

# Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13, Date of Daniel, Oral Tradition and Writing among the Prophets Resources from NotebookLM

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

## **1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13, Date of Daniel, Oral Tradition and Writing among the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**This lecture by Robert Vannoy explores the dating of the book of Daniel and the nature of biblical prophecy.** It refutes arguments for a late dating of Daniel, such as the presence of Greek loan words and the type of Aramaic used, while also addressing the "history of traditions school," assessing how oral tradition affected the Old Testament. **Vannoy analyzes the views of scholars like Nyberg, Birkeland, and Nielsen, who posit a strong oral tradition in the transmission of biblical texts.** The lecture underscores the importance of memorization in ancient cultures and argues that while oral tradition existed, it did not function independently of written texts. **Ultimately, Vannoy emphasizes the purpose of predictive prophecy, highlighting its role in exhorting believers to holy living and obedience.** The lecture cautions against using prophecy merely to satisfy curiosity about the future, but to inspire practical life change.

## **2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Foundations).**



**Vannoy\_FoundProp  
hecy\_Session13.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13, Date of Daniel, Oral Tradition and Writing among the Prophets

Here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on the Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12:

#### Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12

##### I. Overview:

This lecture primarily addresses two main areas: the dating of the Book of Daniel and the History of Traditions School's challenge to the traditional understanding of prophetic writing. Vannoy defends the traditional dating of Daniel and critiques the History of Traditions School, particularly regarding its emphasis on oral tradition over written texts in ancient Israel. He also discusses hermeneutical principles for the interpretation of predictive prophecy.

##### II. Dating of Daniel:

- **Main Point:** Vannoy argues that there are no compelling reasons to date the Book of Daniel late (i.e., to the Maccabean period). He challenges arguments for a late date based on alleged linguistic features and the assumption that predictive prophecy is impossible.
- **Arguments Against Late Dating:**
- **Greek Loan Words:** The presence of a few Greek loan words (specifically for musical instruments in Daniel 3:5) is not sufficient evidence for a late date. Vannoy suggests that given the extensive contact between the Greeks and the Near East prior to Alexander the Great, it's surprising there aren't *more* Greek words if the book were written in the 2nd century BC.
- **Late Aramaic:** Vannoy cites Joyce Baldwin's commentary on Daniel, stating that the Aramaic of Daniel is "Imperial Aramaic... practically undatable with any conviction within c. 600 to 330 B.C." He also references K. A. Kitchen and Edwin Yamauchi, who have argued against the "late Aramaic" thesis.

- **Qumran Evidence:** The existence of copies of Daniel found at Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) dating back to 150-100 B.C. or earlier suggests that Daniel must have been written well before that time in order to achieve canonical status within the Qumran community.
- **Predictive Prophecy:** Ultimately, Vannoy argues that the late dating of Daniel stems from a disbelief in predictive prophecy. He posits that critics seek to place the book's authorship *after* the events it seems to predict (specifically, events relating to Antiochus Epiphanes).
- **Quote:** "There are no compelling reasons for dating Daniel late. There are adequate answers for each of the historical and linguistic arguments for the late date. The underlying question is whether or not one is prepared to accept the possibility of general predictive prophecy."

### III. The History of Traditions School:

- **Main Point:** Vannoy critiques the History of Traditions School, which argues that much of the Old Testament was transmitted orally for centuries before being written down, challenging the idea that the prophets were writers.
- **Key Figures and Ideas:**
- **H.S. Nyberg:** Argued that oral transmission was the norm in the Ancient Near East, and that the written Old Testament was largely a creation of the Jewish community after the exile. Nyberg believed pre-exilic writing was limited to practical matters, not historical or literary works.
- **Harris Birkeland:** Applied Nyberg's views to individual prophetic books, suggesting that they were literary representations of pre-existing oral traditions. Birkeland emphasized "tradition circles" and the constant remolding of prophetic sayings.
- **Eduard Nielsen:** While agreeing with Nyberg and Birkeland, Nielsen focused on the importance of memorization in the Ancient Near East. He cited examples from Babylonian texts, the Koran, and Jewish tradition to demonstrate the capacity for memorizing vast amounts of material. He cites Plato's Phaedrus where Socrates warned of the effect of writing: "For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it because they will not practice their memory."

- **Vannoy's Critique of Nielsen's Thesis:**
- While acknowledging the existence of oral tradition in ancient Israel (citing examples like Exodus 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Psalms 44 & 78), Vannoy argues that it was not isolated from written fixation. He emphasizes that these traditions occurred with family circles.
- Vannoy points out that even Nielsen's examples (Mesopotamian legends, the Koran) involve memorized *texts*, undermining the idea of purely oral transmission.
- He argues that there's evidence of written law codes and historical accounts in Israel from early times (e.g., Hammurabi code, Numbers 33:2). He cites 1 & 2 Chronicles as evidence that the prophets were writers.
- **Examples of Oral Tradition Supplementing Written Material:** Vannoy provides examples (Psalm 77, Joshua 24:2, 2 Timothy 3:8) where the oral tradition added to the written material, and that should not be denied.
- **Quote:** "even though oral tradition existed in ancient Israel it did not play the role that Nielsen ascribes to it. And two, I don't think there's any convincing evidence that writing was not used for literary purposes prior to the exile. That's contrary to all we know about ancient areas of the world, as well as the Old Testament."

#### IV. Hermeneutical Principles for Predictive Prophecy:

- **Main Point:** Vannoy emphasizes the importance of understanding the *purpose* of predictive prophecy, which is primarily to induce holy living and obedience to God, not simply to satisfy curiosity about the future. He distinguishes between "forth-telling" (exhortation, reproof, instruction) and "foretelling" (prediction).
- **Purpose of Predictive Prophecy:**
- Should not cater to people's appetites about the future.
- It should not be separated from its paranetic (instructional) function.
- It should exhort, reprove, reflect, encourage, and call to repentance.
- **Cautionary Notes:**
- Vannoy cites writers who caution against escapism and a lack of moral responsibility in prophetic study.

- Dwight Wilson's quote highlights the history of erroneous identifications in prophetic interpretation (e.g., identifying current crises or political figures as signs of the end).
- **Biblical Examples:** 1 John 3:3, 1 Peter 4:7, 2 Peter 3:11, and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, where the predictive element is linked to a call for holy living and self-control.
- **Quote:** "The prophetic message is meant to exhort, to reprove, to reflect, to encourage, and to call to repentance."

## **4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13, Date of Daniel, Oral Tradition and Writing among the Prophets**

### **Foundations of Biblical Prophecy: A Study Guide**

#### **Quiz**

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three Greek loan words found in Daniel 3:5, and why is their presence used as an argument for a late date of authorship?
2. What is "Imperial Aramaic," and why does Joyce Baldwin argue that its presence in Daniel is not helpful in determining the book's date?
3. How do the Dead Sea Scrolls provide evidence against a late dating of the book of Daniel?
4. According to H.S. Nyberg, what was the primary means of transmitting information in the Ancient Near East, and what implications did this have for understanding the Old Testament?
5. How did Harris Birkeland build upon Nyberg's ideas about oral tradition, and what did he suggest regarding the possibility of accessing the "ippssima verba" of the prophets?
6. What evidence does Eduard Nielsen present to demonstrate the significance of memorization in ancient Near Eastern cultures?
7. What are some of the Old Testament examples Vannoy gives to show that oral tradition existed in ancient Israel?
8. What does Vannoy argue regarding the relationship between oral tradition and written fixation in ancient Israel?
9. What is the difference between the "forth-telling" and "foretelling" aspects of biblical prophecy, according to Vannoy?
10. According to Vannoy, what is the primary purpose of predictive prophecy in Scripture, and how should it affect the lives of believers?

#### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. The three Greek loan words are technical terms for musical instruments. Their presence is used as an argument for a late date because it is assumed that Greek influence wouldn't have been present until after the time of Alexander the Great.
2. Imperial Aramaic was a common language used across a wide geographical area during a specific time period. Baldwin argues that the Aramaic of Daniel is practically undatable within c. 600 to 330 B.C. because it is Imperial Aramaic, so it is irrelevant to try to distinguish between Eastern and Western Aramaic, which developed later.
3. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain copies of Daniel dating back to at least 150-100 B.C., and perhaps even earlier. This suggests that the book of Daniel had already achieved canonical status within the Qumran community by this time, making a late composition date less probable.
4. Nyberg argued that the normal manner of transmission of various types of information in the Ancient Near East was oral rather than written. This implies that much of the Old Testament material was passed down through word of mouth and only written down much later, after the Babylonian captivity.
5. Birkeland applied Nyberg's ideas to individual prophetic books, suggesting that they were literary representations of already established oral traditions. He suggested that the transmission of prophetic sayings were constantly remolded, and it was impossible to get back to the "ippssima verba," or exact words, of the prophets.
6. Nielsen presents examples from Babylonian texts, the Koran in Arabia, Johanan ben Zakkai and the Mishnah in Judaism, and Plato's writings to demonstrate that memorization of enormous amounts of material was a common practice and highly valued in various ancient cultures.
7. Vannoy gives the Old Testament examples of Exodus 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Psalms 44:1-3, and Psalm 78 to show that oral tradition existed in ancient Israel, particularly within the family circle, where fathers would pass on stories and teachings to their children.
8. Vannoy argues that while oral tradition certainly existed in ancient Israel, it was not isolated from written fixation. He points to examples like Exodus 17:14, where God instructs Moses to write down the account of the Amalekites alongside the oral transmission, suggesting that the two often occurred together.

9. The "forth-telling" aspect of biblical prophecy refers to exhortation, reproof, correction, and instruction, while the "foretelling" aspect refers to the prediction of things to come in the future. Vannoy emphasizes that the forth-telling aspect is often neglected in favor of the foretelling aspect, which obscures the fundamental purpose of the prophetic message.
10. According to Vannoy, the primary purpose of predictive prophecy in Scripture is to show God's people that His program of redemption is moving forward according to His divine plan and schedule. This should affect the lives of believers by inducing holy living and obedience to God in the present.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the arguments for and against a late dating of the book of Daniel. In your response, evaluate the evidence from linguistic features (Greek loan words and Aramaic) and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
2. Explain the central tenets of the "history of traditions school" as it relates to the Old Testament prophets. How do figures like Nyberg, Birkeland, and Nielsen contribute to this perspective, and what are some potential criticisms of their views?
3. Vannoy argues that oral tradition existed in ancient Israel, but it did not function as the "history of traditions school" claims. Compare and contrast these two concepts of oral tradition.
4. Analyze the relationship between "forth-telling" and "foretelling" in biblical prophecy. According to Vannoy, how should these two aspects of prophecy inform one's understanding and application of prophetic texts?
5. Explore the purpose of predictive prophecy. Should modern Christians be trying to identify current and/or future events described in prophecy, or should they focus on holy living and obedience to God?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Aramaic:** A Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, used in parts of the Old Testament, including Daniel 2:4-7:28.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran):** Ancient Jewish religious manuscripts discovered in the Qumran Caves near the Dead Sea, containing portions of the Hebrew Bible and other religious texts.



- **Eschatology:** The study of "last things" or end-times events, such as the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the final judgment.
- **Exile (Babylonian):** The period in Jewish history (586-539 B.C.) when the elite of Judah were captives in Babylon.
- **Forth-telling:** The aspect of prophecy that involves exhortation, reproof, correction, and instruction.
- **Foretelling:** The aspect of prophecy that involves the prediction of future events.
- **Greek Loan Words:** Words borrowed from the Greek language and incorporated into another language, in this case, Aramaic.
- **Hermeneutics:** The branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.
- **History of Traditions School:** A school of thought that emphasizes the role of oral tradition in the transmission of biblical texts, suggesting that much of the Old Testament material was passed down orally before being written down.
- **Imperial Aramaic:** A standardized form of Aramaic used as an official language of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550-330 B.C.).
- **Ippissima Verba:** The exact words spoken by someone (Latin). Used in the context of the prophets, it refers to the challenge of recovering the precise words they spoke.
- **Maccabean Period:** The period in Jewish history (c. 167-160 B.C.) marked by the revolt against Seleucid rule, led by the Maccabee family.
- **Oral Tradition:** The transmission of information, beliefs, or customs by word of mouth or performance rather than in writing.
- **Premillennialism:** A belief that the second coming of Christ will occur before a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.
- **Prophecy:** A message from God communicated through a prophet, often involving both forth-telling and foretelling.
- **Qumran:** See Dead Sea Scrolls.
- **Sitz im Leben:** A German phrase meaning "setting in life." It refers to the social and historical context in which a text originated.

## **5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 12, Session 13, Date of Daniel, Oral Tradition and Writing among the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided lecture excerpts:

### **1. What are the main arguments used to support a late dating of the Book of Daniel, and how convincing are they?**

The arguments for a late dating of Daniel primarily revolve around alleged late linguistic features, specifically the presence of Greek loan words and a supposed late form of Aramaic. However, these arguments are generally considered unconvincing. The Greek words are few in number and technical, relating to musical instruments, suggesting early trade contacts rather than a late composition date. Furthermore, studies indicate that the Aramaic used in Daniel is more consistent with Imperial Aramaic, a form of Aramaic from the 5th century BC or earlier, and therefore difficult to date precisely. The presence of copies of Daniel in the Qumran caves from 150-100 BC, demonstrates it would have had to have been composed much earlier to allow time for its distribution.

### **2. What is the "History of Traditions School," and what are its primary claims regarding the writing of the Old Testament, especially prophetic books?**

The History of Traditions School, exemplified by scholars like H.S. Nyberg, Harris Birkeland, and Eduard Nielsen, argues that much of the Old Testament, including prophetic material, was transmitted orally for a significant period before being written down. This school posits that pre-exilic writing was largely limited to practical matters (contracts, lists, etc.) and that the compilation of the written Old Testament occurred primarily after the Babylonian exile, in the Second Temple period. They claim that prophetic preaching was primarily oral and was only written down after the exile.

### **3. According to scholars like Nyberg, what are the implications of oral transmission for understanding the original words of the prophets?**

Nyberg argues that because prophetic material was transmitted orally through "circles of tradition," the original words (*ippssima verba*) of the prophets are largely irretrievable. Oral transmission involves an active transformation of the material, making it difficult to distinguish between the original prophetic utterances and later additions or modifications by those who preserved and passed on the tradition.

#### **4. What evidence does Eduard Nielsen present to support the idea of significant oral transmission in the ancient Near East?**

Nielsen highlights the importance of memorization in ancient Near Eastern cultures. He cites examples from Babylonian texts, where memorization was valued, as well as the oral transmission of the Koran in early Islam, and stories of Rabbis that could recite the entire Mishnah from memory. Plato's writings are used to express concerns about the effect of writing on memory. These examples are meant to illustrate the capacity for, and cultural emphasis on, oral transmission of large amounts of material.

#### **5. What are the counterarguments against the History of Traditions School's view, and what evidence suggests the use of writing in ancient Israel?**

Counterarguments emphasize that while oral tradition certainly existed, it was not the sole or primary means of transmitting religious and historical material. There are numerous Old Testament references to oral transmission (Exodus 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Psalm 44:1-3, Psalm 78), but these examples usually take place between parents and children. Further there is significant evidence of written laws, histories, and prophetic writings in ancient Israel, as cited in Numbers, Kings, and Chronicles. The Hammurabi and Lipit-Ishtar codes also show the existence of written law long before Moses. References to writings by Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and Isaiah also indicates an understanding that the prophets did write.

#### **6. How did oral tradition supplement written texts in ancient Israel?**

Examples such as Psalm 77 referencing "thunder and lightning" at the Red Sea crossing (not mentioned in Exodus 14), Joshua 24:2 stating Abraham's father Terah worshipped other Gods, and 2 Timothy 3:8 naming "Jannes and Jambres" as pharaoh's magicians highlight oral traditions that came down through the generations that supplemented gaps in knowledge in the older written accounts.

#### **7. What is the primary purpose of predictive prophecy, according to the lecture?**

The primary purpose of predictive prophecy is not merely to satisfy curiosity about the future. Instead, its primary purpose is to exhort, reprove, encourage, and call to repentance. It serves to demonstrate God's sovereign control over history and to prompt holy living and obedience in the present, based on the knowledge of God's future plans.

**8. How should the "foretelling" aspect of prophecy relate to its "forth-telling" aspect, and what are some potential pitfalls in focusing solely on prediction?**

The "foretelling" (prediction) aspect of prophecy should never be separated from its "forth-telling" (exhortation, instruction) function. Overemphasizing prediction can lead to a neglect of the ethical and moral implications of the prophetic message. It can also result in speculative interpretations and the erroneous identification of current events with specific prophecies, ultimately undermining the credibility of prophetic interpretation and potentially leading to a desire to escape responsibility rather than a commitment to transformation.