the social reformers of their day."
- He shows examples of how this idea of prophecy as predictive has led to false claims about the end times, mentioning specific examples of date-setting and false prophets. He cites examples from newspapers, books, and other media, illustrating how the word "prophecy" is often used to sensationalize and predict doom.
- He critiques those who make dogmatic claims about future events and who focus on "unwarranted speculation."
- **The Prophet as a Spokesperson for God:**
- Dr. Wilson offers an etymological analysis of the word "prophet," explaining that in Greek, it means "one who speaks for another." He emphasizes the prophets' role as messengers and spokespersons for God, not just predictors of the future.
- **Importance of Heschel's Work:**
- Wilson repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Abraham Joshua Heschel's work, seeing it as a crucial perspective on the prophets. He states, "next to the Bible, he has done more to shape my view about God, Israel, the scriptures, the prophets, than any other single writer."

- Heschel's unique perspective is that he writes "as if God is alive," which is rare among books about the Bible. Heschel saw God as the "great force within the universe."
- **The Prophets' Dual Role:**
 - The prophets not only judged and rebuked but also offered hope and encouragement. Dr. Wilson uses the metaphor of "spanking with the left hand but drawing closer with the right."
 - They "spanked, they judged, they were critical of their generation, but they gave encouragement and hope."
- **The Abrahamic Covenant and Universal Mission:**
 - Abraham is seen as an early prophet who anticipated the universal nature of God's covenant with Israel, blessing all the nations on Earth. This is seen as the historical basis for Christian mission, and the Church is seen as part of an "expanded Abrahamic family."
 - He emphasizes how "the church, in a sense, has come into that mission of being a light to the Gentiles, which was Israel's mission."
- **Literary Genres in the Bible:**
 - Dr Wilson notes that, "there are many different literary genres in the Bible. And there are some principles I think we need to keep in mind when we come to prophetic literature." He will address hermeneutics, or principles of interpretation in his lectures, as it applies to prophetic literature versus other Biblical genres.
- **The Balance between the Present and the Future:**
 - Drawing from 2 Thessalonians, Dr. Wilson stresses that Christians should not be so focused on the future that they neglect their responsibilities in the present. He warns against being "so heavenly-minded" that one becomes "no earthly good."
 - He emphasizes the importance of living responsibly in the present, citing Paul's admonishment, "if anyone should not work, neither should they eat."

III. Course Structure

- The course will focus on six minor prophets and Isaiah.
- Lectures will include exegesis, theological, archaeological, and cultural comments on the text.
- There will be lectures on hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) specific to the prophetic literature.
- The course will utilize the NIV and RSV translations, along with Heschel's work and others.
- Two English Bible tests are scheduled, one on the six minor prophets and one on the first half of Isaiah.

IV. Key Quotes

- "The good news about biblical literature is that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible."
- "Heschel, unlike many books about the Bible, writes as if God is alive. No post-mortem on God."
- "Less than 10% of what you read in the prophets of the Bible concerned events to come. Most of what the prophets had to say dealt with the here and the now. They were the social reformers of their day."
- "Etymologically speaking, at least, the word prophet simply means someone who speaks for someone else."
- "The prophets spanked, they judged, they were critical of their generation, but they gave encouragement and hope."

V. Conclusion

Dr. Wilson's introductory lecture emphasizes a rigorous, direct engagement with the prophetic texts. His course will focus on uncovering the prophets' core message, which he argues is not primarily about future predictions, but about social justice, ethical living, and the very heart of God for the world. He seeks to equip students with the tools to understand and apply the prophetic message to their lives, while also correcting widespread misconceptions about prophets and prophecy.

4. Study Guide: Wilson, Prophets, Session 1, Introduction

Study Guide: Biblical Prophets

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. According to Dr. Wilson, what is a major problem with how many students approach biblical and theological studies?
2. What does Dr. Wilson say about the best way to understand biblical literature?
3. What does Dr. Wilson say are the three possible ways that the second line of Hebrew poetry can relate to the first?
4. Why does Dr. Wilson emphasize the importance of Abraham Joshua Heschel's work?
5. What is the significance of Israel being called an "or goyim"?
6. According to Dr. Wilson, what is a common, yet distorted, popular view of the prophets?
7. Why does Dr. Wilson say it is dangerous to focus too much on the futuristic interpretation of prophecy?
8. What does Dr. Wilson mean by the etymological definition of "prophet"?
9. How did the prophets function as social reformers in their time?
10. What are the two sections of the Nevi'im (prophets) in the Hebrew Bible?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Dr. Wilson states that many students do not engage with primary sources, such as the writings of the prophets themselves, instead relying on secondary summaries and interpretations of the texts. He believes that this hinders a deeper understanding of the material.
2. Dr. Wilson believes that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself, where a more thorough understanding can be gained through careful reading, specifically paying attention to parallelism found in Hebrew poetry.
3. Dr. Wilson states that the second line of Hebrew poetry can be synonymous with the first, expand on the first, be in contrast to it, or explain it in some way.

4. Dr. Wilson emphasizes Heschel's work because Heschel writes as if God is alive and that he does a fantastic job showing the heart of the prophets and the justice of God. He also sees him as a wonderful source of theological and philosophical reflection.
5. The term "or goyim" means "a light to the nations" and signifies that Israel's covenant with God was meant to have a universal thrust and to bring knowledge of God to the whole world. This idea of a universal thrust is carried on by the Church.
6. Dr. Wilson claims the common misconception is that prophets are people who primarily predict doom, end times, and the future, emphasizing that this view misrepresents the main focus of the biblical prophets.
7. Dr. Wilson suggests that focusing too much on the future can lead to inaction and neglect of present responsibilities, similar to the problem addressed in 2nd Thessalonians where some church members stopped working while anticipating the Lord's return. This approach has created difficulties in presenting the gospel to others.
8. Etymologically, the word "prophet" means someone who speaks for another, acting as a spokesperson or messenger, rather than primarily being a predictor of the future. The word is based on the Greek roots *pro*, meaning "in place of," and *phemi*, meaning "to speak."
9. The prophets were social reformers who challenged moral and ethical injustices, including the mistreatment of the poor, the disenfranchised, the widows, and the aliens. They focused on issues of righteousness, compassion, and fair living (tzedakah).
10. The Nevi'im, or the prophets, in the Hebrew Bible are divided into two sections: the "former prophets" (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings) and the "latter prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets).

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between the Old Testament prophets and the development of Christian concepts of social justice and missions. How does the teaching of the prophets influence ethical considerations in a modern context?
2. Analyze how popular interpretations of prophecy, especially those focused on apocalyptic predictions, compare with Dr. Wilson's presentation of the core message of the biblical prophets. What are the dangers and misinterpretations that arise when focusing too much on predictive prophecy?
3. Compare and contrast the role of the prophet as a "spokesperson for God" with the popular notion of the prophet as a "predictor of the future." How can this understanding of a "prophet" affect your perception of the Bible?
4. Evaluate the significance of the prophets' focus on the "here and now." How does this focus challenge contemporary Christian perspectives that may be overly concentrated on future events or individual salvation?
5. Examine the role of hope and judgment in the prophetic message. How do both elements contribute to a more holistic understanding of the biblical prophets and their significance for today?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Hermeneutics:** The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible. In this context, it involves principles for interpreting prophetic literature.
- **Nevi'im:** The Hebrew word for "prophets," the second major division of the Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible.
- **Parallelism:** A common feature of Hebrew poetry, in which the second line of a verse may be synonymous, expanding on, contrasting with, or explaining the first line.
- **Tzedakah:** A Hebrew word encompassing righteousness, fairness, and just living, involving a burning desire to care for others. The prophetic word often involves helping the poor, widows, and those disenfranchised.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind. The book of Habakkuk deals with the nature of theophany.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times, in Christian theology, this involves events surrounding the return of Christ, resurrection, judgment, and His reign.
- **Or goyim:** A Hebrew phrase meaning "a light to the nations," referring to Israel's mission to bring knowledge of God to the world.
- **Tanakh:** An acronym for the Jewish Bible, including the Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Kethuvim (Writings).
- **Former Prophets:** The first sub-section of the Nevi'im in the Hebrew Bible. The former prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.
- **Latter Prophets:** The second sub-section of the Nevi'im in the Hebrew Bible. The latter prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets.
- **Imminent:** Describes the possibility of something happening at any moment.

5. FAQs on Wilson, Prophets, Session 1, Introduction, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Understanding the Biblical Prophets

- **What is the primary focus of the Biblical prophets, and how is it often misunderstood?** The primary focus of the Biblical prophets was on the present, addressing ethical, moral, and social issues within their communities. They were concerned with justice, compassion, and righteous living (tzedakah). They acted as social reformers, speaking out against oppression and the mistreatment of the vulnerable. This is often misunderstood, as many commonly associate prophecy solely with predicting future events, especially "end-times" scenarios. Less than 10% of prophetic literature deals with the future; the vast majority addresses the immediate concerns of their time.
- **Why is it important to study the primary sources of prophetic literature instead of relying on secondary sources?** Studying the primary texts of the prophets allows for a deeper understanding of the original context and intent of the messages. Secondary sources, which summarize and interpret these texts, can sometimes distort or dilute the original meaning and themes. Directly engaging with the prophets' writings, which often take the form of poetry with parallelism and figures of speech, allows the reader to grapple with the texts and discover the richness and complexity within.
- **How does the course approach the study of the prophetic books?** This course focuses on a selection of six minor prophets and the book of Isaiah, emphasizing the main themes, and providing exegetical, theological, archaeological, and cultural commentary. There will be introductory lectures on hermeneutics (the principles of interpretation), helping to distinguish prophetic literature from other biblical genres. The course emphasizes hearing the message of the prophets as they delivered it, not through the lens of modern interpretations.

- **Who is Abraham Joshua Heschel, and why is his work significant to the study of the prophets?** Abraham Joshua Heschel was a Jewish theologian and philosopher who wrote extensively about the prophets. His work emphasizes the living presence of God and the prophets' focus on social justice, rooted in the ancient traditions of Israel. Heschel, unlike many books about the Bible, writes as if God is alive, a powerful force in the universe. He highlights that the concept of social justice in Christianity is not a new invention, but rather originates from the ancient prophets who were deeply concerned with the poor and disenfranchised. His work is considered foundational in understanding the heart of the prophetic message.
- **What are the dangers of focusing too much on predicting the future through prophecy?** An excessive focus on predicting the future through prophecy, especially concerning the end-times, can lead to a neglect of present responsibilities and ethical living. It can cause unwarranted speculation and dogmatism, which can harm the credibility of the Bible. Such obsession can create a sense of passivity and inaction, preventing people from addressing the social and moral issues that the prophets cared so deeply about. This focus is a misuse of prophetic texts and distorts their primary intent.
- **How do the prophets relate to the concepts of hope and judgment?** The prophets delivered both oracles of judgment and messages of hope. While they often criticized and condemned their society for its injustices, they also provided encouragement and pointed toward a future of restoration and renewal. This dual message of judgment and hope can be seen in the imagery of God's correction and subsequent embrace. The prophets spank and judge with one hand while simultaneously offering hope and a promise of a better future with the other hand.
- **What is the meaning of the word "prophet" and how is this significant?** Etymologically, the word "prophet" comes from the Greek words "pro" (in place of or instead of) and "phemi" (to speak). Therefore, a prophet is fundamentally someone who speaks for another, specifically for God. This indicates their role as messengers or spokespersons conveying God's message. Over time, this word has acquired a futuristic connotation, but it is crucial to remember that their role was primarily that of divine messengers dealing with the present and social concerns.

- **How do the Former and Latter Prophets contribute to our understanding of the Bible?** The Hebrew Bible is divided into three parts: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Kethuvim (Writings). Within Nevi'im (the Prophets), there are two divisions: Former and Latter. The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) provide the historical context in which the Latter Prophets operated, detailing political and social life in Israel and Judah. The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets) offer direct messages from God, emphasizing ethical living and social justice, with a smaller portion devoted to future events. Together, these books form the core of prophetic literature, teaching both the history and heart of Israel's relationship with God.