

**38 Old Testament "prophets" by era (NRSV)**

Patriarchal (5) Abraham ~ Moses (1300 BC) ~ Aaron ~ Miriam ~ Balaam

Promised Land (2) Deborah (1106 BC) ~ Samuel (1050 BC)

Kingdoms Era (15) Gad ~ Nathan (970-930 BC) ~ Ahijah ~ Elijah (885 BC) ~ Elisha (852 BC) ~ Jehu ~ Huldah ~ Shemaiah ~ Iddo ~ Oded ~ Micaiah ~ Hanani ~ Jahaziel ~ Eliezer ~ Urijah

Writing Prophets (16) [= chapters in each book]

\* Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel

- Minor Prophets (*The 12 Prophets*) - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi

8th Century (pre Fall of Israel the Northern Kingdom)

Isaiah\* [66] 739 BC to So & No Kingdoms (w/Hosea)  
Hosea [14] "Adultery & Faithful Love" pre 722 BC to No. Kingdom  
Joel [3] "The Day of the Lord" 840 BC or post exile?  
Amos [9] Shepherd to Prophet "Cry for Justice" 755 BC to 7 Kngdms  
Obadiah [1] "Nation's Pride & Fall" in 840 BC or 590 BC? to Edom  
Jonah [4] "God's Mercy" 740 BC (?) to Nineveh of Assyria  
Micah [7] "Sin & Redeeming Shepherd" 735 BC to No & So (w/Isaiah)

7th Century (after the fall of No. Kingdom; pre Judah So. Kingdom fall)

Zephaniah [3] Young prophet "Coming Judgment" 642 BC to Judah  
Jeremiah\* [52] Young prophet 629-587 BC to Judah  
Nahum [3] 711 BC (pre 612 BC) to Nineveh of Assyria (like Jonah)  
Habakkuk [3] 609-605 BC (or earlier) to Judah

Babylonian Exile (586 BC)

Ezekiel\* [48] Priest turned Prophet 595 BC on...  
Daniel\* [12] in Babylon

After the Remnant Return to Jerusalem

{*Gov. Zerubbabel 537 BC, Ezra 458 BC, Nehemiah 445 BC, Esther*}  
Haggai [2] "Restore Temple" 520 BC to Judah (Persia) (w/Zechariah)  
Zechariah [14] "Visions & Restoration" 520 BC to Judah (w/Haggai)

{*Temple & Rituals Restored*}

Malachi [4] "Repent & Return" 430 BC to Israel in 2nd Temple era

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*"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command."* Deuteronomy 18:18

*Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?" Then one of the servants of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah, is here."* II Kings 3:11

*"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."* I Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations"* Jeremiah 1:5

*"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* 2 Peter 1:21

*"As is it written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, Who will prepare Your way before you."* Mark 1:2

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### **Old Testament Prophets** (66) by online-bible.org (**Bold** listed above)

Ancient Prophets (9) Adam, Seth, Enosh, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Eber, Melchizedek

Patriarchal Prophets (15) **Abraham**, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Caleb, Hur, Jethro, **Moses**, **Aaron**, **Miriam**, **Balaam**, Assir, Joshua, Phinehas, Boaz

Judge Prophets (5) Eli, **Deborah**, Gideon, Elkanah, **Samuel**

King's Prophets (6) **Nathan**, **Gad**, Ahimelech, Abiathar, **Shemaiah**, **Iddo**

Prophets of Israel (7) **Ahijah**, **Micaiah**, **Hosea**, **Amos**, **Jonah**, **Elijah**, **Elisha**

Prophets of Judah (16) **Oded** (both kingdoms), **Hanani**, **Jehu**, **Jahaziel**, **Eliezer**, **Obadiah**, **Joel**, **Isaiah** (both Kingdoms), **Micah** (both Kingdoms), **Nahum**, **Huldah**, Maaseiah, **Jeremiah**, **Zephaniah**, **Habakkuk**, **Urijah**

Captivity Prophets (3) **Daniel**, **Ezekiel**, Mordecai

Prophets of the Return (5) Ezra, **Haggai**, **Malachi**, Nehemiah, **Zechariah**

## The Chronology of Old Testament Prophets

<http://www.biblechronologytimeline.com/biblechronologytimeline7.html>

The 16 prophets—Isaiah to Malachi—whose writings have come down to us lived during four centuries, from about 800 to 400 B.C. Most of them left chronological data by which the duration of their ministry can be determined, at least approximately. For two of them (Joel and Obadiah), however, no conclusive evidence as to the time of their work exists, and scholars differ widely in their views concerning this matter.

The accompanying chart enables the reader to study these prophets in their historical setting. Many messages and prophecies can be understood correctly only if seen against the background of the time in which the prophets ministered and in the light of the events that happened during their lives.

Inasmuch as it is possible to date the kings of Judah and Israel, especially the later ones, with comparatively high accuracy, the various reigns during which these sixteen prophets ministered have been entered in this chart according to the tentative chronology used in this commentary. The kings of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, whose dates for this period are well established, are shown in a separate column. Most of them are mentioned in the Bible, in either the prophetic or the historical books. One column provides a list of certain special events of this period—some of a political nature, concerning the nations surrounding Israel and Judah, others of a domestic nature. This chart shows only those events that are mentioned in the Bible and that are of importance to an understanding of the prophetic messages.

The following brief summaries contain the evidence on which the various prophets have been entered in the chronological positions in which they are found in the chart.

### ISAIAH

Isaiah was the great forerunner of the writers. This fact is recognized by the various New Testament writers, who quoted Isaiah more than 90 times. Isaiah was a prophet of the southern kingdom, living in a critical period of his nation. He played an important role during two momentous periods: (1) under Ahaz, during the war between Syria and Israel (chapters 7-11), and (2) under Hezekiah, during a siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (chapters 36; 37). Encouraging Hezekiah and the people through his own trust in God, he was instrumental in saving Jerusalem.

His early ministry seems to have coincided with the last years of King Uzziah's reign (see Introduction to Isaiah), but his official call to the office of a prophet came in 740/39, the last year of King Uzziah (chapter 6:1). Continuing faithfully under the following three kings, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (chapter 1:1), he seems to have been fiercely hated by Manasseh, Hezekiah's wicked son. When Manasseh came to the throne as sole ruler upon his father's death, approximately in 686, he lost little time in removing the faithful seer. According to Jewish tradition Isaiah was sawn asunder. It is possible that Hebrews 11:37 refers to this event. Isaiah's whole ministry from Uzziah to Manasseh must therefore have lasted more than half a century.

### JEREMIAH

The life story of Jeremiah is better known than that of any other prophet. He belonged to a family of priests whose home town was Anathoth. Jeremiah had been chosen by God for his office before birth (chapter 1:5), and was called to be a prophet at a tender age (chapter 1:6, 7). Although the Hebrew term *na'ar*, "youth," or "child," by which the prophet

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designates himself verse (6), does not give an indication of Jeremiah's exact age at the time of his call, the context of the passage in which this word appears seems to favor the interpretation that he was still very young, perhaps less than twenty. This call came to him in the 13th year of King Josiah (chapters 1:2; 25:3), about 627. Josiah was also still a young king, having reached the age of but 21 years at that time.

Living in a crisis period of his nation, Jeremiah was called to proclaim many messages of reproof and solemn predictions of doom over his people for their disobedience. During the reign of Jehoiakim he nearly lost his life for his bold messages, and hence went into hiding (chapter 36:26). During the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's last king, Jeremiah was thrown into prison, being considered a traitor to his country (chapter 37:11-16) because he advised his people to surrender to the Babylonians. After Jerusalem's fall in 586, Nebuchadnezzar allowed Jeremiah to stay with the remnant of his people who were left in the country (chapter 40:1-6). After the murder of Gedaliah, the new governor of Judea, the Jews of Mizpah, fearing the revenge of Nebuchadnezzar, went to Egypt and took with them Jeremiah as well as his secretary Baruch (chapter 43:6).

In Egypt, Jeremiah raised his voice against the idolatries the Jews practiced there (chapters 43; 44). He probably died in the Nile country. A Jewish legend claims that he was stoned to death by his people. If chapter 52, a historical appendix, was written by the prophet, he must have lived until 561, when Jehoiachin was released from prison by King Evil-Merodach of Babylon (see chapter 52:31). In this case, he was an octogenarian. Those who think that chapter 52 was added as an inspired postscript by Jeremiah's secretary or one of his disciples, believe that he died some 20 years earlier, about 580 B.C. The chart allows both ideas, indicating his possible ministry during the two decades preceding 560 B.C. by means of a broken line.

### **EZEKIEL**

The prophet Ezekiel, a priest, was one of the 10,000 Jews taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., when King Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon. In the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 593/92, Ezekiel had his first vision by "the river Chebar," a canal near the famous city of Nippur in lower Babylonia (chapter 1:1-3). Enigmatic is his statement that this 5th year of captivity was also the "thirtieth year." It is believed that the prophet refers either to his own age or to that year as the 30th year reckoned from the reform which took place during the 18th year of Josiah.

Several of the prophet's messages are dated exactly, and the last of these dated prophetic messages was received in the 27th year of Ezekiel's captivity (chapter 29:17), 571/70. This leaves Ezekiel with a ministry of at least 22 years, from 593/92 to 571/70. However, it is possible that some of his undated prophecies were given at a later time. Hence the year 571/70 must not be considered as necessarily marking the end of his ministry.

### **DANIEL**

Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C., during the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (see on chapter 1:1). But it was not until his 3rd year in captivity, the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar, that young Daniel gave the first proofs of his prophetic calling (chapters 1:5, 17; 2:1, 19). Hence, the year 603 can be considered as the beginning of Daniel's ministry as a prophet.

For some time he held a high position in Nebuchadnezzar's government (chapter 2:48), and became a trusted counselor of the great king. Under Nebuchadnezzar's successors Daniel's service seems not to have been desired. However, he is again found playing a role on the night of Babylon's fall, as interpreter of the mysterious handwriting on the wall (chapter 5). Shortly after this event he once more rose to a high position of honor and responsibility in the newly formed Persian Empire (chapter 6).

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All the visions of Daniel recorded in chapters 7-12 were received during the last years of his life, the first one (chapter 7) in Belshazzar's 1st year (552 or possibly later), and the last one (chapters 10-12) in the 3rd year of Cyrus, 536/35 B.C. It was probably at this time, when Daniel was nearly 90 years of age, that he was commanded to conclude his book and seal it up (chapter 12:4, 13). For these reasons Daniel's extended prophetic ministry can be dated approximately from 603 to 535 B.C.

### HOSEA

The prophet Hosea was a citizen of the northern kingdom of Israel, whose ruler, Jeroboam II, is called by the prophet, "our king" (chapters 1:1; 7:5). A comparison between some of his prophecies and those of Amos indicates that Hosea was a younger contemporary of Amos (cf. Hosea. 4:3 with Amos 8:8; Hosea 4:15 with Amos 5:5; and Hosea 8:14 with Amos 2:5). Having begun his ministry in the time of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (chapter 1:1), Hosea continued until the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah (chapter 1:1). However, all his messages were addressed to the northern nation.

The book makes no reference to the fall of Samaria, which took place in 723/22 B.C., and it can therefore be concluded that the prophet's last message was given prior to Samaria's destruction. For these reasons his ministry can be dated from about 755 (or earlier) to about 725 B.C.

### JOEL

Nothing is known of the prophet Joel beyond the fact that he was the son of Pethuel (chapter 1:1). His work is characterized by skill in the use of language, a well-balanced syntax, and a lively and impressive poetry. Yet the book contains no clear indication of the time in which the prophet lived. It is impossible to date the devastating plague of locusts that the prophet so vividly describes and compares with the terrors of the coming day of judgment. Scholars differ widely in their views concerning the time of Joel's ministry. The older generation place him in the 9th century B.C., whereas most commentators are now inclined to assign him either to the time of King Josiah or to the postexilic period. Since no conclusive evidence for any of these three views exists, all are presented here:

1. *The 9th-century view.* The great empires of Assyria and Babylonia do not appear within the horizon of the prophet. Hence, he seems to have labored at a time before Assyria played a role in Palestinian affairs. Since the hostile acts of the heathen peoples committed against Judah (chapter 3:4 ff.) seem to refer to those recorded in 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-10, 16, while nothing points to the troubles caused by Hazael, as narrated in 2 Kings 12:17, 18 and 2 Chronicles 24:23, 24, it has been concluded that Joel gave his messages during the time lying between these two events. It is thought, furthermore, that his ministry fell in the years when the high priest Jehoiada acted as regent for the child king Joash (2 Kings 11:17 to 12:2), which fact would explain why the king is not mentioned anywhere in the book, while at the same time the Temple service flourished.

2. *The 7th-century view.* This view holds that Joel's ministry seems to fit into the early years of Josiah, when Assyrian power was nearing its end and Babylon was still a weak kingdom. Hence no reference to these two kingdoms was made by the prophet. Since Josiah came to the throne as a child, he must have lived under a regent, which explains why no king is mentioned by Joel. Furthermore, the fact that the people of Tyre and Sidon do not appear as hostile nations of Judah until the last decades of its history, while they are mentioned by Joel as Judah's enemies, seems also to point to a late date for the prophet's ministry. To this can be added the mention of Greeks (chapter 3:6), who hardly played a role in Near Eastern history earlier than the 7th century. For these reasons the 7th-century date for Joel has been adopted in this commentary, although there is no conclusive proof that this choice is correct.

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3. *The post-exilic view.* The absence of any reference to a king of Judah or to Assyria or Babylon, the reference to the hostility of Tyre and Sidon, and the mention of Greeks have been taken by some commentators as evidence for a postexilic date for Joel. However, there is also no reference made to Persia, which would be expected if the book was of so late a date. This fact weakens the arguments for such a late date.

### **AMOS**

Amos presents himself to his readers as a “herdsman” and a “gatherer of sycamore fruit” (chapters 1:1; 7:14). In the introduction to his book he declares that he worked under the kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. Since only these two kings are mentioned, Amos seems to have prophesied during the time when both kings were sole rulers in their respective kingdoms. Uzziah was sole king over Judah from 767 to 750, and Jeroboam over Israel from 782 to 753. The ministry of Amos may therefore have fallen in the years 767-753 B.C. A closer dating is impossible in spite of the statement that his first divine message came to him “two years before the earthquake” (chapter 1:1), because the date of this event is unknown. However, that earthquake must have been very severe, for the memory of it was still fresh in the minds of people who lived 250 years later, as Zechariah 14:5 shows.

The prophet was a citizen of Judah, but delivered messages to the kingdom of Israel as well. Several of his messages were against various foreign nations. He went to Bethel, a sanctuary city of the northern kingdom, to deliver prophecies of warning, reproof, and doom to Israel.

### **OBADIAH**

The short book of Obadiah, consisting of only 21 verses, is not dated and its chronological setting is uncertain. Obadiah’s prophecy, directed against Edom, presupposes that a looting of Jerusalem and a carrying away of many Jews into captivity had recently taken place. Some believe that the prophet refers to the conquest of Jerusalem at the time of King Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-10, 16, 17) in the 9th century; others believe that the prophet is speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. That some of the words he uses are also found in Jeremiah (Obadiah 1, 3, 4; cf. Jeremiah 49:14, 16), and Joel (Obadiah 15, 17; cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 32) can hardly serve as evidence for either a late or an early date. The late date is taken here, without prejudice toward an early one.

### **JONAH**

The prophet Jonah was a Galilean from Gath-hepher. His book contains no direct to establish the time of his mission to Nineveh. However, 2 Kings 14:25 states that Jonah also pronounced a prophecy concerning the expansion of Israel that was fulfilled by Jeroboam II. This prophecy must have been pronounced either before Jeroboam came to the throne (approximately 793 B.C.) or during the early years of his reign. Hence, Jonah was probably the earliest of the prophets under discussion.

So early a date for Jonah’s ministry—about 790 B.C.—fits well into Assyrian history. The only period in which the mission of Jonah to Nineveh, with its results, seems to fit is the reign of Adad-nirari III (810–782). For a short time during his reign Assyria turned from its polytheistic religion to a kind of monotheistic Nabu worship.

### **MICAH**

Micah was a prophet from Moresheth-gath (1:1, 14), probably *Tell ej-Judeideh* in southwestern Judah. He should not be confused with Micaiah, the son of Imlah, a prophet of Israel in Ahab’s time (9th century B.C.). Earlier commentators attempted to equate the two men, because of the use of similar expressions in their utterances (Micah 1:2; cf. 1 Kings

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22:28). However, the chronological data given by Micah are against such an identification and show that a century or more lies between the two men. Micah states that his ministry fell in the time of the kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (chapter 1:1). Since Jotham's sole reign began after the death of his father Uzziah in 740/39, the initial date for Micah's prophetic ministry should probably be placed after that date. He was younger contemporary of Isaiah, to whose vocabulary and terminology his prophecies show great similarity (Micah 4:1-4; cf. Isaiah 2:2-4). Jeremiah (26:18), quoting Micah (3:12), testifies that Micah ministered during Hezekiah's time. All this leads to the conclusion that Micah prophesied from about 740 to about 700 B.C.

### **NAHUM**

Nahum is called the Elkoshite (chapter 1:1), but Elkosh is unknown as a place name, although commentators have tried to identify it with *Elkesi* in northern Galilee, *Alkush* near Mosul, and a town near Eleutheropolis in Judah. It is certain, however, that he lived and labored in the southern kingdom, and that his main prophecy dealt with Assyria in general and Nineveh in particular. No chronological data are given, but the prophet speaks of the fall of No (chapter 3:8) as an event of the past. This Upper Egyptian capital city, better known by its Greek name Thebes, was destroyed by King Ashurbanipal in 663 B.C., a date that provides the upper time limit of Nahum's prophecy. On the other hand, the destruction of Nineveh is described as an event still future (chapter 3:7). The Assyrian capital city of Nineveh was captured and destroyed by the combined forces of Media and Babylonia in 612 B.C., which is, accordingly, the latest possible date for Nahum. The prophet's vivid description of the catastrophe that had befallen Thebes leaves the impression that the event was still fresh in the memory of the people, whereas Assyria's power, although waning, was not yet near its end. Hence, 640 B.C., about midway between the two limits, marked by the destruction of Thebes and the fall of Nineveh, would seem to be a reasonable conjectural date for Nahum's prophetic ministry.

### **HABAKKUK**

Nothing is known concerning the prophet Habakkuk beyond his name. It is possible that he was a Temple singer, since his third chapter is dedicated to the "chief singer on my stringed instruments" (chapter 3:19). Although no chronological data are found in the book, certain statements permit a comparatively exact dating of Habakkuk's prophecies. The Temple is mentioned as still existing (chapter 2:20), which shows that the book was written before Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Furthermore, the rise of the Chaldeans and their invasion of the West is predicted, but this seemed at that time completely incredible (chapter 1:5-7). This situation fits best the time prior to the rise of the Chaldean Empire under Nabopolassar, who began to reign in 626/25 B.C., and who, with the Medes, was responsible for the destruction of Assyria. A date, possibly about 630 B.C., but before the Chaldeans had become a power of some importance, would seem most appropriate for the period of Habakkuk's prophetic activity.

**ZEPHANIAH**

The prophet Zephaniah traces his genealogy back to an important personage by the name of Hezekiah, probably King Hezekiah (the names are the same in Hebrew) of Judah. He states that he ministered under King Josiah (chapter 1:1), who reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. Nineveh's destruction, which came in 612, is referred to as a future event, indicating that Zephaniah's work preceded this date. Furthermore, the repeated mention of Judah's wickedness, described as enormous in his day (see chapters 1:4-6, 8, 9, 12; 3:1-3, 7), points to the time before Josiah's reform, which began in 623/22. These observations seem to place Zephaniah in the early years of Josiah's reign, perhaps about 630 B.C., as a contemporary of Habakkuk.

### **HAGGAI**

Haggai's courageous ministry was responsible for the resumption of the rebuilding of the Temple in the time of Darius I, after the work had ceased for some time (Ezra 4:24; 5:1). The book of Haggai contains four addresses, each bearing a precise date giving the day, month, and year of Darius' reign. The consecutive order of the book of Haggai would indicate that his whole recorded ministry lasted not longer than 31/2 months, beginning (chapter 1:1) on August 29, 520 B.C., and extending, in his last two recorded speeches (chapter 2:10, 20), to December 18, 520. The work of no other prophet can be dated so definitely as that of Haggai.

### **ZECHARIAH**

Zechariah probably belonged to a priestly family (chapter 1:1; cf. Nehemiah 12:12, 16). His call came to him sometime in October/November, 520 B.C., in the same year as Haggai's first appearance (chapter 1:1). Several prophecies followed a few months later (Zechariah 1:7 to 6:15). Then came a pause in his activity of almost two years, at the end of which Zechariah received another divine message, on December 6, 518 (chapter 7:1), recorded in chapters 7 and 8. The remaining messages and prophecies, found in chapters 9-14, are not dated, a fact that prevents us from fixing the duration of the prophet's activity. While it is thus known that he began his work in 520 and continued until 518 B.C., the end of his prophetic ministry must be left open. The close of his ministry is tentatively set by some scholars at 510. It is possible that he worked much longer, as part of chapters 9-14 may have been given at a much later time.

### **MALACHI**

It is not known whether Malachi is the name of the author or simply the title of an otherwise anonymous author, since Malachi means "my messenger." If it is the latter, his is the only anonymous work among the prophetic books of the Old Testament. However, there is no valid reason why Malachi should not be considered a proper name.

Not only is Malachi last in the sequential order of the prophets; it is also the last prophetic book produced in pre-Christian times. Its messages show that it was written after the time of the kingdom of Judah, when a governor ruled over the country (chapter 1:8), a fact that points to the Persian period. The Temple was apparently rebuilt, and sacrifices were regularly offered at the time of the prophet's activity (chapter 1:7-10). The various abuses rebuked by Malachi are mostly the same as those Nehemiah found when he returned to Jerusalem for his second term of governorship (Malachi 3:8, 9; cf. Nehemiah 13:10-12; Malachi 2:11-16; cf. Nehemiah 13:23-27).

Unfortunately, Nehemiah's second term as governor cannot be dated, which fact makes it also somewhat difficult to date Malachi. Nehemiah's first term lasted from 444 to 432 B.C. (chapter 5:14), after which he was recalled to Persia. There, he spent an unknown number of years before his return to Judea and his discovery of the abuses described in chapter 13. These were remedied by the vigorous actions of the governor. This leads us to conclude that Malachi's work may have followed Nehemiah's first term as governor, but preceded his return to Jerusalem from the Persian capital. Accordingly, the book can probably be dated about 425 B.C.