

A Quick Guide to Prophet Forms¹

Prophetic Narrative

Types	Description/Purpose	Elements	Examples/ Notes
Vision Report	Autobiographical recounting of what a prophet sees or hears	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Announcement of vision (employing “to see” [r’h]) 2) Transition (“and behold” or the like) 3) Vision Sequence 	<i>Examples:</i> Amos 7–8;
Prophetic Word Report	Narration of the coming of a message to the prophet; authenticates the message	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prophetic Word Formula (“the word of Yahweh came to X”) 2) Setting of the word 	<i>Examples:</i> Jer 21:1-10; 35:1; Ezek 14:1-11; 20:1-44
Symbolic Action Report	1st or 3rd person description of the prophet’s performance of an act intended to symbolize Yahweh’s intentions or actions towards the people.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Instruction to perform the act 2) Report that act was performed 3) Interpretative statement 	<i>Examples:</i> Hos 1; 3; Isa 7:3; 8:1-4; 20:1-6; Jer 13:1-11; 16:1-9; 32:1-15; Ezek 4:1-5:17; 12:1-20; 37:15-28.
Vocation Report (Call narrative)	An autobiographical account of the prophet’s experience of initial calling; meant to authenticate the prophet and his message as true	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Divine confrontation 2) Introductory word 3) Commission 4) Objection(s) 5) Reassurances 6) Sign(s) 	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 6; Jer 1:4-10; Ezek 1–3
Prophetic Story/ Legend	3rd person narratives with a prophet as the main character; typically to exemplify religious devotion/ethics or (more likely) to emphasize a attribute of Yahweh	—	<i>Subcategories:</i> Political (2Kgs 6; Isa 36-37); ethical (Num 20; 2Kgs 4-5); Confrontation Stories (Amos 7:10-17; Jer 6, 19, 26-28)

¹ A summary of Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Genres of Prophetic Literature” in *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 15-30. Prepared by Tyler F. Williams January 1998; revised September 1999.

Prophetic Speech

Types	Description/Purpose	Elements	Examples/ Subcategories
Messenger Formula	Technically not a form, by a formula that introduces a message (thus it is often part of a larger form)	1) Formula “thus says Yahweh”	<i>Examples:</i> 14 times in Amos, 44 in Isaiah, 157 in Jeremiah, 125 in Ezekiel, once in Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, 3 in Haggai, 9 in Zechariah. It does not occur in Hosea, Joel, Habakkuk, or Zephaniah cf. Num 22:15-17
Messenger Speech	A report of an oral message delivered by a messenger (the prophet), in which the words of the sender (Yahweh) are repeated literally to the recipient	1) Prophetic Word Formula (“the word of Yahweh came to X”) 2) Commissioning formula (“go and say”) 3) Messenger formula (“thus says Yahweh”) 4) Message	<i>Examples:</i> Hos 1; Amos 7; Isa 6, 7:3-9; Jer 1
Prophetic Judgment Speech	Prophet speaks on behalf of Yahweh to announce disaster to individuals, groups, or nations. Based on juridical proceedings where the punishment is the consequence of the crime (thus related to covenant blessings and curses)	1) Reason for judgment (Indictment) 2) Logical Connective (“therefore”) 3) Announcement of judgment (Verdict)	<i>Examples:</i> Mic 3:9-12; Isa 8:6-8; Jer 11:9-12 <i>Subcategories:</i> Individual (Amos 7:14-17; Jer 20:1-6) and Corporate (Amos 2:1-3, 4-5; Hos 2; Isa 30:12-14; Mic 3:1-4)
Prophetic Proof Saying/Self Disclosure Oracle	Prophet announces punishment and argues that the punishment will convince the recipient to recognize Yahweh	1) Announcement of punishment 2) Recognition formula (“and you shall know that I am Yahweh”)	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 41:17-20; 49:22-26; Ezek 12:19-20; 25:6-7
Proclamation of Salvation/ Restoration	Prophet speaks on behalf of Yahweh to announce salvation to individuals, groups, or the nation often followed by blessing	1) Indication of situation 2) Proclamation of salvation (introduced by “therefore”) 3) Concluding characterization	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 7:7-9; Jer 28:2-4; 31:2-6; Amos 9:11-15; Mic 5:10-20 <i>Subcategories:</i> Announcement of a Royal Savior

Prophetic Speech, cont.

Types	Description/Purpose	Elements	Examples/ Subcategories
Prophecy concerning a Foreign Nation	Identified by content, not form. Message directed towards a foreign nation		<i>Examples:</i> Isa 13-23; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Amos 1-2; Zeph 2:4-15
Announcement of Reprieve	Type of oracle that announces Yahweh's intent to mitigate a promised punishment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Allusion to some act of penitence 2) Reason for reprieve 3) The reprieve itself 	<i>Examples:</i> 1Kgs 21:29; 2Kgs 22:18-20
Announcement of a Sign	Announcement of an event that will take place in the future to confirm the prophetic word	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Declaration of an event or sign 2) Significance of the sign 3) Description of the event that will constitute the sign 	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 37:30-32; Jer 44:29-30
Trial Speech/ Rîb Pattern / Prophetic Lawsuit / Covenant Lawsuit	A speech that charges Israel (or another nation or individual) with a breach of covenant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Summons to trial 2) Trial proper, including speeches by plaintiff and defendant 3) Sentencing 	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 1; 41:1-5, 21-29; 42:18-25; 43:8-15; Jer 2; Hos 4; Mic 6
Prophetic Disputation	A speech in which the prophet argues against a particular viewpoint by means of interrogation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Quotation of opinion 2) Refutation of opinion 	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 8:16-9:6; 40:27-31; Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 11:2-17; Mic 2:6-11; Hag 1:2-11; Mal 1:2-2:9
Woe Oracle	A speech that criticizes (by means of a <i>hōy</i> "woe!") specific actions and announces doom and punishment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introductory exclamation <i>hōy</i> "woe!" 2) Elaboration using various forms 	<i>Examples:</i> Amos 5:18-20; 6:1-7; Isa 1:4; 5:8-24; Hab 2:6-20; Micah 2:1-5
Prophetic Liturgies	A text taken over by the prophet that was used (originally?) worship in which two or more speakers participate in response to each other	—	<i>Examples:</i> Isa 12 (hymn); 33 (entrance liturgy); Jer 14 (complaint); Joel 1-2 (complaint); Hab (prayer); Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6 (doxologies); Amos 5:1-3; Isa 14:3-23; Ezek 19:1-14 (dirges); Amos 4:4 (parody of a call to worship)