

## OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETISM

## O. Terminology

## A. Divisional

1. Former Prophets

- a. Basically historical in content
- b. Term "prophet" was attached to them because they were considered to be prophetic in authorship
- c. Term "former" does not refer to chronology but to the order in the canon in relation to the writing prophets
- d. Books included (Joshua, Judges, I&II Samuel, I&II Kings)

2. Latter Prophets

- a. The writing prophets
- b. Order in the Jewish canon
  - 1) Major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
  - 2) Minor prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- c. Daniel
  - 1) Placed in the historical section of the "Writings" in the Jewish canon
  - 2) An historical-prophetic work
  - 3) The critical problem of the dating

## B. Hebrew terminology for a prophet

1. Ro'eh

- a. Translation: Seer
- b. One who through the means of sight, inward or outward, has the message of God revealed to him
- c. The stress is on the means of reception rather than on the means of delivery
- d. Individuals
  - 1) Samuel (I Sam 9:9, 11, 18, 19; I Chron 9:22; 26:28; 29:29)
  - 2) Zadoc (II Sam 15:27)
  - 3) Hanani (II Chron 16:7)
  - 4) General usage (Isa 30:10; Jer 1:1; Ezek 8:6; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zech 4:2)

2. Hozeh

- a. Nearly synonymous with Ro'eh (cf. Hanani above)
- b. Translation: Seer
- c. The stress is on the means of reception
- d. Individuals
  - 1) Gad (II Sam 24:11)
  - 2) Heman (I Chron 25:5)
  - 3) Iddo (II Chron 9:29)
  - 4) Hanani (II Chron 19:2)
  - 5) Asaph (II Chron 29:30)
  - 6) Jeduthun (II Chron 35:15)
  - 7) Amos (Amos 7:12)

3. Nabi'

- a. Translation: Prophet
- b. The stress is on the function rather than on the means of reception. A prophet was a messenger of a god.
- c. The term occurs over 300 times. It will be dealt with more fully in subsequent discussions.
- d. The female counterpart (prophetess)
  - 1) Miriam (Ex 15:20)
  - 2) Deborah (Jud 4:14)
  - 3) Huldah (II Kings 22:14; II Chron 34:22)

## 4. 'ish Elohim

- a. Translation: Man of God
  - b. The stress is on the relationship between man and God
    - 1) Negative: Not all men -- a lost relationship
    - 2) Positive: A mediator -- to go between God and man
  - c. Individuals
    - 1) Moses (Deut 33:1; Joshua 14:6; I Chron 23:14; II Chron 30:16; Ezra 3:2; Ps 90:1 'title')
    - 2) Samuel (I Sam 9:6ff)
    - 3) Shemiah (I Kings 12:22; II Chron 11:2)
    - 4) Elijah (I Kings 17:18, 24; II Kings 1:9)
    - 5) Elisha (II Kings 4:7-13:19)
    - 6) David (II Chron 8:14; Neh 12:24)
    - 7) Iedaiiah (Jer 35:4)
    - 8) Angel of Yahweh (Judges 13:6)
    - 9) Unnamed
      - a) Against Eli (I Sam 2:27)
      - b) Against Bethel and Jeroboam (I Kings 13:1)
      - c) To Ahab (I Kings 20:28)
      - d) To Amaziah (II Chron 25:7,9)
5. The relationships of these various terms
- a. Ro'eh and Hozeh stress the reception of the message
  - b. Nabi' stresses the prophetic function of spokesman
  - c. 'ish Elohim stresses the mediatorial aspect
  - d. Overlapping of useage
    - 1) Parallel use of Ro'eh and Hozeh in connection with Hanani (II Chron 16:7; 19:2)
    - 2) Parallel use of Hozeh and Nabi' in connection with Gad (II Sam 24:11)
    - 3) Parallel use of Ro'eh and Nabi' in I Sam 9:9
    - 4) Relation of 'ish Elohim to the other terms for a prophet
      - a) Parallel use in connection with Ro'eh and Nabi' (I Sam 9:8,9; I Kings 13:18)
      - b) Not used in an immediate context with Hozeh
6. Schools of prophets
- a. Loose associations of prophets
  - b. Not necessarily a place of instruction
  - c. Found mainly during two periods
    - 1) Days of Samuel
      - a) Hebel nabi'im -- Band of prophets (an association)
      - b) I Sam 10:5-12; 19:19-20
      - c) Indications of an increase in numbers
      - d) Samuel may have been the head over all the prophets (I Sam 19)
    - 2) Days of Elijah and Elisha
      - a) Bney Hanabi'im -- Sons of the prophets
      - b) An individual prophet like Elijah or Elisha was probably the head of the group
      - c) Economical and social elements of the relation
      - d) Educational relationship
      - e) Relation of the phrase "Sons of the Prophets" to the term Nabi'
 

In some contexts the sons of the prophets seem to have no independent power or authority while in others one of the sons of the prophets is called a prophet (cf. II Kings 6:5; II Kings 9:1-4; I Kings 20:35, 38, 41)

I. Chronology

- A. Some of the prophets before the time of Moses
  - 1. Able (Luke 11:50,51)
  - 2. Enoch (Jude 14)
  - 3. Noah? (Gen 9:24; II Peter 2:5)
  - 4. Abraham (Gen 20:7)
  - 5. Patriarchs?  
cf. The patriarchal blessings by Isaac (Gen 27:28, 29)  
Jacob (Gen 49)
- B. Moses the Prophet
  - 1. Relation to the other prophets
    - a. None like him (Num 12: Deut 34:10-12)
    - b. The prophets built on the Old Covenant whose human founder was Moses (cf. Deut 18:15)
  - 2. A servant (Num 12:7)
  - 3. Compared with Christ (Hebrews 3:1-6)
- C. Institution of the prophetic office (Deut 18:9-22)
  - 1. Negative: not like the heathen (vv 9-14; cf. Ex 22:18; Lev 20:27; Gal 5:20; Rev 22:15)
  - 2. Positive: one like Moses, one from among Israel
  - 3. As they are about to enter the promised land
  - 4. Divine in its origin
  - 5. mediatorial in nature
  - 6. Looks for ward to the office of Christ (cf Heb 1:1,2)
- D. Pre-Literary prophets after the time of Moses
  - 1. Period of the Judges
    - a. Unnamed prophets (Judges 6:8; I Sam 2:27)
    - b. Samuel (I Sam 3, etc.)
  - 2. Period of the kingdom
    - a. Samuel
    - b. God (I Sam 22:5; II Sam 24:11)
    - c. Nathan (II Sam 7:2; 12:25; I Kings 1)
    - d. Ahijah (I Kings 11:29; 14:2, 18)
    - e. Jehu (I Kings 16:7, 12)
    - f. Elijah (I Kings 7ff)
    - g. Elisha (I Kings 19- II Kings 13)
    - h. Micaiah ben Imlah (I Kings 22)
- E. Literary prophets
  - a. . . . Approximate time of activity

	Conservative dating	Critical dating (where differing)
1. Isaiah	746-698	( I (1-39) 746 II (40-55) 540 III (56-66) 450 )
2. Jeremiah	626-586	
3. Ezekiel	592-570	
4. Daniel	590-530	165
5. Hosea	725	
6. Joel	830	4th or 3rd cent
7. Amos	760-755	
8. Obadiah	(850) (585)	585
9. Jonah	760	430
10. Micah	750-722	
11. Nahum	625	post 621
12. Habakkuk	607	
13. Zephaniah	pre 621	
14. Haggai	520	
15. Zechariah	520-518	
16. Malachi	435	

b. General area of activity

- 1. North  
Hosea, Amos, Jonah (Nineveh)
- 2. South  
Joel, Obadiah, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- 3. Babylon  
Ezekiel, Daniel

F. Summary

- 1. Coeval with the beginning of redemptive history; Protevangelium
  - a. "First prophecy" of a divine Redeemer (Gen 3:15)
  - b. Spoken directly by God without the necessity of prophetic intermediation
- 2. The patriarchs, especially Abraham, were recipients of visions and divine revelation
- 3. God spoke "face to face" with Moses
- 4. Until the close of OT prophecy with Malachi, prophets appear continually in Hebrew history
- 5. Prophecy rose to great literary heights in the pre-exilic oracles of Isaiah and Jeremiah

III. The character of prophecy

A. Associated with the Spirit of God

- 1. Num 11:24; I Sam 10:5,6; 19:24; II Peter 1:20, 21
- 2. Ecstasy was sometimes present, but it would be an error to consider it the predominant characteristic

B. True and False

1. False

- a. Outside of Israel
  - 1) cf. Deut 18:9ff
  - 2) Same terminology used
    - a) Terminology is not the criterion
    - b) The message and its source is important
- b. Within Israel
  - 1) Prophets of Baal and Asherah (I Kings 18:19ff; Jer 2:8)
  - 2) Yahweh prophets (I Kings 22; II Thess 2:9-12; Jer 14:14ff; 23:13ff; 27-29)
    - a) False prophets sometimes associated together about a common center, such as the king's court (cf I Kings 22)
    - b) Often willing to speak a message that would be pleasing to the king in order to seek his favor (cf. the messenger who tried to persuade Michiah, I Kings 22:13)
    - c) Men who could be deceived (I Kings 22:21-22)
    - d) Those who prophesied for self ( Ez 13:7 & 9)
      - (1) Product of a living spirit (Ez 13:6)
      - (2) Product of his own heart (Jer. 23:14)

2. True

- a. Outside of Israel (cf Balaam Num 22:5ff)
- b. Within Israel
  - 1) Criteria for determining the true
    - a) Miracles (Ex 4:8)
    - b) Fulfilled prophecy (Deut 18: 21,22)
    - c) Witness of the Spirit (I Jn 4:1-3)
    - d) Primary purpose of the prophet
      - (1) To promote self--false (Micah 3:5,6,11)
      - (2) To promote God--True
    - e) Conformity to the Word of God (Deut 13:1-4)

- 2) Characteristic elements
  - a) Called by God
  - b) Did not arise out of the false (the false were a deterioration of the true)
  - c) Direct revelation as a gift from God rather than instruction of men

#### IV The functions of the Prophet

##### A. Passive

1. The reception of the Word of God
2. Means of reception

##### a. Hearing

- 1) Yahweh speaks -- the prophet hears
- 2) Unique position of Moses ( Numbers 12:6-8)
- 3) Internal aspect
- 4) Association with other means of reception

##### b. Seeing

- 1) Yahweh shows -- the prophet sees
- 2) Dreams
  - a) The consciousness of the dreamer
  - b) Truthfulness of the message
    - (1) Not affected by the method
    - (2) Not all dreams bear the message of Yahweh (cf. Jeremiah 23:23-32)

##### 3) Visions

- a) The mind of the prophet is lifted to a high plane of intercourse with God
- b) The prophets, while in the visionary state, retain the faculty of reflection and introspection (cf. Isaiah 6:1ff)

##### c. Theophanies

- d. Often both hearing and seeing are involved at the same time, and in most cases it is the word which is the most important aspect since it makes understandable what has been seen. The word also becomes the vehicle for transmitting the message, not only to the prophet but also from the prophet to the people

3. The term "passive" is not meant to convey the idea that the prophet is not in control of his faculties but that the origin of the message is God and not man.

##### B. Active

1. The result of the commissioning by God and the message from God
2. Proclamation of the word of God

- a. Relation of the prophet to God -- spokesman (cf. Exodus 4:15, 16; 7:1,2)

- b. Methodology of the proclamation

- 1) Indirect
- 2) Direct

- c. Nature of the proclamation

- 1) Grounded in the previously given word of God
- 2) Speaks to a then present situation
- 3) May speak of a future situation
- 4) Relation of the predictive element

##### a) Extremes

- (1) to stress the predictive element as the most important

- (2) to deny the presence of predictive elements

- b) A preview of the future arising from the exigencies of the present

- (1) to warn the impious of judgment

- (2) to encourage the faithful to persevere