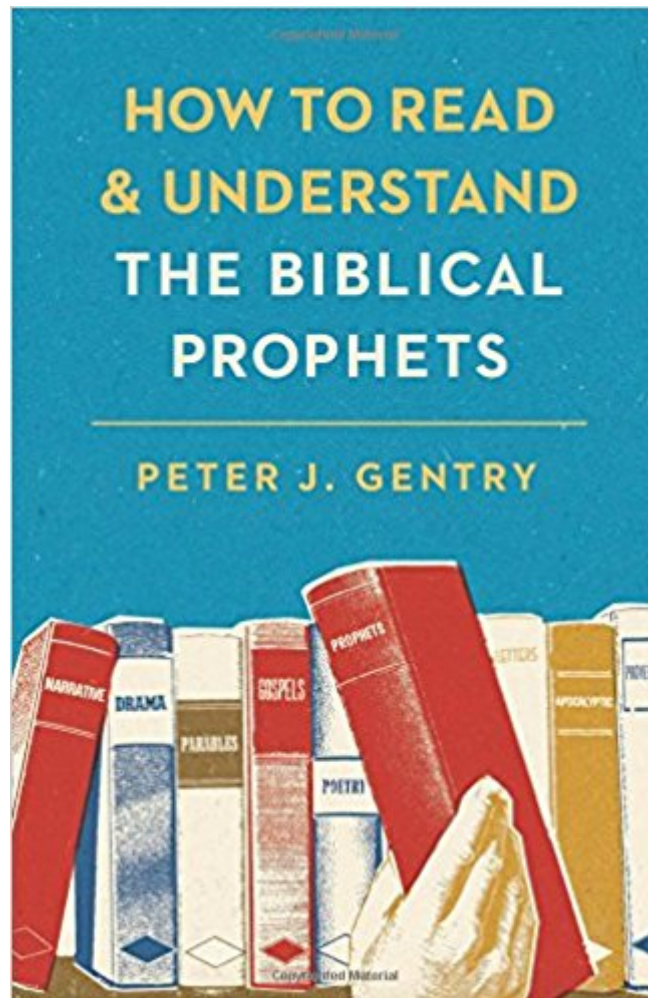




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# How To Read And Understand The Biblical Prophets



## Synopsis

**A Concise Guide to Reading the Prophetic Books** The Prophetic Books of the Bible are full of symbolic speeches, dramatic metaphors, and lengthy allegories—•a unique blend of literary styles that can make them hard to comprehend. How can we know if we are reading them the way God intended them to be read? In this accessible guide, leading Old Testament scholar Peter Gentry identifies seven common characteristics of prophetic literature in the Bible that help us understand each book’s message. With illustrations and clear examples, Gentry offers guidance for reading these challenging texts—•teaching us practical strategies for deeper engagement with the biblical text as we seek to apply God’s Word to our lives today. Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“When reading the Prophets, one may despair like the Ethiopian eunuch puzzling over Isaiah, “How can I understand, unless someone guides me?” Fortunately, Peter Gentry meets us on the road and asks, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Gentry ably guides us through this strange and foreign land. Lindsay Kennedy, Assistant Pastor, Calvary Chapel Bothell, Bothell, Washington; blogger, My Digital Seminary “This is just the book I was looking for! And why? To serve as an essential guide and resource text for my Lusaka Lutheran Seminary exegesis of Isaiah class. Gentry succeeds most admirably in his stated objective, which is to enable readers to read and understand the Prophets. And he does so in a way that is truly exemplary, employing a

clear, concise, logically developed writing style that makes it relatively easy to probe this potentially difficult subject – the Old Testament prophetic literature. The basic principles and procedures of text interpretation are given substance in many helpful reading strategies that are exemplified by some crucial biblical case studies – primarily Isaiah, but also other prophetic texts that reflect upon the fundamental covenantal tenets of the Mosaic Torah, Deuteronomy in particular. All the key topics and tactics necessary for more effectively delving into the Prophets are introduced and amply illustrated: literary-stylistic cues, discourse structural markers, function of the foreign nations, Yahwist covenantal theology, biblical chronology and typology, and, of course, correctly discerning the future, including the apocalyptic genre. In short, the author demystifies the Hebrew prophets and successfully relates their writings also to hermeneutical issues facing the church today – all in the space of less than 150 pages. This book would serve as a helpful introduction for adult Bible studies as well as college-level courses on hermeneutics. Scholars teaching at higher academic levels too would benefit from Gentry’s excellent pedagogical approach. I had intended to complete my review of this book periodically, over the space of two weeks; however, once I got started, it took me only two days. Whether one happens to agree with the author’s various interpretive conclusions or not (I do!), one must commend him for the careful manner in which he arrives at them. Many readers now will look forward to some sort of a teacher’s guide (including various content and application questions) that could accompany this indispensable resource on the Hebrew prophets.

– Ernst R. Wendland, instructor, Lusaka Lutheran Seminary, Zambia; Internal Examiner, University of Zambia

“Having established a stellar reputation already through his many publications in Old Testament studies – especially in Septuagint and biblical theology – Gentry reflects broad expertise here in his treatment of prophetism as an institution and in the literary output of the canonical Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. This is more than – just another book on the Prophets: their lives, times, and ministries. The approach in this case goes beyond the standard of the oeuvres already at hand. Gentry knits together most skillfully the strands of criticism, theology, history, poetry, apocalyptic, and pastoral practicality in a style that betrays at once solid scholarship and transparent readability.”

– Eugene H. Merrill, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

“When traveling to a foreign land, the experience is so much richer when you have an experienced guide to explain the unique customs, point out things you might have missed, and take you to places you would not dare traverse alone. For modern Western readers of the Bible, the Prophets are a foreign land, even if we do not initially realize it. Peter Gentry, with his decades of experience traveling in this difficult terrain, can be your expert

guide to the biblical Prophets through reading this book. I'm overjoyed that Gentry is sharing in print for a wider audience what I first found so helpful as class lectures a dozen years ago. Pick up this travel guide and experience the biblical Prophets afresh.

—Richard Lucas, a biblical and theological studies mentor, The NETS Center for Church Planting and Revitalization; associate pastor, Christ Memorial Church, Williston, Vermont

“Peter Gentry is a master exegete and theologian, and in this brief volume he supplies excellent guidance for those of us who desire to read and understand the Prophets with greater biblical faithfulness. With clear prose and numerous examples, he identifies how we should approach the prophetic genre—its grounding in the Mosaic covenant, its structure and use of repetition, its engagement of foreign nations, its use of typology and apocalyptic language, and its appropriation and already-but-not-yet fulfillment in the New Testament. Gentry helps us grasp how the prophets communicated their messages, and by doing so he empowers us to become better interpreters of God's Word. I highly recommend this book.

—Jason S. DeRouchie, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology, Bethlehem College & Seminary

“Many people set out to read through the Bible but get bogged down in the Old Testament Prophets. Some push ahead anyway, others skip ahead—both missing out on the full counsel of God. But there's hope—everyone should read Peter Gentry's new book! Under seven key topics he asks the right questions, and his answers are the most insightful I've seen. Pastors and scholars: you'll benefit too.

—Brent Sandy, a Former Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, Grace College, Winona Lake, Indiana; coeditor, *Cracking Old Testament Codes*; coauthor, *The Lost World of Scripture*

Peter J. Gentry (PhD, University of Toronto) is professor of Old Testament interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and director of the Hexapla Institute.

This is a short, succinct book on the genre of prophecy and how this Hebrew literature was written. In our Western mindset, we often don't properly read and understand Hebrew prophecy, as it was written in a style that we are not accustomed to. Peter Gentry takes us through the characteristics of Hebrew prophecy and how to better understand it. He uses multiple examples, particularly in Isaiah, to show the style and genre and demonstrate how this would have been understood to the original readers. As I'm currently studying Isaiah, I found this helpful to better understand what I am reading. There are charts throughout the book to demonstrate the chiastic structure that is common in

Hebrew literature. We are not properly understanding the Bible if we don't understand it the way the original readers understood its meaning. This book is a helpful resource to better understand the genre and structure of the biblical prophets so we can better grasp the original readers' understanding of the text.\*I received a copy of this book free on Kindle from the publisher Crossway in exchange for my review.

Bible prophets used poetic symbols, metaphors, and other literary devices for impact. Like poets and prophets today, they wanted to wake people up to God's ways and the Lord's calling on their lives. In general, the Old Testament prophets reiterated what God had already said or revealed then showed how that word applied to a situation in their era in hopes of encouraging faith and obedience to God. The prophets also exhorted the people to seek God's will and rely on God to help them find it. In Deuteronomy 18, for example, Moses strongly warned against contacting mediums, fortune-tellers, sorcerers, witches, or the dead as other nations had done when wanting to know about or, perhaps, control future events. Such control and oversight belong only to God. With world events worrying many of us, this book from Crossway, who kindly sent me a copy to review, will help us better understand God's prophetic word, which speaks to us even now.

As a mom with littles, I don't often get time to read books that deepen my understanding of biblical interpretation. The length of this book and the clarity with which Dr. Gentry writes is so refreshing and very helpful. He lays out his learning of Hebrew and Greek writing styles in a way that makes sense to me, an average person, and brings to light things that I have never understood before! A fantastic resource!

Easy read and he takes the complications of scripture and simplifies it so the average reader can understand more fully. Helpful for both Professional and Lay persons.

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