



Lecture # 10 Part 2

Specific Claims of Inspiration in the Old Testament

AN EXPLANATION OF BOOKS THAT LACK EXPLICIT CLAIM FOR INSPIRATION

The vast majority of the books of the Old Testament (about [twenty-six](#) of [thirty-nine](#)) explicitly claim that they are God's words to men, but some do not have such clear statements as to their origin. Several reasons may be offered in the clarification of this important matter.

They are all part of a given section

Every book is included within the organic unity of a section (Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings) in which there is distinct and indisputable claim for inspiration, which fact thereby speaks for every book within that section. As a result, each individual book does not need to state its own case; the claim has already been made for it by the claim made for the section as a whole and confirmed by the fact that later biblical books refer to the authority of that particular section as a whole. Of course, it is to be assumed that unless a book had an implicit claim to inspiration of its own it would never have been included in the canon from the beginning. **This, however, is a matter of canonization and is considered more fully in [chapters 12, 14, and 15](#).**

Another reason may be found in their nature

It is only the historical and poetical books that do not contain direct statements as to their divine origin; all of the didactic books do have an explicit **"thus says the Lord."** The obvious reason that the historical and poetical books do not is that they present what **God "showed"** (History) rather than what **God "said"** (Law and Prophets). Nonetheless, there is an implicit didactic, **"thus says the Lord,"** even in the historical and poetical books. History is what God said in the concrete events of national life. Poetry is what God said in the hearts and aspirations of individuals within the nation. Both are what God said, just as much so as the explicit record He spoke through the law and the other didactic writings.

Traditional writers of the books were men accredited of God with prophetic ministries

Solomon, who is credited by Jewish tradition with writing Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, had God-given wisdom ([1 Kings 4:29](#)).

[1 Kings 4:29 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁹ Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.



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Furthermore, he fulfilled the qualification for a prophet laid down in [Numbers 12:6](#): one to whom God spoke in visions or dreams (cf. [1 Kings 11:9](#)).

[Numbers 12:6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream.

[1 Kings 11:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

David is credited with writing nearly half of the psalms. And although the psalms themselves do not lay direct claim to divine inspiration, David's testimony of his own ministry is recorded in [2 Samuel 23:2 \(NASB\)](#): "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

Jeremiah, the traditional author of [1](#) and [2 Kings](#), has well-known prophetic credentials (cf. [Jeremiah 1:4, 17](#)).

[Jeremiah 1:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

[Jeremiah 1:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷"Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them.

Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are attributed to Ezra the priest, who functioned with all the authority of a prophet interpreting the law of Moses and instituting civil and religious reforms thereupon (cf. [Jeremiah 1:10, 13](#)).

[Jeremiah 1:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰"See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant."

[Jeremiah 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north."

So then, either the books of the Old Testament testify for themselves, or the men who are believed to have written them, almost without exception,⁴ claim them to be the authoritative word of God.

THE CLAIM OF INSPIRATION IN THE LAW AND PROPHETS

The earliest and most basic division of the Old Testament Scriptures was that of Law and Prophets, that is, the five books of Moses and then all of the prophetic writings that came after them. The New Testament refers to this twofold arrangement about a dozen



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times (cf. [Matthew 5:17](#); [Matthew 7:12](#)), and only once does it even suggest a possible threefold ([Luke 24:44](#)).

[Matthew 5:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

[Matthew 7:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹² "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

[Luke 24:44 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

However, in the same chapter, Jesus refers to "Moses and ... the prophets" as being "all the Scriptures" ([Luke 24:27](#)).

Within the Old Testament itself there is a basic, twofold division between the law of Moses and all the prophets who came after him ([Nehemiah 9:14](#), [26](#) and [Daniel 9:2](#), [11](#)).

[Nehemiah 9:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ "So You made known to them Your holy sabbath, And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses.

[Nehemiah 9:26 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁶ "But they became disobedient and rebelled against You, And cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your prophets who had admonished them So that they might return to You, And they committed great blasphemies.

[Daniel 9:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as* the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.

[Daniel 9:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ "Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

The same twofold division is carried on in the period between the Old and New Testaments ([2 Macc. 15:9](#)) and in the Qumran community (*Manual of Discipline* [1.3](#); [8.15](#); [9.11](#)). A consideration of these two divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament will reveal what each claimed for itself and what one claimed for the other as regards the matter of divine inspiration.⁵



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THE LAW

The first and most important section of the Old Testament is the Torah, or law of Moses. The claim for inspiration in this section of the Bible is very distinct, as has already been seen from the previous examination of the individual books of the Law.

The claim in the Law for inspiration

The books of [Exodus \(32:16\)](#), [Leviticus \(1:1\)](#), [Numbers \(1:1\)](#), and [Deuteronomy \(31:26\)](#) all make an explicit claim to inspiration.

[Exodus 32:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.

[Leviticus 1:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying,

[Numbers 1:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

[Deuteronomy 31:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

Genesis alone has no such direct claim. However, Genesis too was considered to be part of the "book of Moses" (cf. [Nehemiah 3:1](#); [2 Chronicles 35:12](#)) and by virtue of that association has the same divine authority.

[Nehemiah 3:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred *and* the Tower of Hananel.

[2 Chronicles 35:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹²Then they removed the burnt offerings that *they* might give them to the sections of the fathers' households of the lay people to present to the LORD, as it is written in the book of Moses. *They did* this also with the bulls.

Whatever holds for one book holds for all of them. In other words, a claim by or for one book in this canonical section is thereby a claim for all of them, since they were all unified under a title such as *the book of Moses* or *the law of Moses*.



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The claim for the Law

Joshua 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Throughout the remainder of the Old Testament, in an unbroken succession, the law of Moses was enjoined on the people as the law of God; Moses' voice was heeded as God's. Joshua began his ministry as Moses' successor by saying, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" ([Joshua 1:8 \(NASB\)](#)).

In [Judges 3:4](#), God tested the people of Israel to know whether they "would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses."

"Then Samuel said to the people, 'It is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt ... But they forgot the Lord their God' " ([1 Samuel 12:6, 9](#)).

In Josiah's day, "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses" ([2 Chronicles 34:14](#)).

In exile, Daniel recognized Moses' law as God's Word, saying, "The curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us" ([Daniel 9:11-12](#)).

Even in postexilic times, the revival under Nehemiah came as a result of obedience to Moses' law (cf. [Ezra 6:18](#), [Nehemiah 13:1](#)).

[Ezra 6:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

[Nehemiah 13:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God,

THE PROPHETS

The next section of the Hebrew Scripture was known as "The Prophets." This section literally abounds with claims of its divine inspiration.



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The claim in the Prophets

The characteristic “**thus says the Lord**” and similar expressions are found here and in other parts of the Old Testament thousands of times.⁶ A sample survey finds Isaiah proclaiming, “**Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; for the Lord speaks**” ([Isaiah 1:2](#)).

Jeremiah wrote, “**And the word of the Lord came to me, saying ...**” ([Jeremiah 1:11](#)).

“**The word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel**” ([Ezekiel 1:3](#)).

Similar statements are found throughout the twelve “**minor**” prophets (cf. [Hosea 1:1–2](#); [Joel 1:1](#)).

The claim for the Prophets

Some references in the later prophets reveal a high regard for the utterances of earlier prophets. God spoke to Daniel through the writings of Jeremiah (cf. [Daniel 9:2](#) with [Jeremiah 25:11](#)).

[Daniel 9:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as* the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.

[Jeremiah 25:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Ezra likewise recognized the divine authority in Jeremiah’s writings ([Ezra 1:1](#)), as well as in those of Haggai and Zechariah ([Ezra 5:1](#)).

[Ezra 1:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying:

[Ezra 5:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them,

One of the strongest passages is found in one of the last of the Old Testament prophets, Zechariah. He speaks of “**They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit**



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through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts” ([Zechariah 7:12](#) (NASB)).

In a similar passage in the last historical book of the Old Testament, Nehemiah writes, “**However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands**” ([Nehemiah 9:30](#) (NASB)).

These examples confirm the high regard that the latter prophets had for the writings of their predecessors; they considered them to be the Word of God, given by the Spirit of God for the good of Israel.

The books of the prophets later sectioned off as “Writings”⁷ are automatically included in the overall claim for the prophets of which they were a part. Even the book of Psalms (part of the “Writings”), which Jesus singled out for its messianic importance ([Luke 24:44](#)), was part of the Law and the Prophets that Jesus said constituted “**all the Scriptures**” ([Luke 24:27](#)).

[Luke 24:44](#) (NASB)

⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

[Luke 24:27](#) (NASB)

²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Josephus placed Daniel (which was later in the “Writings”) in the “Prophets” section of his day ([Against Apion 1.8](#)). So whatever alternate (or later) manner of arranging the Old Testament books into three sections may have existed, it is clear that the usual arrangement was a twofold division of Law and Prophets (which included the books later to be known as “Writings”) from late Old Testament times through the “intertestamental” period and on into the New Testament era.

THE CLAIM FOR INSPIRATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A WHOLE

Throughout the foregoing discussion runs the concept that a writing was considered the Word of God if it was written by a prophet of God. In order, therefore, to see that the Old Testament as a whole claims to be the Word of God, it must be determined what is meant by a prophet and a prophetic utterance.

THE FUNCTION OF A PROPHET

A prophetic utterance, of course, is that which comes from a prophet in the exercise of his prophetic ministry. Hence, the nature of the prophetic gift becomes crucial in the



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understanding of the authoritative character of the Old Testament Scriptures which were written as a result of this prophetic gift.

Names given to a prophet

First, a brief examination of the names given to a prophet will help to reveal the character and origin of his ministry. He is called:

1. a man of God ([1 Kings 12:22](#)), meaning that he was chosen by God
2. a servant of the Lord ([1 Kings 14:18](#)), indicating that he was to be faithful to God
3. a messenger of the Lord ([Isaiah 42:19](#)), showing that he was sent by God
4. a seer (*Ro·eh*), or beholder (*Hozeh*) ([Isaiah 30:9–10](#)), revealing that his insight was from God
5. a man of the Spirit ([Hosea 9:7](#); cf. [Micah 3:8](#)), telling that he spoke by the Spirit of God
6. a watchman ([Ezekiel 3:7](#)), relating his alertness for God
7. a prophet (which he is most commonly called), marking him as a spokesman for God

In summary, all of the prophetic titles refer essentially to the same function, that of a man receiving a revelation from God and relating it to others.

Nature of his office

The same conclusion is substantiated by an examination of the nature of the prophetic office. The etymology of the word “prophet” (*nabhi*) is obscure,⁸ but the nature of the prophetic office is clearly defined throughout the Old Testament. The prophet was one who felt as Amos, “**The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?**” ([Amos 3:8](#)) or even as the prophet Balaam, who said, “**I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the Lord my God**” ([Numbers 22:18](#)).

Not only was a prophet one who felt the constraint to relate faithfully the command of the Lord, but he was indeed the very mouthpiece of God to men. The Lord said to Moses, “**See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet**” ([Exodus 7:1](#)). In accordance with that, Aaron spoke “**all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses**” ([Exodus 4:30](#)).

In [Deuteronomy 18:18](#) God describes a prophet in these words: “**I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**” Moses was told, “**You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it**” ([Deuteronomy 4:2](#)).

Micaiah the prophet confirmed the same: “**As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak**” ([1 Kings 22:14](#)). The nature of the prophetic ministry, then, was



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to be the voice of God to men. And that voice had to be heeded; the prophets demanded that the nation give obedience to their message as to God Himself (cf. [Isaiah 8:5](#); [Jeremiah 3:6](#); [Ezekiel 21:1](#); [Amos 3:1](#)).

[Isaiah 8:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ Again the LORD spoke to me further, saying,

[Jeremiah 3:6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.

[Ezekiel 21:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

[Amos 3:1 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:

Thus, the Old Testament concept of a prophet was one who served as a mouthpiece of God. Aaron was to be a "prophet" for Moses, and Moses was told, "He shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him" ([Exodus 4:16](#)). Edward J. Young summarizes well the nature of the Old Testament prophet when he writes, "We conclude, then, that upon the basis of the Old Testament usage, the *nabhi* was a speaker who declared the word that God had given him."⁹

THE WHOLE OLD TESTAMENT IS A "PROPHETIC UTTERANCE"

The prophets were the voice of God not only in what they *said* but in what they *wrote* as well. Moses was commanded, "Write down these words" ([Exodus 34:27](#)). The Lord ordered Jeremiah to "take again another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll" ([Jeremiah 36:28](#)). Isaiah testified that the Lord said to him: "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it" ([Isaiah 8:1](#)).

And again God told him: "Go, write it on a tablet before them and inscribe it on a scroll, that it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever" ([Isaiah 30:8](#)).

A similar command was given to Habakkuk: "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run" ([Habakkuk 2:2](#)). There can be little doubt, then, that the prophets did write, and what they wrote was the Word of God just as much as what they spoke was the Word of God. That being the case, it remains only to discover whether the Old Testament was the work of the prophets in order to establish it, in its entirety, as the Word of God.

Besides the fact that the New Testament repeatedly refers to all of the Old Testament as Law and Prophets (cf. [Luke 16:31](#); [Luke 24:27](#)), there are several lines of evidence within the Old Testament that all of the books were written by prophets (whether recognized as such by their office or only by their spiritual gift).



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Luke 16:31 (NASB)

³¹ "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Luke 24:27 (NASB)

²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

1. Moses was a prophet ([Deuteronomy 34:10](#)). Moreover, he was a mediator and lawgiver with whom God spoke “face to face” ([Exodus 33:11](#)) and “mouth to mouth” ([Numbers 12:8](#)). Hence, his books are prophetic beyond question.
2. All of the second division of the Old Testament known as Prophets, and divided into “former” and “latter” prophets in the Hebrew Bible, is considered to be written by prophets, as the name of the section suggests (cf. [Zechariah 7:7, 12](#); [Nehemiah 9:30](#)).
3. Even if it be argued that the Hebrew canon was originally arranged into three sections—the Law, Prophets, and Writings—the books classed as Writings were prophetic utterances written by men **who did not hold the prophetic office but who possessed a prophetic gift.**¹⁰

In fact, Daniel, whose book is found in the Writings, is called by Jesus “Daniel the prophet” ([Matthew 24:15](#)).

Solomon, whose books appear among the Writings, was a prophet by definition, because he had visions from the Lord ([Numbers 12:6](#); cf. [1 Kings 11:9](#)). David, who wrote many of the psalms, is called a prophet in [Acts 2:30](#). David’s testimony of himself was: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me” ([2 Samuel 23:2](#); cf. [1 Chronicles 28:19](#)). If there is a distinction between the prophetic office and the prophetic gift, it in no way affects the prophetic function, which was possessed by all of the Old Testament writers.

THE WHOLE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE WORD OF GOD

To summarize the foregoing discussion, it may be contended that:

All “prophetic utterances” are the Word of God.

All the Old Testament Scriptures are “prophetic utterances.”

Therefore, all the Old Testament is the Word of God.

In other words, if the whole Old Testament is a prophetic writing, as it claims to be and the New Testament says it is (cf. [2 Peter 1:20](#)), and if all “prophetic writing” comes from God, then it follows that the whole Old Testament is the Word of God.



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2 Peter 1:20 (NASB)

²⁰ “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An examination of each book of the Old Testament reveals either a direct or an indirect claim to be the Word of God. The claims in the historical and poetical books are usually indirect because **they are not primarily a record of what God said to Israel but what He did in Israel's national life (History) and in their individual lives (Poetry).**

Further, the Old Testament was originally divided into two sections: the Law and the Prophets. Each of those sections was considered a unit; hence, the claim that holds for the section as a whole holds for every book in that section. On that basis, all of the books, Law and Prophets, are seen to claim divine authority.

Finally, the Old Testament as a whole claims to be a “**prophetic utterance,**” even the books that were sometimes classified as “**Writings.**” Because a “**prophetic utterance**” means an utterance of the Word of God, it follows that the Old Testament as a whole lays claim to be the divinely inspired Word of God, since the whole claims to be a prophetic utterance.

Notes

1. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:96.
2. It is interesting to note that the New Testament quotes from this section using the formula “**It is written.**” Cf. 1 Cor. 3:9, as it cites Job 5:13.
3. Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 355.
4. The book of Esther does not have an explicit claim to inspiration and its author is unknown. Any book of undetermined authorship raises questions about its authority. Only those who originally recognized it as part of the canon were in a position to know its prophetic source. See the discussion on Esther and these other Old Testament books of questioned authority in chap. 15.
5. See discussion in chaps. 14 and 15.
6. William Evans, *The Greatest Doctrines of the Bible*, p. 203, cites some 3,808 instances.
7. See R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, pp. 169.
8. It is variously derived from root words meaning (1) to bubble forth, (2) to speak, (3) to announce, (4) ecstatic behavior, (5) a speaker, (6) a called one. See Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, pp. 56–57.
9. Ibid., p. 60.
10. Edward J. Young and Merrill F. Unger follow William H. Green, *A General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon*, p. 85, in making this distinction as the basis for classification of the third section of the Old Testament, namely, the Writings.