

Patterns of Prophetic Speech Merged in Final Text

An Example from Isaiah 1 where one pattern appears next to another.

Isaiah 1:19-26

19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

21 How the faithful city has become a whore! She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her-- but now murderers! 22 Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water. 23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them. 24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes! 25 I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.

26 And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. [NRSV]

Call for Repentance

Isaiah 1:19-20

19 **If** you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 **but if** you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Announcement of Judgment

Isaiah 1:21- 25

21 How the faithful city has become a whore! She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her-- but now murderers! 22 Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water. 23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them. 24 **Therefore** says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes! 25 I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.

Announcement of Hope

Isaiah 1:26

26 And I **will** restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Cf. the switch from the end of Isaiah 42 to the beginning of 43 and the end of 43 to the beginning of 44.

A prophet might switch from one type of speech to another because of audience is varied. A segment of the audience might be arrogantly defying the needs of the vulnerable and another segment might be the vulnerable who fear abandonment and are in deep despair. The prophetic word varies to truthfully address the context(s) of hearers.

In addition, the written words of the prophets are remembered and reasserted in later (diverse) historical context. For example, in the midst of persecution a word of hope needs to be heard but a summons to repentance may be more truthful in a period of prosperity.