

Lord: Focused Prophetic Speech Forms

Old Testament prophets used a number of speech forms, or formulaic expressions, when they revealed God’s word to their audiences. These speech forms, indicative of prophetic authority and prerogative, are largely unique to the prophets and their revelatory world. That is to say, such expressions as “Thus saith the lord,” “Hearken to the word of the lord,” and “As the lord liveth” are not common to the worlds of government, law, commerce, and trade, or to the everyday speech of people. Rather, these expressions are used only by prophets and indicate their authority to speak in the lord’s name. These expressions also demonstrate that

prophetic speech forms focus on the lord—nearly all of them include the lord’s divine name; and those that do not include the lord’s divine name are revealed by the lord to His mouthpiece, the prophets.⁴⁰

The chart features six prominent prophetic speech forms: the messenger formula, the proclamation formula, the oath formula, the woe oracle, the announcement formula, and the revelation formula. For each of the six speech forms, the chart includes (1) the name of the form, (2) the wording of the form, and (3) the purpose of the form.

Name of Form	Form	Purpose
Messenger Formula	“Thus saith the lord”	Indicates the origin and authority of the revelation that God gives to the prophets.
Proclamation Formula	“Hearken to the word of the lord” (or similar)	An emphatic summons for people to hear the word of the lord as it is revealed through the prophets.
Oath Formula	“As the lord liveth”	An oath based on the lord’s existence; the oath gives power to the prophets’ message.
Woe Oracle	“Woe”	A prophecy or statement of anguish, misery, and judgment uttered to the wicked; the characteristic woe oracle consists of the accusation, the addressee, the intent of the accusation, and the promise of judgment.

Name of Form	Form	Purpose
Announcement Formula	"I say unto you"	Adds authority and emphasis to the revelation from God to the prophets.
Revelation Formula	"The word of the lord came to me, saying" or "The voice of the lord came unto him"	Indicates the origin and authority of the revelation that God gives to the prophets.