

LESSON 1

THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

The Prophetic Books

In the middle of the eighth century B.C., Amos and Hosea spoke to the Northern Kingdom; Micah and Isaiah spoke to the Southern Kingdom. Their messages were considered inspired and of great value. They were written and preserved as part of the Old Testament. These prophets were the fore-runners of numerous other inspired men whose messages were recorded and have been transmitted to us.

In our English Bible, based on the arrangement of the Septuagint, Isaiah begins the section known as The Prophets. Sixteen books are included in this section.¹ They are divided, primarily on the basis of length, into the four Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel) and the twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea through Malachi).

The Hebrew Bible grouped the Old Testament books differently from our English Bible: our historical books, Joshua through 2 Kings, were included as part of The Prophets. One function of a prophet was to interpret God's work and purpose in the history of Israel. God revealed His will through history, but a prophet was needed to interpret the revelation and to convey God's message to His people. Since the historical books contain accounts of prophets and interpretation of Israel's history by prophets, they are justifiably classified as part of The Prophets. They describe the work of the early prophets in Israel, such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha who are often referred to as non-writing prophets since their works were described but their messages were not written. A more common designation for these books is The Former Prophets.

In addition to the four books of The Former Prophets, the second section of the Hebrew Bible contains four books of writing prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve. Since these prophets followed the non-writing prophets described in the historical books, they are known as The Latter Prophets. These men are known primarily through their discourses which were collected into books bearing their names. Daniel was not included in The Latter Prophets. Our

¹Actually, there are seventeen books of The Prophets if Lamentations is considered as separate from Jeremiah. Jeremiah is recognized as author of both books.

Draw a line from the name of the prophet to the kingdom where he prophesied.

Micah Northern Kingdom

Amos

Hosea Southern Kingdom

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Underline the correct word or words.

The primary basis for dividing the sixteen books of prophets is (style, author, length of the books).

(length of the books)

The Hebrew Bible included as part of The Prophets J _____ through 2 _____, which are called historical books in our Bible.

(Joshua, 2 Kings)

List the other books included in The Prophets in the Hebrew Bible.

(Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve)

twelve Minor Prophets were collected into one book known as The Twelve. They have been designated as "minor" because of their brevity.

The Nature of Prophecy

The functions of prophets

To many people, prophecy is synonymous with prediction. The prophet is often thought of as a mystical person whose message or vision from Yahweh came through an ecstatic experience in which an outline of future events was revealed. Prophecy does involve prediction, but prediction is not the central feature. The prophets were inspired teachers whose messages were directed towards their contemporaries. Future hope and judgement, however, did concern the people in the day of the prophets just as they concern the people of today. Prophets taught the people the will of Yahweh for their daily lives and predicted judgement if they refused to obey. They were guided by the Spirit to give an inspired interpretation of Israel's history. The prophets predicted better days ahead for those in distress, if they repented, and destruction for those who continued in sin.

Although the prophets experienced ecstasy and visions, they should not be thought of as men given to seizures of frenzy. To their contemporaries, they were moral and ethical preachers of spiritual religion. They were men of great conviction who were willing to endanger their lives in proclaiming what God had revealed to them.

Prophecy in early cultures

Recent studies have revealed that prophetism was common to a number of ancient Near Eastern cultures. Five letters from Mari, which was located on the Middle Euphrates before 1700 B.C., speak of the appearance of a god's messenger, called a muḫḫum. Another letter mentions the appearance of a prophetess. These were associated with the temple of a deity from whom they received messages through omens, dreams, and ecstatic experiences. In Babylon, priests and priestesses used dream interpretations (normally the work of prophets) in their counsel to the king. In the fifteenth century in Assyria, a letter mentioned a priestess of Astarte (a feminine god) who was learned in magic and prediction. Ecstatic prophecy appears to have been a prominent phenomenon in ancient Near Eastern civilization.

Some scholars have concluded that Israel received prophetism from other cultures. It is true that certain aspects of external behaviour and religious psychology were common in various Near Eastern cultures. Since men of all cultures are religious, they have some religious characteristics in common. However, there are significant differences as well. Outside of Israel, witch doctors, medicine men, and sorcerers worked

The prophets t _____ the people the will of Yahweh, they p _____ judgement and blessings, and they i _____ God's revelation in history.

(taught, predicted, interpreted)

The prophets were men of great conviction who were willing to e _____ their lives in p _____ what G _____ had revealed to them.

(endanger, proclaiming, God)

Circle the early cultures that had prophets.

Mari	Babylon
Assyria	Israel
Greece	Arabia

(Mari, Babylon, Assyria, Israel)

themselves into frenzies of demonic spirit-possession in order to elicit secrets from the spirits for curing sicknesses and bewitching opponents. In Israel, sorcerers, soothsayers, and workers of divination were prohibited and denounced by the prophets. Although the ecstasy of Israel's prophets may have resembled some aspects of the external behaviour of other Near Eastern religious leaders, Johannes Lindblom concludes it is inaccurate to say that ecstasy or prophecy in itself was commonly borrowed by one people from another.² He believes that the phenomenon arose in different regions quite independently.

Terms for designating the prophet

The English word prophet is derived from the Greek word prophētēs. According to Liddell and Scott in A Greek-English Lexicon, the word means "strictly one who speaks for another, especially one who speaks for a god, and interprets his will to man." In Moses' call, he protested that he was slow of speech and could not act as a spokesman for God in the court of Pharaoh. "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god [Elohim] to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet [nabi']. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh . . ." (Exod. 7:1-2a). This passage makes clear that the Hebrews understood a prophet to be one who speaks for God.

The Hebrew word for prophet in the Old Testament is nabi'. Scholars are not agreed concerning the root meaning of this term. Some believe nabi' is from an Arabic root. The Arabic root naba'a means to proclaim or announce. The Hebrew derivative would therefore mean a spokesman or speaker. Other scholars believe the noun form comes from the Hebrew verb nabha' (to flow, boil up, or bubble forth.) The prophet would be one whose mouth poured forth words. Albright and others believe the word had an Akkadian ancestry which meant to call. The prophet would be one who was called by the gods. Other scholars believe that the noun is from an unknown Semitic root; therefore, the meaning of the term must be determined by usage alone since the root meaning is uncertain.

Two other Hebrew terms referring to the prophet and translated as seer are rō'eh and hōzeh. According to 1 Samuel 9:9, the relation of the seer and prophet is very close: "Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was before-time called a Seer." Amos is called a seer who prophesies: "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, . . . and prophesy there" (7:12). (Also see 2 Sam. 24:11; 1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 29:25.)

²Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1963), p. 32.

Underline the best definition for the Greek word prophētē.

1. *One who speaks for himself and does not listen to God.*
2. *One who speaks for another, especially one who speaks for God and interprets His will to man.*

(2)

Continue reading the next paragraph before doing the following exercise

Nabi' is the Hebrew word for prophet in the Old Testament. What other two Hebrew words are used to refer to prophet?

1. _____
2. _____

(rō'eh and hōzeh)

Nabi' (prophet) and the two terms translated seer may refer to the same person, but each emphasizes a different aspect of his function. Seer emphasizes the mode of receiving divine revelation, that is, by seeing or by visions. Prophet emphasizes the function of speaking forth the divine revelation which has been received.

Another designation for the prophet is man of God. Samuel is described by the servant of Saul as "a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass" (1 Sam. 9:6). The designation seems to emphasize the holy calling, the moral character, and the divine ministry of the prophet, one who sustained an unusually intimate relation with God.

The prophet was called the messenger of the Lord. The same Hebrew term is used for messenger and angel. Angels are special messengers of the Lord and to His people, making the will of God known to them. Prophets are also messengers who proclaim God's word, a description related to Nabi' (2 Chron. 36:15f.; Isa. 44:26).

The prophet was known as an interpreter. The messages delivered for God to the people were interpretations of God's will. The task of the prophet was often to interpret God's purpose and activity in history. History is the stage of God's activity, but not all men are able to see God's purpose and will being worked out in history.

A prophet was also called a servant of the Lord. God frequently spoke of "my servants the prophets" (2 Kings 9:7; 17:13; Jer. 7:25; etc.).

Prophecy and prediction

The predictive element is important in prophecy, but prophecy and prediction are not synonymous terms. Prophets did not write history in advance; however, much of what they spoke was fulfilled in future history. Amos warned of the captivity of Israel, and Jeremiah predicted the fall of Jerusalem. The prophets warned of many things to come which they did not expect to happen if the people turned back to God. The purpose of their predictions of disaster was to cause the people to repent in order that they would not be punished as predicted. The prophet often proclaimed hope to defeated people.

Some people use the books of the prophets as a "soothsayers' manual for predicting the future."³ Millenarians (persons who emphasize the millennium) have used unfulfilled prophecies to set dates for the end of the world. Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, and Irenaeus of the second century A.D. believed that the end was near. Joachim of Flora predicted the end of the world

³This expression is frequently used by R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 7ff.

Read down to the section Prophecy and prediction before doing the following exercise.

Match by placing the number of the definition in the blank before the term for the prophet.

- ___ a. Seer
- ___ b. Prophet
- ___ c. Man of God
- ___ d. Messenger of God
- ___ e. Interpreter
- ___ f. Priest

1. one who interprets God's purpose and activity in history.
2. one who makes God's will and word known to the people.
3. receives divine revelation by visions.
4. speaks forth the divine revelation received.
5. has a holy calling, a moral character, and a divine ministry.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

P _____ is an important element in prophecy but not s _____ to it. The prophet did not write history in a _____ but gave predictions to w _____ people of disaster if they did not repent and to give h _____ to people who had been defeated.

(Prediction, synonymous, advance, warn, hope)

in 1260. Hoffman and the Anabaptists of the Reformation period set the date for the world to end and the millennium to begin in 1533. Pastor Russell of Jehovah's Witnesses predicted that the world would come to an end in 1914. Although the Scripture speaks of the end of the world and the judgement of God, it does not give a detailed description nor a definite time for the event. Scott accuses those who use prophecy to predict details of future events of using the Bible (in some degree, at least) as a soothsayer's manual and an instrument of divination

The use of divination to predict the future was not unknown in the Old Testament. Joseph had a cup by which he divined (Gen. 44:5). Perhaps he observed the shapes assumed by wine dreggs or by oil poured on water. During the years of Saul's decline, he faced a battle with the Philistines. He desired to know the outcome of the battle; therefore, he asked the Lord. "The Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. 28:6). Then Saul sent his servants to find a woman who had a "familiar spirit" and could tell him the future. The king was taken to the woman of Endor who said, "Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" (1 Sam. 28:9). The Scripture reveals that divination was prohibited in Israel, but in his desperation Saul turned to the demonic practice.

The interpreter should avoid arranging biblical numbers and statements in an attempt to predict details of future events. The Scripture teaches the return of the Messiah, the resurrection, and the coming judgement, new heavens, and new earth. However, the chronological order and details of those great events are not part of revelation. Jesus said that not even He knew the hour of the end. The predictive element of prophecy should be taken seriously, but no attempt should be made to use prophecy in predicting chronological details in history. Actually, prophecy is more valuable in understanding the purpose and will of God as they are made known in historical events. Jesus was able to interpret God's purpose and will for His own life as a fulfilment of the prophecy set forth in Scripture, especially Isaiah. People were prepared by prophecy to expect the Messiah, but no person, before the time of Jesus, appears to have been able to use Isaiah to give a detailed account of the life and suffering of the Messiah. A study of the prophets helps a person to understand the will of God for his life and to prepare for the future. It does not enable him to know historical details beforehand. He may be able to predict general trends of history; for example, a nation which turns to wickedness will fall, and God will bring the present historical order to a conclusion with the return of Christ and the judgement of the people of all nations.

Prophetic writings are not to be used as a _____ manual nor an instrument of _____.

(soothsayer's, divination)

Underline the correct word.

The use of divination to predict the future was (known, unknown) in the Old Testament.

(known)

List five events the Scripture teaches about the end of time.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(the return of the Messiah, the resurrection, the coming judgement, new heavens, new earth)

Answer yes or no.

Are the preceding events listed in chronological order in the Scripture? _____

(no)

The Origin and Development
of Prophecy in Israel

Prohibition of divination

Deuteronomy 18:9ff. prohibits the use of divination, the practice of witchcraft, the interpretation of omens, and the use of spiritists to call up the dead because these activities are abominations to the Lord. God promised the Israelites a prophet, like Moses, who would make known the will and word of God. Israel would not need to practise witchcraft and spiritism.

Since men are created with the nature to worship God, a way is needed by which they relate to God and know His voice or word. The voice of the Lord would be made known to the people through His spokesman, the prophet. The Lord would put His words in the mouth of the prophet; therefore, the oracle of the prophet could be introduced by "thus saith the Lord." The word of the Lord would be made known to His prophet by revelation and not by divination and occult practices. Deuteronomy 18 warns that the prophetic institution could be used by false prophets who spoke without receiving revelation from God.

The earliest prophet

The prophetic institution was one of the most important elements in the religion of Israel and one which exercised a decisive influence on her later development. It is not easy to determine how early prophetism appeared in Israel. Moses assumed some of the prophetic functions, but his leadership cannot be classified as that of an inspired seer or prophetic spokesman. God did appear to him during his forty days on Mount Sinai and during the wilderness wanderings, but Moses did not have the characteristic of other seers who were given miraculous foreknowledge of the future or explanations of puzzling situations. Some Old Testament passages do give Moses the title of prophet (Deut. 18:15, 18; 34:10; Hos. 12:4).

Numbers 11:24-30.—This Scripture attributes to Moses the functions of a prophet. He related the words of the Lord to the people, and the Lord "spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease" (v. 25). Two of the men who remained in the camp and did not go out to the tabernacle received the Spirit and prophesied. Joshua urged Moses to forbid them, but Moses answered, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (v. 29). This Scripture implies three factors involved in prophecy: (1) the Lord spoke to the prophet or revealed His will to him some other way; (2) the prophet functioned under the control of the Spirit; and (3) the prophet spoke God's word to the people.

Read the following paragraph before doing the following exercise.

Are these statements true or false?

- 1. The believer should use prophecy to understand God's will and purpose for his life but not to set forth the details of future historical events. _____*
- 2. Divination and sorcery were prohibited in the Old Testament since they were abominations to the Lord. _____*

(1. true, 2. false)

What was one of the most important elements in the religion of Israel which exercised a decisive influence on her later development?

(the prophetic institution)

Circle the three factors involved in prophecy according to Numbers 11:24-30.

- A. The Lord speaks to the prophet or reveals His will to him.*
- B. The prophet uses a soothsayer's manual.*
- C. The prophet functions under the control of the Spirit.*
- D. He speaks God's word to the people.*

(A, C, D)

Numbers 12:2-15.—This passage indicates that God revealed Himself to a prophet by words, visions, and dreams. Revelation to prophets was usually given through visions and dreams, but because of Moses' greatness, God spoke to him "face to face" (Exod. 33:11).

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.—Moses was called a prophet, and the promise was given that a prophet, like Moses, would be chosen from among the people. God would put His words in the prophet's mouth, and he would speak all that God commanded him.

Moses functioned as a mediator between God and the people. From the very outset, the Israelite religion was not a product of tradition but was the creation of God's Spirit manifesting His purpose and will to the leader of the people. Man's relationship with God is based on revelation, and that revelation was given to the prophet who proclaimed it to the people.

Seers

The name indicates that these men saw more than ordinary mortals saw. They saw not only the future but other things that were hidden. The Lord opened Balaam's eyes and enabled him to see the angel which blocked his path (Num. 22:31). Balaam was instructed to speak to Balak only the words which the Lord told him. After Balaam concluded that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not seek God's word through omens, but the Spirit of God came upon Him (Num. 24:1ff.). In a discourse, he spoke of the man whose eyes were opened, who heard the words of God, who saw the visions of the Almighty, and who fell down and had his eyes uncovered. This event describes an ecstatic experience in which Balaam, with eyes closed and only semi-conscious, sank to the ground and was given visual and auditory revelations. The Lord first spoke to Samuel when he was asleep. Samuel mistook God's voice for that of Eli (see 1 Sam. 3). The revelation of the Lord to Samuel came through a vision (1 Sam. 3:15).

After Saul was unable to find his father's asses, the servant suggested that they inquire of "a man of God" (see 1 Sam. 9). The author, who wrote the account in a later period, explained that the "man of God" who was called a seer was later called a prophet. The Lord revealed to Samuel that Saul was the chosen man who would reign over Israel. The sign that Saul was God's chosen would be the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him and causing him to prophesy (see 1 Sam. 10:5ff.).

Ecstasy and prophecy

After Samuel announced to Saul that he had been chosen king, signs were given to assure him of the presence of the Lord. One of the signs was to receive the Spirit and to prophesy with "a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery,

Name three ways God made His message known to prophets.

_____, _____, _____
(words, visions, dreams)

Draw lines from the names Balaam and Samuel to the way in which God revealed His message to each.

Balaam	received God's revelation through a vision.
Samuel	saw God's message in a cloud. was enabled to see the invisible angel in his path.

(Balaam was enabled to see the invisible angel in his path. Samuel received God's revelation through a vision.)

and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp" (1 Sam. 10:5). The purpose of the sign is uncertain; however, some scholars have suggested that the authority of Israel's first king had to be established by evidence of charisma (an anointing of God's Spirit). A king was needed by the Israelites to defend against the Philistines. The Spirit of God came upon Saul as he joined the group of prophets who were coming down from the hill of God where a Philistine garrison was stationed.

During the declining years of Saul's rule, he sought to take David captive. David and Samuel were in Ramah with a company of prophets who were prophesying as Samuel presided over them. Saul proceeded to Ramah, and "the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night" (1 Sam. 19:23f.). The actions of Saul and the band of prophets under Samuel's leadership are not to be compared with the actions of the greater prophets of a later date.

Whether the writing prophets were descendants of the ecstatic groups under Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha continues to be debated. R.B.Y. Scott believes that the purpose of those associated with Saul was to arouse warlike fervour in themselves and others in a religio-patriotic movement against the Philistines.⁴ He compares them to the later prophets who appeared in the royal courts, eating at Jezebel's table and advising Ahab on the eve of battle. Scott believes that only the exceptional men from among those who acted independently, and not the "mad men of the Spirit," stood as ancestors to the great writing prophets.⁵ Scott considers that the moral character and spiritual insight of the writing prophets distinguish them from those who prophesied only for a living.

The school of prophets

Perhaps the company of prophets which Saul joined was a school of prophets under the leadership of Samuel. The band or school may have been disciples who gathered around the great prophet Samuel. This practice was followed by Elijah and Elisha (see 2 Kings 2-6). Isaiah and Jeremiah seem to have had disciples also. The sons of the prophet lived with their great teacher and were perhaps supported by gifts from the people. Elijah was fed by a widow of Zarephath in Phoenicia (1 Kings 17:8ff.). Elisha was entertained at the home of the rich Shunammite. The royal treasury may have supported a company of prophets who agreed with the king's wishes.

⁴See Scott, The Relevance of Prophets, p. 47.

⁵Ibid., p. 48.

Underline the correct answer.

Why did Saul experience ecstasy and prophesy?

- a. to prove that he could defeat the Philistines.*
- b. perhaps the first king of Israel needed to be established by evidence of charisma.*

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Are these statements true or false?

- 1. The early prophets were characterized by ecstasy for arousing warlike fervour. _____*
- 2. The writing prophets demonstrated immoral character and no spiritual insight. _____*

(1. true, 2. false)

Saul joined a school of prophets which perhaps _____ lead.

(Samuel)

The role of the Spirit in prophecy

The possession of the Spirit of the Lord qualified a man to be a prophet. The Spirit was the medium of divine inspiration and revelation to the prophet. Ecstatic behaviour was attributed to the Spirit's coming upon a man. During the early stages of the prophetic institution, ecstatic manifestations were more pronounced than at a later time when the institution was established in Israel. Both the early prophets and the later writing prophets claimed the Spirit of the Lord. Micah declared, "Truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord" (3:8). Ezekiel spoke of the Spirit's entering him (2:2; 3:24). In like manner, 1 Samuel 10:10 and 19:23 state that the Spirit of God came upon Saul and caused him to prophesy. Perhaps the external excesses of Saul were needed for God to accomplish His purpose through Saul in his particular day. The false prophets also claimed to be possessed by the Spirit. Their claims were proven false by the failure of their words to be fulfilled. They followed their own spirits and received money for speaking words which pleased men, especially kings.

Certainly there was a difference between the Hebrew prophets and the prophets of Baal of Mount Carmel who shouted, leapt, and danced to achieve ecstasy through self-induced means. Ecstasy did not induce prophecy, but divine revelation may have produced a moderate form of ecstasy. During a time of divine revelation, the prophet's mind and emotions were subjugated by the power of the divine Spirit. The true prophets' ecstasy did not include the irrational utterances and actions of raving, leaping, and self-mutilating which resulted from self-induced trances. Their ecstasy was the result of mental and emotional concentration upon Yahweh, allowing the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes through them. The personality of the prophet was not fused mystically into that of the Divine Being however, there may have been a temporary interruption of normal consciousness.

The transition of prophetic functions

After Samuel, there was less ecstasy in prophecy and more conservative action and intellectual expression. Probably Samuel led this change. He was a great influence in Israel and filled the role of a transitional figure. He marked the end of the theocracy (the rule of God over Israel through religious leaders, like Moses, instead of political leaders, like Saul and David) and participated in establishment of the monarchy. The prophets moved from the role of inciting patriotism to the political task of anointing the king chosen by God. As political leaders (kings) replaced national religious leaders, the prophetic role came to focus more on receiving God's word by which the nation was to be guided. The word of God shifted to an emphasis on righteousness and redemption.

What qualified a man to be a prophet?

(The possession of the Spirit of the Lord qualified a man to be a prophet.)

Rewrite the following statements to make them correct.

Ecstasy induced prophecy.

Divine revelation may not produce a moderate form of ecstasy.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Underline the correct words.

After Samuel, there was (less, more) ecstasy in prophecy and more (liberal, conservative) action and intellectual expression. The prophets moved from the role of inciting patriotism to the political task of (anointing, choosing) the king.

(less, conservative, anointing)

The prophet was not afraid to oppose the monarch if his reign degenerated. Nathan boldly told David that he had no right to have Bathsheba. The tradition of rebuking kings was continued by Elijah. Elisha commissioned Jehu to usurp Ahab's throne.

The significance of Elijah

After the kingdom was divided, more attention was given to Ahab and Elijah (1 Kings 16-22). Ahab was no greater than his father Omri, but the Israelite historian added material about him to enhance the deeds of Elijah and certain other prophets. A cycle of narratives surrounding the prophetic figure Elijah comprises four chapters, and the roles played by Micaiah ben Imlah and two other prophets, who remained anonymous, comprise the two remaining chapters of the section (1 Kings 17-20 and 21-22).

Elijah was held in great esteem by the Israelites. Both his origin and death were mysterious. He spoke to Israel at a critical time and called the nation back to loyalty to Moses' God. He was linked with Moses by later religious thinkers. Malachi states the expectation that this prophet would come again to herald the judgement and the Messianic Age. He became the representative of the Old Testament prophets. When Jesus was transfigured, Moses, the representative of the Law, and Elijah, the representative of the Prophets, appeared with Him.

Elijah lived during a time when idolatry was rampant. In order to strengthen relations between Israel and the Phoenicians, Omri had arranged the marriage of his son to Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. Just as Solomon built shrines in Jerusalem for his foreign wives, so King Ahab built a temple for Baal worship. Baal-Melkart was the official protective deity of Tyre. The temple was equipped with an altar and an image of Asherah, the mother goddess (1 Kings 16:32-33). King Ahab was content to recognize both Yahweh and Baal-Melkart. The school of prophets became advisers of the king. Since they were fed by the king, they sought to give advice that pleased him. They were also agreeable to having more than one god. Jezebel was devoted to her Phoenician religion; thus she began an aggressive campaign to cut off the prophets of Yahweh. The Baal prophets were likewise supported from the public treasury. Since the prophets of Yahweh were tolerant, Jezebel was unopposed in tearing down the altars of Yahweh, in killing His prophets, and in driving underground the loyal adherents of Yahweh. Elijah appeared on the scene and withstood all of the prophets of Baal who were backed by the queen. The account is described in 1 Kings 17 and 18.

In the name of Yahweh, Elijah announced a drought which was a challenge to Baal in the sphere of his power of fertility. During the drought, Elijah showed that Yahweh controlled fertility not only in Palestine but in Phoenicia as well, the special province

Answer yes or no.

Was the prophet afraid to oppose the monarch if his reign degenerated? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Underline the phrases that make the following statement complete and true.

Elijah was held in great esteem by the Israelites because—

- A. both his origin and death were mysterious.
- B. he wrote two books of the Bible.
- C. he spoke to Israel at a critical time and called her back to Moses' God.
- D. he anointed their king.

(A, C)

Four conditions that contributed to Jezebel's success were:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

of Baal-Melkart. The challenge to the power of Baal-Melkart reached its climax on Mount Carmel. Elijah charged the people with being swayed to follow the impotent fertility god Baal-Melkart. The power of Yahweh was demonstrated by the consumption of the sacrifices by fire. The 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah were put to death. Elijah preserved Yahweh worship in Israel.

Elijah, Micaiah, and Elisha (about 850 B.C.) linked the prophetic tradition of Samuel (about 1025 B.C.) to the great eighth century writing prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah). The prominent theme in the message of each was faithfulness to Yahweh and righteous conduct. The earlier prophets denounced the immorality of kings. The eighth century writing prophets denounced the people also.

Is this statement true or false?

The prominent theme in the messages of both the early and later prophets was faithfulness to Yahweh and righteous conduct. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. What is the primary basis for dividing the sixteen books of prophets into major and minor?

2. According to the Hebrew Bible, what books are considered to be The Prophets? _____
3. List three functions of the prophets. _____
4. Name four early cultures which had prophets. _____
5. Define the Greek word prophētē. _____
6. What do the following Old Testament terms emphasize when referring to a prophet?
 (1) Seer _____ (2) Prophet _____
 (3) Man of God _____
 (4) Messenger of God _____
 (5) An interpreter _____
7. Give three key statements concerning the relation of prophecy and prediction. _____
8. How should the believer use prophecy? _____
9. Why were divination and sorcery prohibited in the Old Testament? _____

10. According to Numbers 11:24-30, list three factors involved in prophecy. _____

11. List three ways God made His message known to prophets. _____
12. Give two examples in which God's message came to the seer through a vision or dream. _____
13. Why did Saul experience ecstasy and prophesy? _____
14. What distinction does Scott note between the early prophets and the writing prophets? _____

15. What was the relation of God's Spirit to ecstasy? _____
16. Name three changes in prophetic function at the time of Samuel. _____

17. List three reasons Elijah came to be esteemed as the representative of the prophets. _____
18. List four conditions that contributed to Jezebel's success. _____
19. What was the prominent theme in the messages of the early and later prophets? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2)

1. Did Israel borrow prophecy from other cultures? Explain your answer.
2. Compare and contrast the practices of the prophets of Israel with those of other cultures.
3. How were true and false prophets distinguished from each other?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Outline the development of prophecy in Israel as revealed in the Old Testament.
2. Research the following questions. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible or some other book on prophecy or Old Testament introduction will be helpful.
 - (1) Discuss different methods God used in revealing His message to the prophets (a study of revelation).
 - (2) Were the prophets and priests antagonists or did their ministries complement one another? (A contemporary debate is attempting to evaluate the relation of the prophets and priests.)
3. After reading Deuteronomy 18:9-22 and other Scriptures on divination, sorcery, and witchcraft, compare and contrast them to obeah, voodoo, and other forms of spiritism in our day. From this study, determine what the Christian attitude should be towards contemporary forms of spiritism.

Seminar Discussion

1. What is the meaning of prophecy?
2. How did the prophet receive "the word of the Lord"?
3. Compare the role of the prophet and the priest in the religion of Israel. Which do you think made the greater contribution?
4. What kind of men were the prophets? Is the modern-day pastor more like the prophet or the priest? Why?
5. What is the role of prediction in prophecy?
6. Is there any way of determining when ecstasy is genuine and when it is self-induced? Why is this question important today?