

the basic Jewish character of the work. Many of the traditions, such as that of Isaiah's death at the hands of Manasseh, find echoes in Jewish apocryphal and rabbinic literature (see also Martyrdom of *Isaiah).

The primary text is preserved in Greek. The Greek version falls into four recensions, two attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus (hence the title "Pseudo-Epiphanius" sometimes given to this work), one to Dorotheus, and one anonymous. The anonymous recension is to be found in Codex Morchalianus (Codex Q of the Septuagint). It is generally considered to be the oldest extant form of the work. Certain of the other recensions, especially that attributed to Dorotheus, are much expanded, containing the lives of various New Testament figures, apostles, and so forth. The "Lives of the Prophets" is also known in a number of the Oriental Churches in translation. There are various Syriac forms of the book which all appear to be developments of a single original translation from Greek. Although it is attributed to Epiphanius, Nestle and Schermann were of the opinion that the form of the Syriac "Lives" contained in the Syrohexaplar Code represents a different translation, but this is denied by Torrey. The "Lives" are also extant in Armenian, in a number of forms, but little is known of this version. Most scholars consider the Greek to be original, although Torrey posited a Hebrew original for the book.

The recension of Q contains the lives of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, followed by the lives of the Twelve Minor Prophets. These are followed by the lives of Nathan, Ahijah, Joed (identified with the anonymous prophet who is mentioned in I Kings 13), Azariah (son of Oded – II Chron. 15:1 ff.), Zechariah b. Jehoiada (II Chron. 24:20–22; cf. Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51), Elijah, and Elisha. Some of these "Lives" are quite extensive, containing many traditions of extra-biblical character touching on the circumstances of birth, acts, or death of the prophet concerned. Others seem to be limited to the very barest of details of place of birth and death. The traditions contained in these brief narratives are of considerable interest. Some of them are found in other sources, others are extant only in the "Lives." It is plausible that the "Lives" preserve references to lost apocryphal documents or at least traditions in common with them. The popular character of many of the traditions also adds to their interest. The "Lives" abound with geographical names, not all of which can be identified.

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[Michael E. Stone]

PROPHETS AND PROPHECY. This article is arranged according to the following outline:

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IN THE BIBLE

Classifications

The second division of the Hebrew Canonical Scriptures is today subdivided into "The Former Prophets," i.e., the books

of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (the term is taken from Zech. 1:4, where it has a different sense), and “The Latter Prophets,” i.e., the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets.

This division is basically a chronological one. A preferable nomenclature would be the pre-classical, or popular, prophets and the classical, or literary, prophets. The latter terminology is reserved for those prophets whose oracles were preserved in writings either by themselves, their disciples, or their scribes (e.g., Jer. 36:4, 18). The primary literary remains of the pre-classical, prophets, in contrast, are the stories and accounts of their lives transmitted at first, no doubt, orally by followers and admirers. Though several third-person biographical accounts of the classical prophets have also been preserved in their respective books (e.g., Isa. 36–39; Jer. 26 ff.; Amos 7:10–17), these stories are secondary to their prophetic pronouncements. The terminological division serves as a formal external criterion for distinguishing between the two.

Nature of Prophecy

The institution of prophecy is founded on the basic premise that God does not abandon humans to their own devices, but provides them with divine guidance. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting divine messages. In biblical theory, the prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, to convey the work of God to his people regardless of whether or not they wish to hear it (Ezek. 3:11). A prophet does not elect to prophesy, nor does he become a prophet by dint of a native or an acquired faculty on his part. Prophecy is not a science to be learned or mastered. There is no striving to be one with God, no *unio mystica*, no indwelling of God within the spirit of the prophet through rapture, trances, or even spiritual contemplation. The prophet is selected by God and is irresistibly compelled to deliver His message and impart His will, even if he personally disagrees with it. He is to some extent set apart from his fellowmen and is destined to bear the responsibility and burden of being chosen. The prophet stands in the presence of God (Jer. 15:1, 19) and is privy to the divine council (Isa. 6; Jer. 23:18; Amos 3:7). He speaks when commanded, but once commanded, must speak (Amos 3:8). Appointed messenger, he must translate his revelatory experience into the idiom of his people. For though the prophet is overwhelmed by the divine word and becomes “word possessed,” he does not lose his identity nor does he suffer from any effacement of personality. The “word of YHWH” and not His “spirit” is the primary source of prophecy. The “spirit” may prepare the prophet to receive divine revelation, may evoke the revelatory state of mind, but the “word” is the revelation itself. What makes him a prophet is not the spirit which envelops or moves him – for this spirit also motivated elders, judges, Nazirites, and kings – but the word that he has heard and which he transmits to others. In fact, the “spirit” or the “hand” of God (see below) is mentioned only occasionally in the writings of the classical prophets (a major exception being Ezekiel), and

then it constitutes the stimulus, not the content, of revelation. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding and may even engage God in a dialogue. The divine constraint does not exclude the prophet’s personal freedom; his individuality is maintained, and the divine message is accented by his own tones.

The prophetic experience is one of confrontation. The prophet is both a recipient and a participant. Armed solely with the divine word and as conveyor of the divine will, he views the world *sub specie dei*. He is concerned not with the being of God but with the designs of God. He has knowledge not about God but from God concerning His actions in history. The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a mediator, often a covenantal mediator, who delivers the word of God to his people in order to shape their future by reforming their present. He is not the ultimate source of the message nor its final addressee; he is the middleman who has the overpowering experience of hearing the divine word, and who must perform the onerous task of bearing it to a usually indifferent if not hostile audience.

The individuality of the prophet is never curtailed. No two prophets prophesied in the same style. Their unique literary styles, whether expressed in prayers, hymns, parables, indictments, sermons, dirges, letters, mocking and drinking songs, or legal pronouncements, bear the mark of independent creativity. The divine message is refracted through the human prism. This is dramatically brought out by the striking image of the prophets’ receiving, literally eating, God’s word, and then bringing it forth (Jer. 15:16 ff.; Ezek. 3:1 ff.). God speaks to the prophet and the prophet speaks out. The divine revelation is delivered by a human agent.

ORIGIN AND FUNCTION. The Hebrew term for a prophet, *navi*, cognate of the Akkadian verb *nabû*, “to call,” i.e., “one who has been called,” is first applied to Abraham. He merits this title because of his role as intercessor (see below): “But you [Abimelech] must restore the man’s wife [Sarah] – since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you – to save your life” (Gen. 20:7). The origin of the office of prophecy, according to Deuteronomy, is rooted in the event at Horeb. Since the people were afraid of receiving God’s word directly in a public theophany (divine manifestation), they requested Moses to “go closer and hear all that our Lord our God tells you... and we will willingly do it” (Deut. 5:24). The account serves as an etiological explanation of why ordinary Israelites do not have direct access to the divine word. This etiology is elaborated in the words of Moses: “I stood between the Lord and you at that time to convey the Lord’s word to you, for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain” (Deut. 5:5; cf. Ex. 19:19). Thus Moses in Deuteronomy serves as the inaugurator of prophecy in Israel (see further Deut. 18:15–19).

The term *navi*, translated in the Septuagint by the Greek word *prophētēs* (“prophet”), which means “one who speaks on behalf of” or “to speak for” “speak before,” is a “forthteller” and

spokesman as well as a “foreteller” and prognosticator. He is God’s mouthpiece (Jer. 15:19); the one to whom God speaks, and who, in turn, speaks forth for God to the people. This, indeed, is the very definition of the prophet’s role found in several places in the Bible. In Exodus 4:15–16 the roles that Moses and Aaron are to assume before Pharaoh are delineated: “You [Moses] shall speak to him [Aaron] and put the words in his mouth... and he shall speak for you to the people. Thus he shall be your spokesman and you shall be an oracle [’*elohim*].” In Exodus 7:1, “The Lord replied to Moses, ‘See I make you an oracle [’*elohim*] to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your spokesman [’*navi*].’” So, too, in Deuteronomy 18:18, “I will raise up a prophet for them among their own people, like yourself. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him.”

DREAMS. Moses, though he is called a *navi*⁷ for the first time only in Deuteronomy (18:15; 34:10), is cast as the prophet par excellence. He is distinguished by God’s revealing Himself directly to him, “mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles,” while to other prophets, God revealed Himself only in visions or dreams (Num. 12:6–8). This distinction between *dreams and prophecy is made because of the universal belief that gods communicate their will to humans through the medium of dreams. Several instances of divine revelation through dreams are attested in the Bible, e.g., the dreams of Abimelech (Gen. 20:3; cf. Gen. 31:10–13); Solomon (1 Kings 3:5–14); Joel (3:1); and Job (33:14–18).

In Deuteronomy 13:2ff. dreams are directly linked to prophecy. It is no wonder, then, that they are considered a possible means for determining the will of God, e.g., 1 Samuel 28:6 (cf. 28:15). Nevertheless, this means for revealing the will of God is frowned upon by some prophets (see Jer. 23:28; 27:9; Zech. 10:2; cf. Jer. 29:8). Dream interpretation existed in ancient Israel as shown by 1 Samuel 28:6, 15 and by the stories of Joseph and Daniel. Even though classical Judaism viewed prophecy as a thing of the past, dream interpretation persisted in rabbinic literature (Bar 101–7).

DIVINATION. In the aforementioned quotations from the books of Jeremiah and Zechariah, the medium of dream communication is coupled with that of divination, a science that was well known and widely spread throughout the entire Ancient Near East. It was a highly specialized skill, which enabled the expert practitioner to peer into the world of the future by fathoming the inexplicable will of the gods. The art of divination was extremely elaborate and encompassed many different fields, including hepatoscopy, extispicy, lecanomancy, libanomancy, necromancy, belomancy, reading entrails, bird omens, astrology, and so on. Against these common practices of Israel’s neighbors the Bible inveighs, “You shall not practice divination or soothsaying” (Lev. 19:26); “Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire of familiar spirits” (Lev. 19:31; cf., also, 20:6, 27). The most comprehensive prohibition is found in Deuteronomy 18:10–11: “Let no one be found among you who consigns his son or daughter to the fire, or who is an

augur, a soothsayer, a diviner, a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or who inquires of the dead.” The prohibition is a clear indication that these practices obtained in Israel (see 1 Sam. 28:7; 11 Kings 23:24; Isa. 2:6; 8:19; 29:4). In keeping with their attribution of practices of which the biblical writers disapprove (e.g., forms of sexual activity) to the Canaanites, the biblical legislator of Deuteronomy 18:10–11 expresses disapproval of some divinatory practices by identifying them with the Canaanites. The Bible is well aware of divination in other nations as well, e.g., Philistines (1 Sam. 6:2; Isa. 2:6); Babylonians (Isa. 47:9, 12–13; Jer. 10:2; 50:35; Ezek. 21:26–28), and Egyptians (Isa. 19:3). It is of interest that the Bible never says that these practices are ineffective. When a prophet vilifies other prophets, he may link them rhetorically with sorcerers (Jer. 27:9).

Biblical opposition to divination is selective. There are several biblical analogues to various forms of divination, e.g., hydromancy or oleomancy (Gen. 44:5, 15), and tree oracles (11 Sam. 5:24). Other biblically sanctioned, legitimate means through which God discloses His will are dreams (1 Sam. 28:6; see above), the *Urim and Thummim placed in the priest’s breastplate (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 14:41; Ezra 2:63), and the *ephod (1 Sam. 23:9ff.). In fact, it seems that prophets may have, at times, fulfilled the same function as the last two. This is suggested by the manner of framing questions in the simple form of alternatives in 1 Samuel 14:37, 42 (cf. Greek version); 23:11, and 1 Kings 22:6. Lots (Num. 26:55–56) and the ordeal (Num. 5) were also occasionally resorted to.

Pre-Classical Prophets

TERMINOLOGY. The pre-classical prophets are referred to by four different names: *hozeh*, *ro’eh*, both meaning “seer”; *’ish ha-’Elohim*, “man of God” (1 Kings 13:1; Elijah, 1 Kings 17:18, 24; 11 Kings 1:10; Elisha, 11 Kings 4:7, 9, 21; 8:4, 8, 11; 13:19; cf. Moses, Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; Ps. 90:1; Ezra 3:2; 1 Chron. 23:14; 11 Chron. 30:16); and *navi*⁷, “prophet.” (The last is also the standard term for the classical prophets.) The seer was one who possessed the ability to reveal that which was concealed from ordinary mortals; he was also able to foretell the future. The term *ro’eh* is first applied to Samuel in 1 Samuel 9, when Saul, in search of his father’s asses, seeks the aid of the seer Samuel and is prepared to pay a fee of one-quarter of a shekel. Samuel, who in this narrative (9:6) is also called *’ish ha-’Elohim*, and who had been previously informed by the Lord of Saul’s arrival, provides the necessary information and, in addition, anoints Saul king of Israel (1 Sam. 10). He then informs Saul of the events which are about to befall him on his way home. It is within this account that the editor of the narrative adds an important historical-chronological footnote (9:9): “He who now is called *navi*⁷ was formerly called *ro’eh*.” The title *ro’eh* is later applied to Samuel in 1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; and 29:29. The only other one clearly designated by this title is Hanani (11 Chron. 16:7, 10; some also attribute it to the priest Zadok (11 Sam. 15:27), but this is highly dubious). In 1 Chronicles 29:29 the three diversely titled proph-

ets of the period of David, Samuel the *ro'eh*, Nathan the *navi*?, and Gad the *hozeh*, are named together.

The title *hozeh* is first applied to Gad in II Samuel 24:11, where he is called the *hozeh* of David (so, also in I Chron. 21:9), where he once again is distinguished by protocol from Nathan the *navi*?. (On the interchangeability of these two terms, however, one may note that Gad is also called *navi*? in I Sam. 22:5, and in II Sam. 24:11 he is accorded the dual title *navi*? and *hozeh*.) According to Chronicles, several other kings kept in their courts men who bore the title *hozeh*: I Chronicles 25:5, Heman is mentioned as a *hozeh* for David; II Chronicles 9:29, Jedo (Iddo) for Jeroboam (in II Chron. 12:15, he is distinguished from Shemaiah the *navi*?); II Chronicles 19:2, Jehu son of Hanani, for Jehoshaphat; II Chronicles 33:18, anonymous men for Manasseh; and II Chronicles 35:15, Jeduthun, Heman, and Asaph for Josiah. Since only the term *hozeh* (and not *ro'eh* or *navi*?) is found when reference is made to a king (*hozeh ha-melekh*), it most probably indicates that the seers who bore this title were officially attached to the court, the so-called court prophets.

The term *hozeh* was at times also connected with *navi*?: positively, in II Samuel 24:11 and II Kings 17:13, and negatively, in Isaiah 29:10 (cf. 28:7); Amos 7:12; and Micah 3:7. That this technical term was not confined to Israel, but was a common West Semitic title for such seers is attested by the inscription of King Zakkur of Hamath (early eighth century B.C.E.), who declares: "I lifted up my hands to Ba'alsha[ma]n and Ba'alshamayn answered me [and spoke] to me through seers [נְבִיִּים] and diviners" (lines 11–12; Pritchard, Texts 3, 655; COS II, 155).

GROUP PROPHECY. The first story in the Bible that makes reference to a seer also mentions bands of prophets. When Saul consults the seer Samuel as to the whereabouts of his father's lost asses, he is told that he is to become "prince over his people Israel" (I Sam. 10:1). To substantiate the authenticity of this prediction, he is informed that upon arriving at Gibeah he will meet "a band of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, and lyre before them." And when he did subsequently meet them, a "spirit of God came mightily upon him and he spoke in ecstasy among them." This encounter became the source for the proverbial question "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Sam. 10:12). I Samuel 19:18–24 relates this proverb to another instance of the contagious nature of group prophecy: Saul sends men to capture David, who was then in the company of Samuel. However, when the men "saw the company of prophets with Samuel standing as head over them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied." This incident is repeated two more times as subsequent messengers are overcome by their contact with the band of prophets. Finally, Saul himself goes to capture David, but the spirit of God comes upon him and he, too, prophesies before Samuel, strips off his clothes, and lies naked all that day and night. Hence, it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

ECSTASY. The ecstatic nature of these groups of prophets is illuminated by Numbers 11:16ff., a narrative whose purpose may have been the legitimation of the phenomenon of ecstatic prophecy. Moses gathered 70 of the people's elders and stationed them around the Tent of Meeting. "Then the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to him. He drew upon the spirit that was on him and put it upon the 70 elders. And when the spirit rested upon them they spoke in ecstasy" (11:25; cf. 11:16–27).

Another instance of group ecstasy is found in I Kings 22, where some 400 prophets rage in ecstasy before kings Jehoshaphat and Ahaz on the eve of their attack against Ramoth-Gilead. This feature of collective dionysiac frenzy is not confined to early Israelite prophets. In I Kings 18 it is recorded that 450 Canaanite prophets (referred to as *navi*) of Baal (and 400 prophets of Asherah, verse 19) "cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with swords and lances till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied in ecstasy until the time of the evening offering..." (18:28–29). Ecstatic seizures, moreover, were not limited to groups; individuals, too, could have them. Thus, the seizure of Elijah: "The hand of the Lord was upon Elijah... and he ran before Ahab[']s chariots" (I Kings 18:46; see also *Ecstasy).

An extra-biblical reference to an ecstatic prophet is attested in the 11th-century tale of the Egyptian Wen-Amon, which takes place in Byblos. It relates that "while he [Zakar-Baal, king of Byblos] was making offering to his gods, the god seized one of his youths and made him possessed. And he said to him, 'Bring up [the] god! Bring the messenger who is carrying him! Amon is the one who sent him out! He is the one who made him come!' And while the possessed [youth] was having his frenzy on this night..." (Pritchard, Texts, 26; COS I, 90). Additional examples of this phenomenon are found among the Hittite *šunianza* and the pre-Islamic *kāhins*.

In such a state one turns, as Saul did, into "another man" (I Sam. 10:6) and may behave madly, as witnessed by Saul's attempt to take the life of David in I Samuel 18:10ff. The irrational and ecstatic behavior of such possessed individuals makes them appear to be madmen. Thus, when Elisha goes to Ramoth-Gilead to anoint Jehu king of Israel, Jehu was asked, "Is all well? Why did this madman come to you?" (II Kings 9:11). A juxtaposition of "madman" and "ecstatic prophet" is found in Jeremiah 29:26; and in Hosea 9:7 the parallel to "prophet" is "madman." (The Hebrew term for madman, *meshugga'* in these verses may very well be a *terminus technicus*, related to the Akkadian *muḥḥūm*, "crazy/frenzy," found in *Mari).

According to the Bible, an ecstatic seizure might be induced by external means, e.g., music. In II Kings 3:15 Elisha requests a musician, "and when the musician played, the power of the Lord came upon him." Specific mention of various musical instruments of the band of prophets is found in I Samuel 10:5 and II Chronicles 35:15. (Dancing in order to induce a prophetic frenzy is mentioned in connection with the Canaanite prophets of Baal, I Kings 18:26.) Of course, prophetic seizure is

conceived of as dependent on God, otherwise it would simply be madness. It is ascribed directly to Him and is caused either by “the hand [*yad*] of YHWH,” “the spirit [*ru’ah*] of YHWH” or “the spirit [*ru’ah*] of God.” The term “the hand of YHWH” to indicate divine inspiration is employed when Elisha resorts to music to help induce this state (II Kings 3:15). It is also found in I Kings 18:46 in the description of Elijah in an ecstatic fit running before Ahab’s chariot (cf. Jer. 15:17). The term “the spirit of God” appears in both I Samuel 10:6, 10 and 19:20, 23, where the spirit “came mightily” upon Saul and his messengers (cf. I Sam. 18:10). In I Kings 22:21–24 the “spirit” is responsible for inducing false prophecy. Azariah son of Oded in II Chronicles 15:1 and Jahaziel son of Zechariah in II Chronicles 20:14 are both inspired by “the spirit of God/YHWH,” which comes upon them (cf. Neh. 9:30).

GROUP LIFE OF PROPHEETS. The pre-classical prophets as a group were distinguished by several prominent personalities, e.g., Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha, and by their number, at times in the hundreds. They were often banded together in groups of “disciples of the prophets” (Heb. *benei ha-nevi’im*) who may or may not have been located at a shrine. Such groups first appear when Saul encounters a “band of prophets” (I Sam. 10:5, 10) and reappear in the Elijah and Elisha cycles. Though in II Kings 4:38 it is stated that they have their meals in common, some of their members are married and have families. Elisha performed a miracle for the widow of one of the members of this order (II Kings 4:1–7). Some of them owned their own houses (I Kings 13:15ff.). One group was found at Beth-El, and another at Jericho, the latter consisting of 50 members (II Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15). Elisha performed miracles on behalf of his coterie at Gilgal (II Kings 4:38–44, where 100 are mentioned), and sent one of them to anoint Jehu (II Kings 9:1ff.). He is also called their master (lit., “father,” II Kings 6:21). Obadiah, the chief steward of Ahab, saved 100 of them, during the siege of Jezebel (I Kings 18:3–4, 13), and kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat consulted some 400 prophets prior to their attack against Ramoth-Gilead (I Kings 22:6). There is also one possible, but far from certain, indication that heredity may have played some role in such circles, for Jehu, the *hozeh*, was a son of Hanani, presumably the same Hanani who was himself a *ro’eh* (II Chron. 16:7; 19:2; I Kings 16:1, 7).

Some of these prophets had attendants in their service. Elisha ministered to Elijah (I Kings 19:21), and Elisha had an attendant (*mesharet*) himself (II Kings 4:43; 6:15). A synonymous term, *na’ar* is also employed for the servants of Elijah (I Kings 18:43; 19:3), of Elisha (II Kings 4:38; 9:4), who was also attended by Gehazi (II Kings 4:12, 25; 5:20; 8:4), and of the attendant of the “man of God” in II Kings 6:15.

ROLE IN SOCIETY. These early prophets played a prominent role in communal affairs and were often sought out and consulted for advice, and asked to deliver oracles in the name of God. In I Kings 14:5, the wife of Jeroboam turns to Ahijah; in I Kings 22:8, Jehoshaphat and Ahab to Micaiah (cf. verses

5ff.); in II Kings 3:4ff., Jehoshaphat and Jeroboam to Elisha; in II Kings 8:8, Ben-Hadad (king of Aram!) to Elisha; and in II Kings 22:13, Josiah to Huldah. Prophets, like ordinary people needed to make a living. There are several references to remunerations for prophetic services, sometimes amounting to as little as one quarter of a shekel (I Sam. 9:8) or ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey (I Kings 14:3); or as much as 40 camels bearing the treasures of Aram (II Kings 8:9). Prophets in Israel, as was true earlier in Mari, delivered their oracles whether asked to or not. In II Kings 1:3ff. Elijah stops Ahaziah’s messengers on their way to inquire of Baal-Zebub; Ahijah the Shilonite tears his new garment when he confronts Jeroboam and announces the division of the United Kingdom (I Kings 11:29ff.); and Shemaiah announces to that same king that he should not go to war against his kinsmen of Israel (I Kings 12:22ff.). In Israel (as in Mari and Assyria) prophets could be female as well as male (Ex. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; II Kings. 22:14; Isa. 8:3; Neh. 6:12).

Politics. The prophets greatly influenced the political destiny of Israel. Samuel chose both Saul (I Sam. 9) and David (I Sam. 16) to be kings over Israel. Nathan castigated David for his conduct with Bath-Sheba and Uriah, her husband (II Sam. 12:7ff.), and later instigated the scheme to have David recognize her son, Solomon, as the next king (I Kings 1:8ff.). Ahijah announced both the selection and the rejection of Jeroboam as king of Israel (I Kings 11:29–39; 14:1–18; 15:29). Another “man of God” declared to Jeroboam the future birth of Josiah, who would destroy the idolatrous priests of the high places (I Kings 13:1–2). Shemaiah, mentioned above, forbade that king to attempt to regain the ten tribes of the North (I Kings 12:22–24; II Chron. 11:2–4). Azariah son of Oded influenced King Asa to institute a reform in Judah and to rely on God (II Chron. 15:1ff.), but the seer Hanani reprimanded Asa for requesting Ben-Hadad’s aid against the blockade set up by Baasha, king of Israel (II Chron. 16:1ff.). Jehu denounced Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, for allying himself with Ahab (II Chron. 19:2–3). (He also chronicled that king’s career, II Chron. 20:34.) In I Kings 22 both Ahab and Jehoshaphat turn to the prophets for an oracle to instruct them whether or not to go to war, and they receive an answer from Micaiah. (“Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I forbear”; the alternative form of this question is reminiscent of the type formerly addressed to the Urim and Thummim.) Elisha foretells the defeat of Moab at the hands of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram (II Kings 3:16ff.). Elisha has one of his colleagues anoint Jehu king of Israel, inspires the latter’s rebellion against Jehoram (II Kings 9), and later (II Kings 13:14ff.) by means of a symbolic act (see below) helps insure the victory of Joash over the Arameans.

Prophets were so important to the crown that several kings had their own court prophets. Both Nathan (II Sam. 7; I Kings 1:8ff.) and Gad (I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 21:9; 29:29; II Chron. 29:25) served with David. Also in David’s court were the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun “who could prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals” (I Chron.

25:1ff.; II Chron. 29:30; 35:15 – the interesting connection between the prophets and musical guilds may be noted). According to the Chronicler, both Nathan and Ahijah wrote accounts of Solomon's career (II Chron. 9:29); Jedo (Iddo) wrote of either Solomon or Jeroboam (II Chron. 9:29); Iddo and Shemaiiah recorded Rehoboam's acts (II Chron. 12:15); and Iddo did the same for Abijah, Rehoboam's successor (II Chron. 13:22).

CLAIRVOYANCE AND PREDICTION. The prophets were both clairvoyant and capable of predicting future events. For example, Ahijah predicted the overthrow of Jeroboam's house and the death of his son (I Kings 14:6ff.); Elijah predicted a drought (I Kings 17:1), and the death of Ahaziah (II Kings 1:4); and Elisha predicted a famine for seven years (II Kings 8:1), and many other events. The prophetic groups in Beth-El and Jericho knew that the Lord would take Elijah away that very day to die (II Kings 2:3ff.). Elisha was aware that Gehazi had accepted a remuneration, for "did I not go with you in spirit when the man turned from his chariots to meet you? Is it a time to receive money...?" (II Kings 5:26). He also knew where the Arameans were encamping (II Kings 6:9) and hears their very words (6:12). Only in exceptional cases does he not foresee events, e.g., when the Shunamite's son died and he declared, "the Lord has hid it from me, and not told me" (II Kings 4:27). Elisha even falls into a trance and foretells the future harm that Hazael, king of Aram, is going to cause Israel (II Kings 8:11ff.). Even if some of these events are *vaticinium ex eventu*, "prophecy after the events," the narratives make it abundantly clear that the people believed in the prophet's ability to foresee the future. Some prophets are also visionaries, e.g., in I Kings 22:19ff., Micaiah sees God enthroned on high; in II Kings 6:17, Elisha sees a mountain full of horses and chariots.

SYMBOLIC ACTS. The prophets did not merely predict the future, however. They often performed symbolic acts, which dramatized and concretized the spoken word. Though the dynamism of the spoken word is considered to have a creative effect in and of itself, it is given further confirmation by this act, which is efficacious and actually plays a role in bringing about the event. Ahijah rends his garment into 12 pieces and bids Jeroboam take ten of them for "thus says the Lord of Israel: 'Behold I will rend this kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes, but he shall take one tribe for my servant David's sake...'" (I Kings 11:29ff.). Elisha, in turn, orders Joash to take bow and arrows, open the window eastward, and shoot: "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! For you shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them" (II Kings 13:14ff.).

WONDERS. These prophets were also wonder workers. The two most famous are Elijah and Elisha. Elijah causes the jar of meal and the cruse of oil not to fail the widow of Zarephath, "according to the word of the Lord which he spoke" (I Kings 17:8ff.); later, he brought her son back to life (17:17–24). He succeeded in bringing fire down from heaven in his famous

contest with the Canaanite prophets (I Kings 18); split the Jordan River by striking it with his mantle (II Kings 2:8); and was swept up on high into heaven by a whirlwind (II Kings 2:11). His successor, Elisha, was no less successful in performing miracles. He, too, split the waters of the Jordan into two with Elijah's mantle (II Kings 2:13–14), made a small jug of oil fill many large vessels (4:1–7), and brought back to life a child who had died (4:8ff.). When the inhabitants of Jericho complained that "the water is bad and the land is unfruitful," he requested a new bowl and salt, which he then threw into the water and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed these waters; henceforth neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.' And so the waters were healed" (II Kings 2:19–22). Once in Gilgal during a famine, the prophetic guild complained that the pottage they were eating had the taste of death. By pouring some flour into the pottage, he effected a miracle and made the food edible (II Kings 4:38–41). Another miracle made a small allotment of food suffice for 100 men, "For thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and leave some'" (4:42–44). His potency for producing miracles continued even after his death. A dead man was reported to have come back to life when his corpse was thrown into Elisha's grave and touched his bones (II Kings 13:20–21). The stories of Elijah and Elisha influenced the New Testament portrayals of Jesus.

These prophets did not always enjoy the security and immunity that their prophetic position should have assured them. Ahab persecuted or permitted Jezebel to persecute Elijah (I Kings 17ff.); Micaiah was put into prison because he foretold the defeat of Israel and the death of Ahab (I Kings 22:27); and Asa, king of Judah, put Hanani, the seer, in the stocks, because the prophet reprimanded him for not relying on God but accepting the help of the king of Aram (II Chron. 16:7–10).

EXTRA-BIBLICAL PROPHECY: MARI. In the pre-biblical period, apostolic prophets, i.e. prophets who declare that a god has sent them, appear in Syria at *Mari in the early second millennium, while late second millennium *Emar texts have the tantalizing *nābû* and *munabbiātu* among their cultic personnel who call upon god. Seers are attested by name outside of Israel (cf. above, the Zakkur inscription). In the neo-Assyrian period favorable oracles are delivered personally to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal by individuals, mostly women, who address Esarhaddon in the name of Ishtar, and Assurbanipal in the name of Mullissu (Ninlil).

Comparison of Pre-Classical and Classical Prophets

Earlier scholars attempted to draw strong distinctions between the pre-classical prophets such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha and such classical prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Among the alleged distinctions are the following:

- (1) The classical prophets rejected the cult and ritual and called for ethical monotheism.
- (2) They rejected the nationalistic outlook of the popular prophets and replaced it with their concept of universalism.

(3) Whereas the popular prophets functioned as part of guilds, the classical prophets always appear alone (e.g., Amos 7:14).

(4) The popular prophets were ecstatics, given to intoxication of the senses (1 Sam. 19:20–24), and they employed musical accompaniment to induce or heighten their frenzy (11 Kings 3:15). The classical prophets, however, for the most part pronounced their oracles soberly in clear control of their senses.

It was thought that there was an unbridgeable gap between the two, and with Amos, the first of the literary prophets, the watershed was reached. Yet, there are many points of contact and continuation in the lives and writings of the classical prophets. Classical prophecy, like every other institution in ancient Israel, did not exist in a vacuum but came into being with an ancestry. The classical prophets were indebted in many ways to the heritage of their predecessors. The technical title *navi* is applied to both. Both speak solely in the name of the God of Israel, who reveals His will directly to them. They are both sent by God, hear the divine word, and are admitted into His council; their messages are sometimes rooted in the Covenant. These and the following considerations lead to the conclusion that there was one continuous religious tradition. More likely the difference between the pre-classical and classical prophets is the literary form in which the prophetic traditions have reached us.

RITUAL VERSUS MORALITY. The prophet Nathan rebukes King David for his breach of the moral law in his conduct with Bath-Sheba, and Elijah takes Ahab to task for the Naboth incident, in which Ahab was an accessory to murder. True, both indictments concern a primary breach of the moral law, adultery and murder, and are leveled against kings; but they are still an integral part of the ethical-moral dimension. Here, too, may be added Samuel's rebuke of Saul "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). The classical prophets for the most part, do not reject the cult per se any more than they absolutely reject prayer or any other type of worship. To them the cultic obligations are secondary to, and dependent upon, the fulfillment of the moral code of behavior. There is a decided change in the degree of emphasis in the pre-exilic literary prophets, but not in the principle. Moreover, the words of castigation leveled against the cult are found in the writings of the pre-Exilic prophets; in contrast, in the books of the Exilic and post-Exilic prophets the ritual is often highly emphasized and favorably viewed (see below).

NATIONALISM VERSUS UNIVERSALISM. Nationalistic as well as universalistic tendencies are present in greater or lesser degree in the writing of both. This can be seen in Elijah's command that Elisha anoint Hazael king of Aram (1 Kings 19:15), for YHWH is considered equally responsible for events in Aram and in Israel. Other universalistic themes in the early prophets are exemplified in 1 Kings 20:28, in which a man of

God says to the king of Israel, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because the Arameans have said, "the Lord is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys," therefore I will deliver all of this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord,'" and in 1 Kings 5:15 in which Naaman, the commander of the Aramean army, after being cured by immersing himself in the Jordan River as prescribed by Elisha, confesses, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the world but in Israel." The universalistic prophecies of the classical prophets on the other hand, do not preclude, of course, their predominant number of nationalistic oracles.

MANTICS VERSUS REPROVERS. Mantic behavior was not restricted to the pre-classical prophets. For example, Isaiah foretells the future for Hezekiah (Isa. 37:1ff.; 38:1ff.), and Jeremiah, for Zedekiah (Jer. 32:4–5, and see below). The latter also predicts the death of his prophetic rival, Hananiah (Jer. 28:16–17). At the same time, the early prophets Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha do not restrict their activity to merely predicting the future and the answering of queries, but are themselves messengers, apostles, and chasteners who deliver the word of God.

GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUALS. Although Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha are followed by bands of prophets, when they fulfill their missions, they do it alone as individuals just as the later prophets did. The latter, too, may have had their followers (e.g., the difficult verse, Isa. 8:16), for it is most likely that it was the disciples of these prophets who recorded their masters' words (e.g., Jer. 36:4).

ECSTATICS VERSUS NON-ECSTATICS. Ecstasy, too, is not limited to the pre-classical prophets. The classical prophets had visions and unnatural experiences during their prophetic "seizures." Ezekiel, in particular, was prone to various ecstatic fits; Hosea is called a "madman" (Hos. 9:7) and so too, by direct implication, is Jeremiah (Jer. 29:26).

ROLE IN SOCIETY. The classical prophets played an extremely important role in the Israelite society, as is well known. Like the earlier prophets, they were consulted by those who wanted information from God. Jeremiah is requested by King Zedekiah's messengers to "inquire of the Lord for us, for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is making war against us..." (Jer. 21:1–2; cf. similar requests in Jer. 37:7ff.; 42:1ff, and the advice given in Jer. 23:33ff.; Ezek. 8:1ff.; 14:1ff.; 33:30ff.; and contrarily, Isa. 30:1–2).

SYMBOLIC ACTS. The classical prophets, too, performed significant symbolic acts which not only presaged future events but were efficacious in initiating their process of realization. In this category may be included the symbolic names which Isaiah gave his children: "a remnant shall turn back" (Isa. 7:3), and "pillage hastens, looting speeds" (Isa. 8:3), and most probably his own name (Isa. 8:18; cf. the child's name, "God is with us," Isa. 7:14). Isaiah walked about naked and barefoot for three years as a sign that the king of Assyria would lead

the Egyptians and Cushites naked into exile (Isa. 20:2ff.). Jeremiah (16:1ff.) refrained from marrying and having children as a portent that both the parents and children of Israel would perish by the sword and famine. He buys a linen waistcloth, wears it, and then buries it in a cleft of the rock, and later upon recovering it, he finds that it has become spoiled, “good for nothing”: “Thus will the Lord spoil the pride of Judah and Jerusalem who were made to cling to God but would not obey” (Jer. 13:1ff.). He buys a potter’s earthen flask and promptly smashes it to signify that the Lord “will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel so that it can never be mended” (Jer. 19:1ff.). He is commanded by the Lord to make thongs and yoke bars and put them on his neck as a portent that any nation or kingdom that does not put its neck under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will be punished, and only those who submit will be left alone to till their own land (Jer. 27:2ff.; cf. the same act performed by Zedekiah, 1 Kings 22:11).

The “false” prophet Hananiah, as a symbolic act of his own, breaks these very bars and says, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Even so will I make the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon break from the neck of all the nations within two years.’” Jeremiah subsequently replaces his wooden yoke with one of iron and repeats the same message (Jer. 28). During the very last months of the siege of Jerusalem, he purchases a field from his uncle as a sign that “houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land” (Jer. 32:6ff.). In Jeremiah 43:8ff. the prophet is commanded to take large stones and hide them in the mortar in the pavement which is at the entrance to Pharaoh’s palace in Tahpanhes as a sign that the Lord will set the throne of Nebuchadnezzar over these stones. In Jeremiah 51:61–64, when Seraiah comes to Babylon, Jeremiah commands him to read the book he has written concerning all the evil that would befall Babylon. He is then to bind a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates and say, “Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the evil I am bringing upon her.” Both the recitation of curses and the sinking of the scroll portend the final downfall of Babylon. Ezekiel (4:1ff.) takes a brick, portrays upon it the city of Jerusalem, puts siege works against it, builds a siege wall, casts a mound, sets camps against it, and plants battering rams round about. He then takes an iron plate and places it as an iron wall between himself and the city and presses the siege against the city, “a sign for the house of Israel.” He also lies alternately on his left and right sides for an extended period of time, presaging the oncoming days of punishment of Israel and Judah. He eats and drinks during those days only a very small amount of food including barley cake baked on human dung to indicate that the people of Israel and Jerusalem “shall eat their bread unclean among the nations” and “shall eat bread by weight... and water by measure” (Ezek. 4:9ff.). In chapter 5 he takes a sharp knife, uses it as a barber’s razor to cut the hair of his head and beard, takes balances and weights, and divides the hair for impending judgment. And in chapter 12 he conspicuously prepares for exile in full sight of his people.

SIGNS AND WONDERS. The literary prophets, following their predecessors, also resorted to the use of signs and wonders to authenticate their prediction of impending events. Isaiah tells King Ahaz that since the latter did not put his complete confidence in the Lord in order to withstand the Syro-Ephramite coalition, “The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall call his name, Immanuel.” Before this lad reaches maturity, the kingdoms of Aram and Ephraim would be destroyed (Isa. 7:10–25). The same prophet gives a sign to King Hezekiah in order to prove to him that the Lord has heard his prayer; 15 years would be added to his life, and he would be delivered from the hand of the king of Assyria: “This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised: Behold I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps” (Isa. 38:5–8). He also cures the king by rubbing a cake of figs over his inflammation (38:21–22; 11 Kings 20:7). In the previous chapter he gives the following sign to that same king: “And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs of the same; then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards” (Isa. 37:30). This is a sign that the surviving remnant of Judah would take root and bear fruit.

Jeremiah, in an embarrassing confrontation with the “false” prophet Hananiah, who later smashed the wooden yoke bars of Jeremiah and subsequently replaced them with bars of iron, says, “Thus says the Lord... ‘This very year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord.’” The next verse tells that in that very year Hananiah died (Jer. 28:15–17). In one instance Ezekiel himself becomes a sign to the people, when God predicts and then executes the death of the prophet’s wife and forbids him to mourn for her as an omen of what the people are about to experience (Ezek. 24:15ff.).

VISIONS. Both the pre-classical and classical prophets share the common oracular terminology “Thus says YHWH.” Though the latter are more “hearers” than “seers,” they, too, often report visions, e.g., those of Amos (7:8); Isaiah (6); Jeremiah (1:11ff.; 24:1ff.), and the extraordinary visions of Ezekiel (particularly in chapters 1–3, 8–10); and Zechariah (5–6). Indeed, visions play an important role in the classical prophetic writings, as the following quotations further attest:

I spoke to the Prophets;
It was I who multiplied visions (Hos. 12:11).
And it shall come to pass in the future
that I will pour out my spirit in all flesh;
your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams, and your young
men shall see visions (Joel 3:1).
For they are a rebellious people, lying sons,
sons who will not hear the instruction of the Lord;
who say to the seers, ‘See not!’ and to the prophets,
‘Prophecy not to us what is right’ (Isa. 30:9–10; cf. Isa. 29:10;
Amos 7:12 in negative contexts).

Like their pre-classical forerunners, the literary prophets occasionally employ the terms “the hand of YHWH” (Isa. 48:16; 59:21; 61:1; Joel 3:1; Micah 3:8; Zech. 7:12; cf. Isa. 11:2; Hos. 9:7) and “the spirit of YHWH” to describe the power that activates and evokes their revelatory state of mind. The ecstatic character of literary prophecy is documented in the various trances of Ezekiel. Finally, classical prophets also, at times, bore the consequence of their dire predictions. Just as Ahab persecuted Elijah (1 Kings 17ff.) and had Micaiah imprisoned, because he foretold the destruction of Israel and the death of the king (1 Kings 22:27), so too Jeremiah was put into the stocks (Jer. 20:2) as well as in prison (Jer. 32ff.), and Uriah was put to death (Jer. 26:20–23).

Classical Prophecy

The classical prophets, thus, cannot be fully understood without knowledge of their antecedents. Some prophets are connected with the literature of the Torah, e.g., Jeremiah with Deuteronomy and Ezekiel with the Priestly Code. Hosea was indebted to traditions about Jacob; and he, Micah, and Jeremiah knew traditions of Exodus and wilderness wanderings. Isaiah was indebted to traditions of David and Zion. Nevertheless, they cannot be entirely explained by their predecessors or by earlier traditions. For in the middle of the eighth century B.C.E., a new dimension was added to Israelite religion, which definitively shaped the character of the nation. Commencing with Amos, a herdsman from Tekoa, there arose a series of great religious teachers and thinkers, inspired spokesmen who became the passionate bearers of the word of God.

HISTORICAL SCOPE. Their appearance was engendered by specific historical and political events. The temporal limits of the classical apostolic prophets can be placed in a historical framework extending over some 300 years and highlighted by two cataclysmic events. The first prophets appeared a few decades before the fall of Northern Israel (722 B.C.E.), after the conclusion of the 100-year war with the Arameans – a war which produced a vast societal cleavage between the impoverished masses and the wealthy minority, and they disappeared approximately a century following the destruction of Jerusalem (587/6 B.C.E.). Within this period three major empires successively dominated the world scene: Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia.

The prophets, however, always addressed their message to the contemporary situation. Amos, living in the time of Jeroboam II before the rise of Tiglath-Pileser (745 B.C.E.) and the neo-Assyrian empire, foretold exile and destruction for Israel, but he never indicated that it would be executed by Assyria. Second *Hosea (chs. 4–14), a somewhat later contemporary, also foresaw destruction, but although he was aware of both pro-Egyptian and pro-Assyrian factions, he did not designate Assyria as the enemy par excellence. Isaiah's call, in contrast, came at the time of the peak of Assyrian ascendancy. He called that nation the rod of God's wrath and considered it the last of the world powers. Simultaneous with the fall of Assyria would come the demise of arrogance, the root of all

idoltrous behavior. Micah and *Zephaniah, too, knew of the Assyrian menace, but except for one late interpolation in the former (Micah 4:10), they, like Isaiah, did not include Babylonia within their historical purview. *Nahum, coming a bit later, rejoiced over the fall of Assyria, but was silent about Babylonia. The Book of *Habakkuk reflects the transition period between Assyrian and Babylonian hegemony. Jeremiah, who received his call to prophecy in 627 B.C.E., identified the enemy described as the “nation from the north” with Babylonia only after the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.E. When he portrays the eventual defeat of Babylonia, however, he once again resorts to his initial image of a “nation from the north.” Persia is never mentioned as the successor to Babylonia in Jeremiah. Ezekiel, living in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, prophesied the fall of Babylonia but never specified Persia as the conqueror. (Persia is mentioned only once in this connection and then incidentally, 38:5.)

Only with the advent of the anonymous prophet of the Exile who is called Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 40ff.), was Cyrus, king of Persia, specifically mentioned and then favorably so (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). The three last prophets of Israel, *Haggai, *Zechariah, and *Malachi, were active during the post-Exilic period under the Persian rule and were not aware of the future ascendancy of the Greek Empire. (For the dating of all these prophets as well as *Jonah, *Joel, and *Obadiah, see the individual articles under their names.) Though there are supplements and interpolations, the oracles of the prophets are oriented to their own contemporary situation.

Thus, classical prophecy arose and reached its zenith during the rise and fall of world empires. In the period of the pre-classical prophets, the political-historical horizon was of limited local significance. The enemies of those days – Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, and Arameans – did not strive for world dominion. The age that witnessed the emergence of great empires bore witness to the unique religious phenomenon of classical prophecy, which interpreted these world-significant events in the light of its own theological viewpoint. The Lord of Israel was seen as the director of the drama of world history. His ever-changing cast included the leading historical figures of those days – Sargon, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus – but his attention was continually focused on Israel; her destiny within the divinely controlled arena of world politics was his main concern. The prophets provided an answer to the “why” of destruction and the “how” of future restoration. One implication of classical prophetic teaching was that Israel's defeats did not indicate Yahweh's weakness, but his strength. He could move all the peoples of the earth to punish his people or reward them, depending on their behavior.

DEDICATION AND COMMISSIONING OF THE PROPHET. The dedication and commissioning of a prophet has its own literary motif; the account of his being called. Such commissioning or re-commissioning accounts are found in Isaiah 6 (which does not describe the prophet's original call to prophecy, but

rather his re-commissioning, so Kaufmann); Jeremiah 1:4ff. and 15:19–21 (the latter, too, being a re-dedication; see below); Ezekiel 1–3; and perhaps Deutero-Isaiah 40:6–8.

The lengthy prophetic dedication of Moses (Ex. 3–4) contains motifs that recur from time to time in the descriptions of the dedication of other prophets: (1) the humble occupation of the prophet (so, too, Amos 7:14); (2) the human response; (3) a protest of inadequacy for the mission; and (4) the divine reassurance. Moses made several attempts to dissuade God from selecting him, since he felt that he did not possess sufficient credentials for his mission. He pleaded inadequacy: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt” (Ex. 3:11) and “Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Ex. 4:10).

Isaiah, in chapter 6, which describes his re-dedication to the prophetic office, after complaining of “unclean lips,” first has his mouth sanctified, and then upon hearing God’s question, “Whom shall I send?” volunteers his services, “I am ready, send me.” (In an augural vision, the prophet would most likely not be asked to volunteer but would be compelled to go willy-nilly.) Jeremiah, who was prenatally designated and consecrated for his calling, recounts how God touched his mouth, too, and put His words into his mouth (Jer. 1:9). Ezekiel describes his consecration as the devouring of a scroll written by God (Ezek. 3:1ff.). The organ of speech is specifically mentioned in all of these prophetic accounts, because the prophet becomes, upon dedication, God’s “mouthpiece.” Not only the lips, however, but the prophet’s whole being becomes dedicated to the service of God.

His Reluctance and God’s Reassurance. The prophets, however, were often reluctant to accept their calling. The most dramatic example by far is the unsuccessful flight of Jonah. The unwillingness of Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to accept the divine call is also concentrated on their organ of speech: “I have never been a man of words” (Ex. 4:10); “Woe is me, for I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5); “Alas, Lord God, I do not know how to speak, for I am inexperienced” (Jer. 1:6). God, in turn, responds with encouraging assurances, for Moses (Ex. 4:11), for Isaiah (Isa. 6:7), and, in particular, for Jeremiah, “Gird up your loins... Do not be dismayed... They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you” (Jer. 1:17–19; cf. 15:19–21).

LIFE OF THE PROPHET. Why such initial opposition? Why, too, such an outpouring of divine encouragement? The prophet’s distinction of being chosen by God was matched only by his frustration and rejection on the part of his fellowman. The prophetic office was not easy to bear. The description of the prophet’s emotional experience upon receiving a “stern vision” is at times graphic and overwhelmingly frightening: his loins are filled with anguish; his pain is comparable to birth pangs; he is tortured, anguished, terror-stricken; he reels, and

he is filled with the wrath of God (Isa. 21:3–4; Jer. 4:19; 6:11; 15:17; Hab. 3:16).

Of far greater significance, however, is the fact that such a selected messenger sometimes becomes a solitary individual, whose life is marked by loneliness and bitterness: “I sat not in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone because Your Hand was upon me” (Jer. 15:17); “Oh that I had a lodge in the wilderness that I might leave my people and go away from them, for they are all adulterers, a troop of treacherous men” (Jer. 9:1). Jeremiah, whose personal tribulations and confessions are better known than those of any other prophet, became the paradigm of one who suffers for his mission. It is no wonder that he was not euphoric about being selected for such a task. Rejected and spurned, he bemoans his fate, “Woe unto me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land. I have neither a lender nor borrower been, yet everyone belittles me” (15:10). Even his own kinsmen and family are counted among his chief antagonists (12:6; cf. 20:10). Enemies were continually plotting against his life (11:19). Eventually, he even cursed his fate, “Cursed be the day on which I was born. Let the day my mother bore me not be blessed... Why did I come forth from the womb to experience trouble and grief and to waste my days in chagrin” (20:14–18).

Some prophets were fated to become harbingers of their nation’s downfall. Messengers of doom, they were doomed to suffer from their very message: “Lord, how long!” (Isa. 6:11); “Let me weep bitterly. Seek not to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people” (Isa. 22:4); “For this I will lament and wail. I will go stripped and naked... For incurable are her blows, for it has come to Judah, has reached the gate of my people, to Jerusalem” (Micah 1:8–9); “O that my head were water and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people” (Jer. 8:23). The prophet bemoans their imminent tragedy and weeps over their tragic rejection of his words: “But if you will not listen, I will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive” (Jer. 13:17; cf. 10:19ff.; 14:17–18).

The life story of a prophet is liable to be one of anguish, fear, rejection, ridicule, and even imprisonment (Isa. 28:9–10; Jer. 11:18–23; 12:1ff.; 15:10, 15; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–18; 37:12–21; Ezek. 21:11–12; Hos. 9:8; Amos 7:12–13; Micah 2:6). Some did not escape their assassins (Jer. 26:20–23; Uriah). Though the prophet weeps with his destined victims and takes up the cry of his compatriots, he is not understood by them. Great yet unbearable is the fate of one who claims that he was seduced, even forced into his role: “O Lord you have seduced me, and I was seduced; you have raped me, and have prevailed” (Jer. 20:7). Nevertheless he cannot cease from being a prophet: “If I say, ‘I will not mention Him or speak any more His name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am not able to hold it in” (Jer. 20:9). Yet paradoxically when he does prophesy, he may be silenced by God (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11) or mocked and spurned by man. Jeremiah

is eventually led to curse his people and demand vengeance against his adversaries (11:20b; 12:3b; 15:15a; 18:21–23).

Reproaching God. He is even driven in extremis to reproach God: “Why are you like a man dumbfounded, like a mighty man who cannot save?” (Jer. 14:9); “You are to me like a deceitful stream, like waters that fail!” (15:18). With this last outburst the prophetic protest reached its ultimate, as is indicated by the response of God, “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me” (15:19). Paradoxically, he who dedicated his life to persuading the people to return must now “return” himself. And why? So that he can once again perform the role of God’s emissary, “You shall be my spokesman” (15:19). Thus, it seems that for a short period of time Jeremiah had actually lost prophetic office. This “demotion” is further substantiated by the remainder of God’s response, where He repeats in almost exactly the same words the original encouragement at the time of the prophet’s initial call, “I will make you before this people an impregnable wall of bronze; They will attack you, but they will not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord” (15:20). Jeremiah, after his defiant outcry of reproach, was re-commissioned to deliver the word of God.

False Prophets. The problem of how to distinguish a prophet who was truly commissioned by God from a “false” prophet is perplexing. A prophet may speak falsely but there is no term for a false prophet in the Bible. The distinction, which is found in rabbinic literature, was introduced by the Greek translation of the Bible into some verses in the books of Jeremiah (6:13:26 (= Greek 33); 7, 8, 11, 16; 27 (= Greek 34):9; 28 (= Greek 35):1) and Zechariah (13:2), as *pseudoprophētēs*. In the Hebrew Bible, however, both “false” and “true” prophets are called *navi*, and both claim inspiration and a mission.

In Deuteronomy there are several, not too useful, attempts to provide infallible criteria for distinguishing between them. Deuteronomy 18:20–22 reads “Any prophet who presumes to speak in My name a prophetic word that I did not command him to utter, or who speaks in the name of other gods – that prophet shall die. And should you ask yourselves, ‘How can we know that the prophetic word was not spoken by the Lord?’ – if the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the word does not come true, that word was not spoken by the Lord; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously: do not stand in dread of him.” Deuteronomy 13:2ff. goes one step further: even if the prophet utters prophecies after providing signs and wonders, should his message be to worship other gods, that prophet, too, is not to be heeded, since his appearance is only a test to determine whether the people really love and revere the Lord alone.

However, examples of an Israelite prophet delivering his message in the name of another god (Jer. 2:8; 23:13) are rare and not one demands that an alien god be worshipped. Most of them spoke, apparently with sincerity and conviction, in the name of God. As for the chronological criterion of the fulfillment of the oracle, this was of no value whatever at the mo-

ment the prophecy was uttered. How could the people suspend judgment if Hananiah told them not to submit to the king of Babylon and foretold the release from Babylonian captivity within two years, while Jeremiah declared that it was God’s plan that Israel surrender and remain in exile for 70 years (Jer. 27–28)? Jeremiah, himself, was completely perplexed and left the scene of confrontation without further contradicting Hananiah (28:11). Furthermore, several occasions are specifically recorded in which an oracle delivered by an acknowledged true prophet did not materialize in the manner in which he predicted – even within his own lifetime! Only a few examples of unfulfilled prophecies need be cited: Jeremiah predicted an ignominious end for King Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:19); yet 11 Kings 24:6 clearly belies this oracle. Ezekiel predicted the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar (26:7–14), but later he acknowledged that the king’s siege of the city was unsuccessful (29:17–20). Both Haggai’s (2:21–23) and Zechariah’s (4:6–7) glorious anticipations and designs for Zerubbabel never materialized.

Jeremiah sought another objective criterion for distinguishing between a true and false prophet when he was dramatically confronted and confuted by Hananiah son of Azzur (Jer. 28). Hananiah declared in the name of YHWH that the Lord was going to break the yoke of Babylon, and that within two years the exiled community in Babylon and their king Jehoiachin would return to Israel. Jeremiah sincerely wished that Hananiah’s words were true. He did not question his sincerity nor did he call him a false prophet, but he merely pointed out that “the prophets who were of old, before my time and yours, prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms of war, disaster, and plague.” Only the future would vindicate the prediction of a prophet who foresaw peace; “As for the prophet who prophesies of well-being, when that prophet’s word comes to pass, then it can be acknowledged that he is the prophet whom YHWH really sent.” But then again how could one suspend judgment until history decided?

Jeremiah, more than any other prophet, was in constant combat with these prophets. He attacks three different types of “false” prophets (Jer. 23): (1) those who have dreams and report them as though they were the word of God and thus mislead the people, “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell his dream”; (2) those who are plagiarists “who keep stealing My words from one another” and pretend that they have had direct revelation; and (3) those “who using their own speech” concoct their own oracles and pass them off as prophecy. Nevertheless, when prophet clashed with prophet not only were the people confounded, but Jeremiah himself, in the case of Hananiah, was left speechless, and was unable to point to any irrefutable objective standard by which to verify or disqualify his opponent (Jer. 28).

To confound matters even more, a true prophet might be misled by a “false” prophet (1 Kings 13), and false prophecy might even be inspired by God in order to deceive and entice Israel (1 Kings 22:21ff.). According to Ezekiel 14:9–11,

moreover, God might actually seduce a bonafide prophet to deliver a false message!

If the individual prophet had a questionable moral character – if he was a drunkard (Isa. 28:7), an adulterer, or a liar (Jer. 23:14); if he used his office to make a living by telling the people what they wanted to hear and not what they ought to hear (Micah 3:11); or if he was a “professional” prophet attached to the staff of temple personnel (the joint denunciation of priest and prophet may be noted in Isa. 28:7; Jer. 23:11, 34; Micah 3:11; Zech. 7:2–3), his veracity obviously would be highly dubious. But what of the others? If there was no difference in the technical form of the prophecy, what of the contents? Apparently the only, and by no means infallible, criterion would be the nature of the message, whether it was one of weal or woe. Proclamations of national-religious salvation were suspect for over 250 years (cf. 1 Kings 22:11 ff.; Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 23:17; 28:2 ff.; Ezek. 13:16; Micah 3:5 ff.). It is also possible that such prophecies were related to the national interests of the crown and the cult – Hananiah predicted the early return of the cult vessels (Jer. 28:3).

But this, too, was not an absolute definition, for both pre-Exilic, e.g., Nahum 2:1, Jeremiah 30–33 (if these chapters stem from the early part of his career), and Exilic, e.g., Deutero-Isaiah, as well as post-Exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, brought messages of comfort, and some also took a positive view of the cult (see below). Hence, the falsity or veracity of prophecies could not be determined on the external basis of form or content. They could only be judged by the person who had true insight into the intentions of God at that historical moment. A prophet “who has My word, let him faithfully speak My word. What has straw to do with wheat?... Is not My word like fire... like the hammer that shatters the rock” (Jer. 23:28–29).

The Prophet as Intercessor. The irresistible character that such a religious experience has on a “God-intoxicated” individual (Jer. 23:9), “who has stood in YHWH’s council and seen and heard His word...” (Jer. 23:18), not only constrains him to deliver the divine message but compels him, at times, to intercede on behalf of his people. Herein lies one possible means of distinguishing between the two kinds of prophets: the function of the prophet as an intercessor. In this role, as distinct from his role as a messenger, the prophet attempts through prayer to offset the impending doom. The first individual in the Bible to be designated a prophet, Abraham, does not merit this title because he delivered oracles in the name of God, but because he was ready to intercede: “Since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you to save your life” (Gen. 20:7). Abraham also valiantly attempted to save the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and with unbridled daring challenged God: “Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly” (18:25).

The paragon of prophets, Moses, paradigmatically and eloquently exemplifies this aspect of his prophetic mission several times:

(1) After the incident of the golden calf, “Let not Your anger, O Lord, blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand... Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: ‘I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess for ever’” (Ex. 32:11–13). Moses’ plea was successful. “And the Lord renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people” (Ex. 32:14).

(2) At Taberah, “The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the Lord and the fire died down” (Num. 11:2).

(3) After the incident of the spies, Moses prayed, “Therefore, I pray, let my Lord’s forbearance be great... Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt” (Num. 14:13 ff.). Once again he met with success, “And the Lord said, ‘I pardon, as you have asked’” (Num. 14:20). (For Moses’ personal intervention on behalf of Miriam and Aaron, see Num. 12:13 and Deut. 9:20, respectively.)

Next in line in the Bible’s narrative tradition of prophetic intercession stands Samuel, who prayed on behalf of his people after their defeat at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:5–9), on their behalf after their request for a king, which so embittered God (1 Sam. 12: 19, 23), and on behalf of Saul after God rejected his election as king of Israel (1 Sam. 15:11).

In the Book of Jeremiah, both Moses and Samuel are singled out as the exemplars of great intercessors on behalf of their people (Jer. 15:1; cf. Ps. 99:6). Jeremiah proved a worthy, though unsuccessful, successor to these two. That he prayed to God on behalf of his nation is explicitly stated several times, e.g., in a time of drought, when he was driven by the enormity of his task to defy God, “Why are You like a man confused, like a mighty man who cannot save” (Jer. 14:1 ff.; cf. his words in 4:10; 15:11; and his confession in 18:20, “Remember how I stood in Your presence speaking good on their behalf so as to avert Your anger from them”). Even more impressive are God’s express commands to Jeremiah not to intercede! “Do not pray for this people, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me, for I do not hear you” (Jer. 7:16; cf. 11:14). When God attempts to silence Jeremiah in 14:11–12, the prophet, nevertheless, blurts out a plea on their behalf (verse 13). The die, however, was cast; the nation was doomed. Even Moses and Samuel (Jer. 15:1) would be helpless in such a situation. Intercession would no longer avail, or more properly stated, God would not permit any further intercession, because it just might have been successful in diverting Him from His self-prescribed course.

The passages cited above and the pleas of Amos (Amos 7:1–3, 4–6) make it patently clear that a prime function of the prophet was to defend his people and to act as mediator on behalf of his nation. Kings Hezekiah and Zedekiah also requested Isaiah (Isa. 37:2 ff. = 11 Kings 19) and Jeremiah (Jer.

37:3; cf. 42:2, 20) respectively, to intercede on behalf of Israel in the face of an enemy onslaught.

Intercession, thus, is an integral component of the true prophet's mission. To be a prophet means to speak for the people to God, represent their case, and take up their cause. Should one shirk from such a duty by refusing to engage God in polemics and confine himself to merely speaking to the people for God, he would be belying his prophetic call. He would then be a "false" prophet. This interpretation finds confirmation in Ezekiel, who himself carries on the tradition of intercession (cf. 9:8; 11:13). In Ezekiel 13:4–5, God declares, "Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins, O Israel. You have not gone up into the breaches to prepare the broken wall around the Israelites, that it may stand firm in battle on the day of the Lord." The prophet's mission was to stand in the breach of the nation's wall, a breach caused by the sin of his people. He was to prevent God from entering; for entrance spelled doom and destruction. This is explicitly stated in Ezekiel 22:30–31, "I looked for a man among them who could build up a barricade, who could stand in the breach before Me to defend the land from ruin; but I found none. Thus I poured out my indignation upon them and utterly destroyed them in the fire of My wrath..." It is of interest to note that the very same imagery is employed in Psalms 106:23 (Y. Muffs).

In sum, though some of the "false" prophets did have revelations and visions, performed symbolic actions (Jer. 28:10 ff.), imparted oracles (23:31), and prophesied in YHWH's name (14:14; 29:9), since they promised good fortune and prosperity and thereby lulled the people into false security (6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 23:17; 28:2 ff.), they were accused by Jeremiah of not having been sent by God (14: 14–15; 23:21, 32; 28:15; 29:9), of not having been admitted to the divine council (23:18), and of not interceding with God on behalf of the people (27:18). However, after all, the final verdict could only be given by a true prophet, and even he was not always completely certain.

HISTORY

Universalism and Election

To the prophets, events of history disclosed the finger of God. God revealed Himself in the language of history. It is true that other nations in the Ancient Near East also regarded their gods as being active in history on significant occasions, but none of them conceived of a panoramic world outlook in which all of history was seen to be governed by the will of one God, nor did they interpret the history of their nation as a unified sequence governed by one, all-encompassing divine plan. Though the God of Israel addressed Himself to all humanity (see, e.g., Isa. 13:23; Jer. 27:2ff.; 28:8; 46–51; Ezek. 25–32; Amos 1:3–2:3; 9:7; Obad.; Nah. 3), the concept of election was unique to Israel: "Only you have I chosen from amongst the nations; therefore I shall punish you for all your sins" (Amos 3:2). Election was not a bona fide guarantee of special protection. Some prophets actually fought against this popular conception of inviolability (e.g., Isa. 28:15; Jer. 5:12; Amos 5:14). The consequence of being chosen was not immunity but heightened responsibility.

Whereas the nations of the world were held culpable solely for gross violations of the established order, Israel alone was taken to task for any and every infringement of the moral and ethical code of behavior. Indeed, one of the distinctive characteristics of the writings of the classical prophets is their insistent and adamant denunciation of corruption in the moral, ethical, and social fields. No one was impervious to their attack: not kings, priests, prophets, judges, women, creditors, wealthy landowners, or even the poorer classes. They leveled severe criticisms against murder, juridical corruption, violence, cruelty, dishonesty, greed, oppression, exploitation, bribery, harlotry, degeneracy, debauchery, arrogance, luxury, callousness, apathy, lust for power, and militarism. Each and every one of these vices exemplifies a "forgetting of God," which leads to the disintegration and the eventual condemnation of the nation (e.g., Isa. 3:14–15, 16–24; 5:8, 11–12, 18–19, 20–23; 9:8–9, 16; 31:1; Jer. 5:26; 7:9; Ezek. 22; Hos. 1:7; 4:2, 6, 11–13; 6:8–10; 7:1–7; 8:14; 10:13; 12:8–9; 13:6; Amos 2:6–8; 3:10–11; 4:1; 5:7; 6:1–7, 13; Micah 3:1–3, 11; Zeph. 1:12). Idolatry, too, was subjected to its usual severe criticism (e.g., Isa. 65:3–4; Jer. 7:18, 30–31; 19:4–5; Ezek. 8; Hos. 2:15; Amos 8:14; Zeph. 1:4–6).

Supremacy of Morality

Special attention should be given to the prophets' new concept of the cult and their novel idea of the supremacy of morality. The problem of the relationship of the prophets to cultic worship has gone through several stages of interpretation. One of the basic axioms of biblical scholarship was the notion that the priest and prophet were fundamentally opposed to one another. The major contribution of the prophets was considered to be the de-ritualization of religion. The basic message of the prophets was "ethical monotheism," with the stress on morality rather than ritual. Thus, it was thought that the independent spirit of the prophet conflicted head-on with the priest, the professional officiant of organized religion. The former was interested in right; the latter in rites. The prophet was "word-possessed" – he brought the word of God to man. The priest was "cult-possessed" – he raised man's sacrifice to God.

The development of form-critical studies brought a partial scholarly reversal, and the attempt was made to demonstrate the positive attitude of the prophets toward the cult. Their utterance of divinely inspired oracles was supposed to be an integral component of Israelite worship. The time, and later even the content, of these oracles were understood to be liturgically fixed. The prophets were identified as members of the cultic personnel.

Both views, especially the latter, are extreme and are constantly being debated. What can be said with certainty is that the prophetic attacks on the cult did introduce a new principle into the religion of Israel: The essence of God's demand is not to be found in the cult but in the moral and ethical spheres of life. In the Torah and pre-classical prophetic literature there is no sharp distinction between cultic and moral prescriptions. Both are equally important, and both are essential to the con-

tinued existence of the nation. With the words of the classical prophets, however, a new aspect was introduced. While Samuel argued for the primacy of obedience over sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22), Amos and his fellow prophets stressed the primacy of morality (Isa. 1:11–17; 66:1ff.; Jer. 6:20; 7:21–23; 14:12; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–25; Micah 6:6–8). The prophets were no more unequivocally opposed to the cult than they were to song and psalm (Amos 5:23) or prayer, festival, and Sabbath (Isa. 1:13–15), all of which they mentioned in their attacks. On the contrary, Isaiah's call came apparently while he was in the Temple (Isa. 6). The Exilic (Isa. 44:28; 52:11; 66:20–24; Jer. 33:11, 18; Ezek. 20:40–44; 22:8, 26; 40–48), as well as the post-Exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah, had a very positive attitude toward the Temple and its cult. They advocated the rebuilding of the sanctuary, with the restoration of sacrificial worship, and stressed ceremonial law. The prophets did not denounce the practice of sacrifice per se, but they did adamantly oppose the absolutization of the cult.

Attitude Toward Ritual

In Israel, ritual is conceived of as God's gift, an act of grace intended for the good of humanity. It affords man means by which to draw closer to God. Worship and ritual are means, justice and righteousness are ends. "God requires devotion, not devotions" (S. Spiegel, *Amos versus Amaziah* (1957), 43), right not rite. When cult becomes a substitute for moral behavior, it is to be condemned. Religion is not to be equated with formal worship, nor is it to be restricted to certain specified times during the calendar year; it is to encompass all of life. Hence, any cultic act performed by a worshiper whose moral or ethical character is not beyond reproach is considered an abomination to God. It is no wonder that, after disparaging independent importance of the cult, the prophets clashed with the acknowledged heads of established religion, the priests. Clashes such as of Amos with Amaziah (Amos 7:10ff.), Jeremiah with Pashhur (Jer. 20), or with Zephaniah son of Maaseiah (Jer. 29:25ff.), are unheard of in stories set in pre-classical times. In the dramatic, near tragic confrontation of Jeremiah with his antagonists (Jer. 26) the priests are among the forefront in demanding the death sentence for the prophet, who was accused of "blasphemy" for repudiating the inviolability of the Temple (Jer. 7).

Moreover, it should be recalled that in other religions of the Ancient Near East the correct observance of the cult was of paramount importance, since it was thought that the welfare of the gods was dependent on both the maintenance of their temples and the daily upkeep of their sacrifices. The prophets, however, devaluated the intrinsic significance of ritual, and stressed God's ultimate concern with correct behavior. Justice, righteousness, kindness, integrity, and faithfulness were among God's chief demands (e.g., Jer. 9:22–23; 22:15–16; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:15, 24; Micah 6:8).

Morality and Destiny

The prophets took yet another step. Not only was morality of ultimate importance but it became the decisive factor in de-

termining the national destiny of Israel. The classical prophets differ in emphasis from the view expressed in the Torah literature and in the Former Prophets, according to which the sin of idolatry was the primary transgression. Not only were the worship of other gods than Yahweh and the cardinal sins of murder and incest denounced as before, but the everyday immoral acts of society were condemned as well. With the emergence of the classical prophets a new criterion became operative – moral rectitude. The destiny of the nation was bound up with it, and unrighteousness would spell the end of Israel.

Repentance

The prophets consistently pleaded with Israel to seek God that they might live (Amos 5:4, 14). They demanded piety and faithfulness to the covenant between God and Israel, and threatened punishment and fulfillment of the covenant's curses for those who were disloyal to it. Yet all of their denunciations and frightful maledictions were not meant as ends in themselves. They were, rather, a vain attempt to arouse the people from their lethargic status quo; they were didactic means to achieve the desired end – repentance. The objective of the prophetic threat of dire punishment was that it should not take place. Paradoxically, the prophets wished to make their own calling self-defeating by persuading man to return to God. They censured, warned, and admonished their audiences to forsake their immoral ways in order to avoid imminent destruction.

The prophets were not always ready to accept the finality of divine judgment (for Amos and Jeremiah, see above). They prayed that repentance would have the desired effect: "Who knows, God may yet have a change of heart and turn from His fierce anger so that we shall not perish" (Jonah 3:9, the words of the king of Nineveh expressing the prophetic sentiment; cf. the "perhaps" of the sailors in 1:6). There are other examples: "Who knows whether He will not turn and change His decision and leave a blessing behind Him" (Joel 2:14). "It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15). "Perhaps you may find shelter on the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2:3). The future is contingent on human response to the prophetic word. Divine plans are not unchangeable; human actions tip the scales of justice and mercy: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and pull it down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in My sight, not listening to My voice, then I will repent of the good which I intended to do to it" (Jer. 18:7–10; cf. Ezek. 3:17–21; 33:7–20). Even the possibility of a "divine turning" not predicated upon the prior repentance of the people was contemplated, "How can I give you up, Ephraim! [How can I] hand you over, Israel! How can I treat you like Admah or make you like Zeboim! My heart is changed within Me; My compassion grows warm and tender, I will not execute My fierce anger, I will not again de-

stroy Ephraim..." (Hos. 11:8–9). Compassion may overcome wrath (cf. Jer. 33:8; Micah 7:18–19).

SUSPENSION OF FREEDOM AND GOD'S INACCESSIBILITY. Yet the prophets were not often so optimistic. They knew very well the futility of chastisement (e.g., Amos 4:6–11; Isa. 1:5ff.; 9:12; Jer. 2:30; 5:3). This incurable stubbornness and hardheartedness of the people (Jer. 5:21; Isa. 42:18–20; 43:8; 46:12; 6:10, 17; 9:25; Ezek. 2:4; 12:2) led one prophet to take the most radical step of all: the suspension of freedom. Isaiah was commissioned to "make the heart of this people fat, their ears heavy, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed" (Isa. 6:10). The prophet became God's messenger to harden their hearts and thereby to prevent the people from repenting! Since Israel had so often spurned the words of God and since they had not returned to Him, the privilege of repentance was to be denied them (until only one-tenth of the population remained). The only "cure" for obdurate hardness was to intensify it.

At other times God would make Himself inaccessible to the people as a punishment (e.g., Hos. 5:6; Amos 8:11–12), or to the prophet himself. Jeremiah had no immediate answer for Hananiah (Jer. 28:11) and had to wait once for ten days for the word of God (Jer. 42:7).

New Covenant

The frustration of waiting for human response and the realization that human effort alone could not effect a total return to God led to the development of an entirely new idea. If humans would not initiate the process, God would. He would not only initiate it but finalize it as well. This is the thought implicit in the concept of a "new covenant." Since the old covenant was broken, God despairing of further futile warnings and punishments, would implant His will directly into the human heart, thereby changing human nature by a divine "grafting." The human heart of stone would be turned into a heart of flesh. People would have their whole being filled with the "knowledge of God," and thus he could not but obey God; they would no longer be capable of rejecting God's teachings. This new covenant would be unbreakable and would presage final redemption (Isa. 55:3; Jer. 24:7; 31:30–33; 32:38–41; Ezek. 16:60; 34:25ff.; 36:26ff.; 37:26ff.; cf. Deut. 30:6; Isa. 11:9; 54:13).

Future of Israel

With the covenant renewed, the future community of Israel, constituted by the *remnant (e.g., Isa. 4:3–4; 8:16–17; 10:20–21; Jer. 31:31ff.; Amos 9:8ff.; Micah 7:8; Zeph. 2:3, 9), which will have survived the "Day of the Lord" (see also *Eschatology), would live in peace, no longer troubled by oppression, injustice, or war (e.g., Isa. 2:1–5; 10:27; 11:1–9; 60:5–16; 61:4–9; Hos. 2:21ff.; Micah 4:3–4). It would be an age in which God's glory would be manifested to all mankind (Isa. 40:5), and so all the nations would come to reject idolatry and recognize and revere the God of Israel alone (Isa. 19:18–25; 45:22ff.; Jer. 3:17; 12:16; Ezek. 17:24; Micah 7:16ff.; Hab. 2:14; Zeph. 2:11; Zech.

2:15; 8:20–23; 14:16–21). Jerusalem would become the spiritual center of the world (Isa. 2:2), from which would flow God's instruction to all mankind (Isa. 2:3; 51:4ff.). Israel, would, according to Deutero-Isaiah, become a prophet nation (49:2–3; 51:16; 59:21), spreading the teaching of God to all humanity (42:1–4) and recounting His glory (43:21). It would become "a light to the nations" (42:6; 49:6) and bring God's blessing and beneficence to the ends of the earth (45:22–24).

[Shalom M. Paul / S. David Sperling (2nd ed.)]

In the Talmud

Despite the many aggadic elements in the references to prophecy or the prophets in rabbinical literature, there emerges a clear picture of the rabbinic view of the prophets. Substantially it is based upon two main principles. The first is that Moses was the "master of the prophets" and no prophet after him succeeded as did Moses in penetrating into the nature of the Divine, communing with Him, and receiving His message while in full possession of his normal cognitive faculties. This is of course clearly expressed in the Bible (Num. 12:6–8) but it is extended to apply to all future prophecy. This concept is expressed in various ways, the most striking being that whereas Moses beheld the Divine as through a clear mirror, the other prophets did so through a distorted mirror ("a mirror which does not shine," Yev. 49b; cf. "through a glass darkly," 1 Cor. 13:12).

However, there is noticeable a definite tendency to give Isaiah precedence over all other prophets. Although it is stated that of the four near-contemporary prophets, Isaiah, Amos, Micah, and Hosea, the last was first both in time and in importance (Pes. 87a), it is stated that of all the prophets only Moses and Isaiah "knew what they were prophesying" (Mid. Ps. 90:1, no. 4). Both are referred to together as "the greatest of the prophets" (Deut. R. 2:4). Isaiah is responsible for more prophecies than any other prophet and he prophesied not only to Israel but to mankind as a whole (PR 34:158a); he received revelation direct from God and his prophecies were "doubled" (Pd-RK 125b). If Ezekiel was vouchsafed a revelation of the Divine Essence equal to that of Isaiah, he saw Him as "a villager sees the person of the king," while Isaiah saw Him as an "inhabitant of a metropolis [*kerakh*] who sees the person of the king" (Hag. 13b).

The second principle is a corollary of the first. It is to the effect that the prophets were not responsible for any religious innovations or novel doctrines, their function being confined to expounding and clarifying the teachings of the Pentateuch. The Talmud interprets the verse (Lev. 27:34) "these are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai," to mean that "henceforth a prophet may make no innovations" (Shab. 104a). "The prophets neither took away from, nor added to, aught that is written in the Torah, save only the commandment to read the *megillah*" and even for that they sought biblical sanction (Meg. 14a). In conformity with this view, in the chain of tradition with which tractate *Avot* opens, the prophets appear merely as the

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tradents of the Torah of Moses, the successors to the elders after Joshua, and the predecessors of the men of the Great Synagogue. It is highly probable that this view was influenced by the contrary Christian view of progressive revelation through the ages, culminating in Jesus, though one need not go so far as does Weiss (Dor, 2 (1904⁴), 8) in seeing in it a polemic against the antinomianism of Paul. Consequently statements of the prophets which have no pentateuchal confirmation or support cannot normally be made the basis of the *halakhah*.

According to the rabbis the number of prophets was innumerable ("double the number of the children of Israel who went forth from Egypt") and every tribe produced them (Suk. 27b). However only the prophecies of those which contained a lesson (lit. "were required for") future generations were recorded. They amount to 48 prophets and seven prophetesses: to Miriam (cf. Ex. 15:20 and Num. 12:2), Deborah, and Huldah, the rabbis add Sarah, Hannah, Abigail, and Esther (Meg. 14a). There were also seven gentile prophets: Balaam, his father Beor (Sanh. 105a), Job and his three companions, and Elisha the son of Barachel (BB 15b), but of them Balaam was incomparably the greatest. He was even regarded as the equal of Moses (see *Balaam in Aggadah) and the gentile nations cannot therefore claim that they were not vouchsafed prophecy (Yalk 966; Num. R. 14:34). Nevertheless prophecy came to them only by night and in "half words" and from "behind the curtain" (Gen. R. 52:5). All the prophets prophesied only concerning the messianic age (i.e., the present world in its ideal state) but were not vouchsafed to see the celestial world to come (Ber. 34b). The statement "the same message [*signon*, lit. "sign"] is given to a number of prophets but no two prophets prophesy in the same *signon*" (Sanh. 89a) is probably to be taken to refer to the fact that although they all reveal the word of God, each one has his own particular message or doctrine. The daring use of anthropomorphisms by the prophets is regarded as a sign of their "greatness" (Num. R. 19:4). With the exception of Jeremiah, all the prophets conclude their prophecies on a note of hope and comfort (TJ, Ber. 5:1, 8d). Where the patronymic of the prophet is given, it is to show that his father was also a prophet; when his place of origin is not given he was a Jerusalemite (Meg. 15a).

The prophets are divided into the Early and Later Prophets, but the former encompass all those of the period of the First Temple, only the post-Exilic – Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – constituting the latter (Sot. 48b). All the prophets were wealthy. An interesting proof is given with regard to Amos. Since he was both a herdsman of Tekoa (Amos 1:1) and a dresser of sycamore trees (7:14), and sycamores grow only in the Shephelah but not in the hilly country of Tekoa, he must have been a wealthy landowner with flocks in Judea and plantations in the Shephelah (Ned. 38a). When prophecy came to an end, the **Shekhinah* departed from Israel and the **Bat Kol* became a partial substitute (Yoma 9b).

For the order of the prophets according to the Talmud (BB 14b) see *Bible Canon.

[Louis Isaac Rabinowitz]

Philo

The teaching of *Philo concerning prophecy has to be reconstructed from discussions scattered throughout his writings. Philo conceives of the prophet as priest, seer, and lawgiver all in one. Prophetic understanding is the highest form, transcending reason, which is based on sense perception. When the divine prophetic spirit rests on a man, he is "possessed" by it in a kind of frenzy or "sober intoxication." All prophecy is by grace of God, but prophecy through the divine spirit, in contrast to communication through angels or the divine voice, demands preparation in the recipient, be he Jew or non-Jew: he must be refined, wise, and just, and emancipated from bodily concerns.

[Ralph Lerner]

Medieval Jewish Philosophy

Prophecy is a critical subject in medieval Jewish philosophy. This is hardly surprising. Where a religious community defines itself by a divinely revealed law and regards the teachings of the biblical prophets as the Word of God, the nature and significance of revelation, the manner of its transmission, and the qualities of the human recipient of the divine message are issues of primary importance. The early medieval Jewish philosophers developed their approaches to prophecy in the broader context of Greek philosophical thought as it was received and shaped in the Islamic world. A fundamental question they wrestled with as a result of this influence is how can the incorporeal, transcendent Deity appear to human beings and communicate with them. As we shall see, their approaches vary greatly in addressing this problem. While all the philosophers agreed that God has no body and hence cannot be seen, nor does He possess any organs of speech, some continued to view Him as directly involved in every bestowal of prophecy, while others developed naturalistic explanations for understanding the phenomenon.

SAADIAH GAON. The early 10th-century Babylonian *gaon* *Saadiah in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Books 2 and 3) deals with a number of issues related to prophecy, particularly the problem raised by the corporeal descriptions of God in biblical literature, and the problem of the purpose of prophecy and the manner of its verification. Since God, in Saadiah's view, is incorporeal and is not to be characterized by any of the categories that pertain to matter (e.g., time, place, quantity, affections), most of the prophets' corporeal descriptions of Him are not to be interpreted literally but allegorically. In regard to the instances when the prophet reports actually seeing God, Saadiah, however, presents a different explanation. These visions are to be interpreted literally – the prophet in fact sees with his eyes what he is describing – but they are not of God. Rather their object is a special created entity made from the purest luminous matter and called the Created Glory or the *Shekhinah*. God sends this special entity to the prophet in order to confirm that the message heard indeed comes from Him. The message itself consists of words created by God, Cre-

ated Speech, and conveyed through the air to the hearing of the prophet. Prophecy hence is an experience that the recipient attains and verifies by means of the external senses, which, in Saadiah's view, are a source of reliable knowledge. Prophecy is verified by others by their beholding this special entity in one of its manifold forms, or by miracles that accompany the relaying of the divine message and which only God is capable of performing. This explanation serves to preserve the integrity of Scriptures by limiting the necessity for introducing allegorical interpretations which undermine its literal meaning. Allegorical interpretations are to be accepted only when there is a blatant contradiction between the literal meaning and the other sources of reliable knowledge.

The Created Glory receives a more extensive treatment in Saadiah's earlier *Commentary to the Book of Creation*, where he identifies it with the Holy Spirit (**Ru'ah ha-Kodesh*) which is the first of God's creations. In addition to being the instrument for transmitting prophecy, it also fills the entire world and plays a crucial role as an intermediary for divine governance. One can detect in this work overtones to the Philonic idea of the *Logos*. Saadiah in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* greatly reduces the stature of the Glory, stressing instead God's direct governance of the world.

As for the purpose of prophecy, Saadiah underlines its role in revealing to all of humanity the fundamental truths of reason, such as the existence of God and the creation of the world, so everyone will possess these beliefs with full confidence even prior to being able to prove them. He also sees a necessity for prophecy with respect to the commandments dictated by the intellect, in addition to those known only by way of revelation (see *Reasons for *Commandments*). While the former commandments are known by reason and obligatory upon all human beings, reason dictates only general moral principles. Revelation lays down specific commandments which translate these principles into a body of law.

JUDAH HALEVI. While Saadiah views prophecy primarily in terms of a mission, the early 12th-century philosopher Judah *Halevi in his *Kuzari* identifies this phenomenon as the ultimate perfection of the individual. Halevi at the beginning of his treatise indicates that the Islamic Aristotelian philosophers posit the following criteria for attaining human perfection: possessing the proper potential inherited from one's parents, living in a moderate geographical climate conducive to actualizing this potential by attaining the moral virtues and mastering all of the sciences. They define ultimate perfection in terms of conjunction with the Active Intellect resulting in the eternal felicity of the intellect, as well as attainment of knowledge of hidden matters by way of prophetic visions. As opposed to this view, while at the same time drawing heavily from it, Halevi maintains that prophecy is unique to the Jewish people due to a special inherited quality they possess and which is actualized by living in the Land of Israel and observing the divinely revealed commandments with the proper intent. God alone knows the actions that will perfect the soul and they are those

given in the Torah. Halevi describes prophecy in terms of conjunction with the *Amr Ilahi* (Divine Matter), though he never offers a clear definition of this term (some scholars maintain that it refers to the *Logos* while others see it as an epithet for God in those instances where there exists an unmediated connection between the Deity and His creatures). The prophet attains the rank of the angels. By means of prophetic intuition, labeled by Halevi "the inner eye," the prophet sees the divine world and experiences an immediate relation with God leading to an overpowering love of the deity, described also in terms of the sense of "taste" (4:3, 15–17) – a state reminiscent of Islamic mystical descriptions of ecstatic rapture.

Halevi, however, does not present a single model for understanding the prophetic phenomenon. In passages where it is important for him to show that prophecy is an empirically verifiable phenomenon proving that God is cognizant of individuals and acts in history, Halevi adopts Saadiah's view of the Created Speech and Created Glory. In this manner he explains the Revelation at Sinai (1:87). In other cases of prophecy he wavers between this approach and the one that treats prophecy as an internal experience. Halevi goes so far as to leave open the possibility that the visions themselves are the product of the prophet's imagination acting under the control of the intellect, a view that follows the Aristotelian philosophers (4:3).

In treating prophecy more in terms of ultimate perfection than a divinely bestowed mission, Halevi himself may have sought to attain this state. Certainly his intention to move to Israel and revive the Jewish community there was part of his plan to bring about the conditions leading to the reappearance of prophecy. His aspiration for achieving this state also finds expression in his liturgical poetry.

MAIMONIDES. Prophecy is a central topic in all of *Maimonides' major writings. It is integrally related in his thought to a host of issues – the nature of God, divine knowledge, providence, divine law, politics, human perfection and biblical exegesis. Already in his early legal writings Maimonides presents a naturalistic approach to prophecy drawn from the Islamic Aristotelians. In his *Commentary to the Mishnah: Introduction to Perek Helek* (Sixth Principle of Faith), Maimonides describes prophecy as follows: "There are human beings possessing a superior nature and great perfection. They prepare their souls till they receive the form of the intellect. The human intellect then conjoins with the Active Intellect. From it [the Active Intellect], a noble emanation emanates upon them. These are the prophets; this is prophecy and this is its essence." The "form of the intellect" is a reference to the "acquired intellect," which according to Alfarabi (see *Farabi, Abu Nasr Muhammad, Al-) is attained only after mastery of all the sciences and apprehension of the essence of the intellect itself. This intellect is an immortal entity, not dependent upon the body for its existence, and it conjoins with the Active Intellect. A similar description of prophecy is presented by Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah: Laws of the Principles of the Torah* (7:1). In both of these legal works he goes on to

deal with the imagination's role in prophecy, which accounts for the prophetic visions.

The naturalistic approach to prophecy characterizes also *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides dismisses the view of the masses that God bestows prophecy upon whom He chooses even if the individual is not perfect. He insists that only a perfect individual – one who possesses a perfect physical temperament and imagination, the moral virtues, and a perfect intellect – can attain prophecy. He introduces the proviso, however, that God can miraculously withhold prophecy from the worthy individual (2:32). In this manner he leaves room for the workings of divine will, though he ascribes to it a negative role. Maimonides defines prophecy as an emanation from God to the Active Intellect and from there to the individual's rational faculty and imaginative faculty (2:36). This emanation results in the apprehension of metaphysical truths, principles of governance and the ability to divine the future. Philosophers and non-prophetic rulers and diviners possess perfection in only one of these two faculties, while one alone attains the Active Intellect's emanation (2:37) – the rational faculty in the case of the philosophers enabling them to master the sciences and the imaginative faculty in the case of the others enabling them to govern and divine the future (though imperfectly). The prophet for Maimonides thus reaches the pinnacle of human perfection and achieves the rank of the perfect philosopher, statesman and diviner. His account suggests that the emanation to the prophets does not consist of specific information, the Active Intellect has no cognizance of the recipient or his circumstances; rather it strengthens the prophet's own faculties to apprehend those matters about which he is thinking and to represent them in a figurative manner. Even the prophetic mission is explained by Maimonides in a naturalistic manner. While for many, if not most, prophets this attainment is a private one, for some the emanation is so strong that the recipient feels inwardly compelled to extend his perfection to others by assuming a leadership role despite the dangers involved (2:37). Maimonides stresses that one attaining intellectual perfection and prophecy in truth prefers the solitary existence in which he can continuously enjoy the state of contemplation. The private longings of the individual who attains perfection to detach himself from society together with the overpowering feeling that he must assume a public role is reflected in Jeremiah's initial prophetic vision in which he tries to refuse the divine mission but is commanded to undertake it nevertheless. The vision itself reflects the conflict in Jeremiah's own soul. Maimonides attempts to reconcile the dilemma facing the public prophet by positing a state in which the prophet continues to live in his own private space, contemplating God and the order of the world, even while engaged in interacting with others and leading them.

In Maimonides' approach to prophecy one can detect his wavering between viewing prophecy primarily in terms of an intellectual attainment and viewing it primarily in terms of the perfection of the imagination. In his most lengthy treatment of this phenomenon in the *Guide of the Perplexed* (2:36–48)

he stresses the latter dimension. His distinction between prophetic dreams, which occur while the recipient is asleep, and the higher level prophetic visions, which occur while awake, is based on the functioning of the imagination. A similar consideration marks his division of prophetic levels based on whether the prophet saw only parables in his dream, heard a voice without seeing anything, beheld a human being speaking, beheld an angel speaking, or beheld God speaking (2:45). His discussions of prophecy in the introduction to his treatise and towards its conclusion (3:51), on the other hand, describe prophecy as the ultimate intellectual attainment, surpassing the metaphysical knowledge possessed by the philosophers. The stress on the imaginative dimension of prophecy is not only important in explaining the biblical visions but also in order to draw a categorical distinction between Moses and all other prophets.

From his discussion of prophecy Maimonides excludes Mosaic prophecy and the Revelation at Sinai. He insists that as opposed to all other prophets, Moses' imaginative faculty was not involved in his prophetic experience, only his intellect. The uniqueness of Moses' prophecy has as its most important corollary the fact that his prophecy alone involves divine legislation. No other prophecy, past or future, results or will result in the laying down of a divine law (2:39). Maimonides appears to maintain that Moses received the Torah directly from God, word for word, and not from the Active Intellect. Furthermore, at Sinai an audible voice was heard by all of Israel, though only Moses heard the actual words (2:33). Maimonides clearly builds on Saadiah's view of Created Speech. Whether this stance reflects his true opinion on the subject or is designed solely for public consumption has been a source of controversy among Maimonidean scholars. His views on the nature of Mosaic prophecy and the Revelation at Sinai are clearly intended to uphold the supernatural origin of the Torah, its uniqueness and inviolability in a manner that would appeal to the masses of Jews. Despite this apparent fundamental departure from the naturalism of the Aristotelian philosophers, Maimonides continues to follow in their footsteps in his conception of the goal of the Torah. He maintains that it is designed to lead society to human perfection in the best possible manner by preventing wrongdoing, instilling the moral virtues and inculcating true beliefs, particularly the monotheistic idea and all this idea entails, which directs one to the path of intellectual perfection (2:49; 3:27). Even all the ceremonial commandments play a crucial role in this regard. All other legislations fall short in attaining this goal.

GERSONIDES. Maimonides' approach to prophecy, as well as Averroes' account of divination in his *Epitome to Parva Naturalia* had a decisive impact on subsequent treatments of this topic among the Jewish philosophers in Provence and in Spain. The most analytical discussion of this phenomenon is to be found in the early 14th-century treatise by Gersonides (*Levi ben Gershom), *Wars of the Lord*. Gersonides deals with prophecy in Book Two of his treatise in the context of his dis-

cussion of veridical dreams. He was more interested than his predecessors in understanding the details of this phenomenon – what exactly is the nature of the emanation from the Active Intellect and how does it come about that the prophet receives it as a particular message relating to his own historical circumstances. While Gersonides views prophets as perfect philosophers, he treats prophecy itself as primarily concerned with knowledge of the future. The prophet has no advantage over the philosopher *qua* prophet when it comes to theoretical knowledge.

The fact that prophecy primarily involves future contingent events raises in its wake certain fundamental philosophic problems for Gersonides: Can the future be known while humans at the same time enjoy free will? Can God's knowledge which is unchanging nevertheless encompass all particulars throughout history? Since Gersonides does not feel that the future can be known absolutely without sacrificing the idea of human freedom, even God in his view does not know what occurs as a result of free choice. The implications of this point are profound. Since God's knowledge is unchanging, not only does He not know the future but also does not know the past. In short, God does not know any individual *qua* individual nor any of his particular circumstances. The same is true also of the knowledge of the Active Intellect. This position is certainly exceptionally radical (and problematic) from a theological perspective. It also does not explain the empirical fact that diviners and prophets often see the future, including events that are contingent upon human choice.

Gersonides resolves this dilemma by ascribing to God and to the Active Intellect knowledge of the entire order of the world, including all the specific influences of the stars and planets upon human events. God does not know individuals as such, but has knowledge of all the influences that the heavenly bodies exert upon any person born at any given time and place. One may say that according to Gersonides, God and the Active Intellect possess knowledge of all possible horoscopes without knowing which horoscope applies to any particular person. Since most people act in accordance with the influences of the heavenly bodies, and do not exercise their freedom to act in a manner contrary to them, their future can be predicted with a fair amount of confidence. Hence all predictions are not absolute but conditional; they are contingent upon the fact that those involved will act in accordance with the celestial influences.

This view still does not explain how the Active Intellect transmits specific knowledge to a particular individual regarding other particular individuals or groups, without at all being cognizant of the individual and his circumstances. According to Gersonides, all information pertaining to the world order emanates continuously from the Active Intellect. The rational and imaginative faculties of the prophet, while “withdrawn” from the other faculties of the soul in the state of sleep, attain the information that applies to an individual or group who the prophet has in mind. One may think of the Active Intellect as a giant transmitter which transmits on all frequencies at once

all information regarding celestial influences on all places on earth through all time. The prophet receives only the information on the frequency to which his mind is attuned, that is to say, which people and groups he is thinking about. In this manner he learns their probable future without the Active Intellect being aware who receives this information, who and what is the subject of the information, and what actually occurs in the domain of human events.

Gersonides deals with Moses' perfection within the context of his discussion of prophecy, but he does not discuss in his philosophic treatise the most important facet of Moses' attainment – the divine law. He turns to this subject in his commentary on the Torah, where he sees the Torah as resulting from a miraculous and unique act of divine providence. Both the topics of providence and miracles are treated in the *Wars of the Lord*. They are seen as resulting from the impersonal activity of the Active Intellect vis-à-vis the person who has attained the level of perfection that triggers off this activity on his behalf.

HASDAI CRESCAS. The late 14th-century Spanish philosopher, Hasdai *Crescas sought to restore to Jewish philosophy the notion of God's personal involvement in the bestowal of prophecy as well as the primacy of the prophetic mission. In short, he sought to counter the naturalistic approaches to prophecy that characterize Maimonides' and Gersonides' approaches by treating prophecy primarily as a supernatural phenomenon. In his philosophic treatise, *Light of the Lord*, he defines prophecy as follows [Book 2, Section 4]: “Prophecy is a spiritual emanation of knowledge. It emanates from God to the intellect of the person, with or without an intermediary. It informs him, even without [his possessing] the necessary premises, of a certain matter or matters of which he is ignorant. It extends to all subjects. Its purpose is to guide him or others properly.” For Crescas, prophecy categorically differs from divination which is received by the imagination. It does not entail the recipient possessing any previous knowledge of the subject of the message. Prophecy is a gift of God, who knows all particulars through all time including all contingent events, to the perfect individual with the purpose of correct guidance. In the case of Moses, the prophecy came directly from God, who is the Author of each word of the Torah. Crescas accepts Saadiah's notion that the voice heard by Moses and by Israel at Sinai was a created audible one. Even in those cases where prophecy came through the mediation of the Active Intellect and was received by the internal faculties of the individual, God determined the message to be received.

Crescas does not abandon the naturalistic approach to prophecy entirely. The attainment of prophecy in his view is contingent upon the attainment of perfection. Yet this perfection for Crescas, as for Halevi before him, does not lie primarily in one's level of theoretical knowledge but in the level achieved of love of God, which is dependent also upon observance of the commandments. As a result of the prophetic experience, the individual not only attains a specific message

but achieves an even more passionate love of God and ultimate felicity. This experience in turn leads to the overpowering desire to call upon others to serve and love God. For Crescas, even more than for Maimonides, the prophetic mission is integral to the prophetic experience itself.

BARUCH SPINOZA. In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* by the 17th-century philosopher Baruch *Spinoza we find a reaction to the medieval Jewish philosophic tradition regarding prophecy at the same time that he incorporates into his treatise many of its ideas. For Spinoza there can be no “supernatural” activity or supernaturally attained knowledge, for the eternal laws of nature are inviolable. Spinoza depicts the prophets as simple-minded individuals, sharing with their contemporaries the same false beliefs about the world, but possessing a superior imagination that translates these beliefs into images. Hence their prophecies as presented in the Bible contain no theoretical truths, and Scripture should not be read as presenting such truths in figurative form. Moses, too, possessed a completely false conception of reality. The law that he laid down led to a well-ordered society of former slaves but certainly not to true virtue and felicity. In this manner Spinoza seeks to undermine completely the authority of the Bible (at least the Old Testament) as a source of knowledge beyond philosophy, and with it the authority of its religious interpreters. Only philosophers left unrestrained in their activity can attain true knowledge of the world. Only they are capable of achieving true virtue and the intellectual love of God. In a crucial sense they are for Spinoza the true prophets.

[Howard Kreisel (2nd ed.)]

Modern Jewish Thought

Depending on their attitude toward *revelation, modern Jewish philosophers treat prophecy either as a subjective experience or as a supernatural phenomenon. Those philosophers who regard prophecy as a subjective experience account for the phenomenon in a variety of ways. Some dismiss it as a form of psychological delusion; others view it as a mystical experience or an “inspired” insight, deriving from excellence of moral, intellectual, or imaginative faculties. Those who treat prophecy as a supernatural phenomenon differ over the nature of the prophetic experience. Of those philosophers who accept the notion that revelation constitutes a supernatural communication of content, some regard prophecy as the authentic disclosure of a message received word by word from God, a view referred to as “the doctrine of verbal inspiration,” and others regard it as the record of a human response to a divine revelation of content. According to the latter view, human and divine elements are intermingled in prophecy. Other philosophers, while accepting supernatural revelation, deprive it of any ideational or instructive content and restrict it to the manifestation of the Divine Presence; they look upon the words of the prophet as a personal response to a revelatory experience.

As a dogmatic rationalist, Moses *Mendelssohn maintained that reason could supply man with all the theoretical insights needed for salvation. Therefore, he restricted the

function of prophecy to the practical sphere, to the divine communication of instruction for human action (*Jerusalem* (1852), pt. 2, ch. 3).

The idealistic philosophers, emphasizing the cognitive aspects of prophecy, viewed it as a special aptitude for moral and religious insight. Hermann *Cohen regarded the prophets as pioneering thinkers who removed the mythical elements from religion and developed Judaism from a tribal religion into a universal ethical monotheism. The essence of the universal ethical monotheism is belief in God and adherence to the moral law (*Juedische Schriften*, 1 (1924), 310–6). Kaufmann *Kohler, like many other exponents of the doctrine of “progressive revelation,” viewed the “inspired” moral and religious insights of the prophets as important milestones in the evolution of the human spirit toward higher ethical and metaphysical truths.

Sharply reacting to idealistic theories that reduce prophecy to a function of the human spirit, Solomon Ludwig *Steinheim insisted that revelation cannot be explained solely in terms of rational or spiritual insight. The central religious affirmations of Judaism could not have originated within our own cognitive faculties because of their inherent limitations. The primary function of prophecy is to disclose religious truths that can be known only through supernatural revelation (*Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge*, 5ff.). However, Steinheim assigned reason an important function in determining which parts of Scripture represent the revelation of eternal truth.

Samson Raphael *Hirsch and other Orthodox thinkers subscribed to the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Bitterly objecting to any form of biblical criticism, Hirsch insisted that one must look upon the Scripture as a basic datum in the same manner scientists look upon natural phenomena as given (*Nineteen Letters* (1960), note to letter 18). As a staunch exponent of the traditional view, he rejected the evolutionary theory, according to which the contributions of later prophets are an advance over earlier formulations (*Horeb* (1962), 7).

Naturalist thinkers, such as *Aḥad Ha-Am and Mordecai *Kaplan, ruled out all supernatural elements in prophecy. However, because of their positive attitude toward Jewish nationalism, they could not follow Hermann Cohen in treating the prophet merely as an exponent of ethical universalism. According to Aḥad Ha-Am, who regarded the nation as the bearer of true ethical universalism, the prophet personifies the finest manifestation of the Jewish national spirit.

Jewish existentialist thinkers characterize prophecy as a dialogic relationship between man and God, rather than as the disclosure of a message. Martin *Buber in his book *The Prophetic Faith* (1949) maintained that the prophet is involved in a divine-human encounter. The prophet’s message reflects the prophet’s personal subjective response to his encounter with God. In the view of Franz *Rosenzweig, although revelation is a supernatural event occurring at specific times to particular individuals, the words of the prophet are nonetheless a purely

human “interpretation” of a revelatory experience in which God reveals His love to man. Abraham J. *Heschel contends that the prophet experiences not merely the presence or the love of God, but a revelation of the “divine pathos.” However, although prophecy is a revelatory experience in which God’s concerns and designs for man are apprehended (*The Prophets* (1962), 307–23), the expression of this experience is affected by the cultural background as well as the personal style of the prophet (*God in Search of Man* (1965), 258–62).

Of the most recent Orthodox thinkers, Joseph B. *Soloveitchik, maintains in his article “The Lonely Man of Faith” (*Tradition*, summer 1965) that the prophetic encounter, a dialogue initiated by God, makes possible the establishment of a “covenantal community” between God and man. Unlike the mystical experience, however, prophecy cannot be limited to religious feelings or intuitions, but entails a normative content. Abraham Isaac *Kook’s treatment of prophecy, in his work *Orot ha-Kodesh* (pt. 1 (1963), 267–72), reflects his mystical orientation. Genuine metaphysical insights, according to Kook, cannot be obtained by reason alone. When properly cultivated by a life of piety and holiness, man’s imaginative faculties enable him to attach himself to the Divine Source and apprehend reality in the light of the **Shekhinah*, or “Divine Presence.” Illumination derived from union with the Divine reaches its highest level in prophecy. Thus, Kook regarded prophecy as the ultimate religious goal.

[Walter S. Wurzburger]

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PROPPER, DAN (1941–), Israeli Industrialist, CEO of Israeli food giant Osem International Ltd., founded by his father in 1942. Propper and his brother GAD (1944–) hold 13% of Osem stock, with Nestlé the majority shareholder. The group produces more than 1,000 different food products in ten plants located throughout Israel. Exports went primarily to Europe. Net sales in 2004 reached nearly NIS 2.5 billion (\$550 million).

Propper studied food engineering and worked for a few years in the industry in England. He joined the firm in the age of 26, starting off in product development and becoming director-general at the age of 37. During the 1990s he served as president of the Israel Manufacturers Association, establishing himself as a highly visible spokesman for Israeli industry. In 2006 he announced that he was stepping down as Osem CEO while remaining chairman of the board.

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[Shaked Gilboa (2nd ed.)]

PROSBUL (Heb. פְּרוֹסְבוּל or פְּרוֹסְבוּל), a legal formula whereby a creditor could still claim his debts after the *Sabbatical Year despite the biblical injunction against doing so (Deut. 15:2). The text of the prosbul reads, “I declare before you, so-and-so, the judges in such-and-such a place, that regarding any debt due to me, I may be able to recover any money owing to me from so-and-so at any time I shall desire.” The prosbul was signed by witnesses or by the judges of the court before whom the declaration was made (Shev. 10:4, Git. 36a). The principle underlying the prosbul was based on the passage “and this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother... Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it; but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother thy hand shall release” (Deut. 15:2, 3). From this the law was deduced that the operation of the year of release did not affect debts of which the bonds had been delivered to the court (*bet din*) before the intervention of the Sabbatical Year (Shev. 10:2), since the Court was regarded as a corporate body to which the words “thy brother,” suggesting an individual, did not apply. The court would therefore collect its debts after the Sabbatical Year (Yad, Shemittah ve-Yovel 9:15). Through a slight extension of this precedent, the prosbul was instituted, which in effect amounted to entrusting the court with the collection of the debt. Without actually handing over the bond to the court as previously required, the creditor could