

PROPHETS

Three white tulips with green stems and leaves are arranged diagonally across the frame. One tulip is in the upper left, another in the upper right, and a third in the lower center. The tulips are in various stages of bloom, with some petals slightly open. The background is plain white.

The Non
Literary
Prophets



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INTRODUCTION

SOCIO- RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCE OF PROPHECY

I. Patriarchal period:

- Patriarchs are the chieftains of nomadic groups
- There were many wandering groups. They often got into clash.
- So the group had to stand together.
- Israel was a family.
 - Socially: nomadic way of life imbued with great clan solidarity.
 - Religiously: Faith in the God of the Fathers, not a temple-God or city-God, but a God solidarity with the people (family God) No organize priesthood, no class differentiation.

II. Period of the Judges: (period of the Tribal confederation)

- After Exodus, people came and settled in Palestine.
- They lived together-12 tribes as brothers and equals.
- But they lived around a central sanctuary for worship (place where Ark of the Covenant was kept) Various delegate from Tribes came together and listen to laws read in public, problems were discussed and decisions were made.

III. Monarchical Period

- Israel came of age, almost emancipated from God. Samuel-Saul-David-Solomon. (1 Sam 8. 4-5, 7)
- It becomes a nation. The nomads becomes citizens. They feel self-sufficient, didn't feel the need of God. During Solomon's period political kingdom, after him worked kings.
- Cult of Royal person propped up by court theology. Theology developed by court men: priests. But rich people are able to theologize about God of slaves. They produce such theology which supports them. So class differentiation.
- Large oppressive royal house: Kings married pagan princess to seal their relationships. Each princess had brought with them many people for service. They stayed in the court. So big royal house to support them taxes had to be collected. Therefore Solomon took census and divided into 12 districts.
- People of God got divided into a minority of rich landlords and a large majority of landless peasants - reduced to slavery
- Rich people became business-minded than covenant mind. Poor were exploited by judges, landlords, tax collectors.

- Degeneration of priests-more poojaris than priests, more loyal to the king than to God because of security it entails.
 - Religious leaders in blissful blindness to religious integrity. They were blind to the goodness of God.
 - Religion got subordinated to the state.
 - King was the leader. So they tried to bring shrines. Solomon rich king living in a palace. So he said God also much have a palace. So big temple, So kings are petty Gods.
 - God got distanced from the people (clerical God) because of this complicated science priests became mediator. So distance between God and people.
 - Cult became “royal” (extravagant). So only rich people could worship. Poor people were not able to worship because of poverty.
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Prophets and Prophecies enter into Israel with the above history as its background

Deuteronomic History had a big role to play in ushering in the Prophets



PROPHETS

Prophecy: God's shock treatment to his lethargic people who were ignorant of true religion, who were self-complacent.

Prophets: God's messengers, God – intoxicated men holding in their hearts the fury of a morally outraged God.

Prophet: He is not a foreteller but a forth-teller-God's messenger. He is an inspired one who speaks on the authority of another (Ex. 7:1) Moses resisted at least four times.

Nabi: Hebrew word for messenger. It means one called by God, entrusted with a message from God. One who has identified oneself with that message with all the emotional solidarity. One is capable of (one who shares in the pathos of God). The root of this word means strong "Call".



PROPHETS & MYSTICS

Mystics:

Experience the God of immanence in silence and isolation (supernatural spirituality.)

Private persons who can keep revelations to themselves.

Prophets:

Experience the God of history in the turmoil of history. (earthly spirituality).

Men of the public word, under divine compulsion to communicate revelations to the people.

Mystical Spirituality:

- World-negating spirituality with long methodical training in Sp. Exercise.
- **Prophetic Spirituality:**
- world-affirming s. with a people oriented holiness.



PROPHETS & PRIESTS

Prophets:

Non-institutional men raised from the ranks of the people to champion and a personal call.

To think with anguish and concern, over God's goals and hopes for His people.

Prophets, if they had lived according to magisterium (they had their own structure), would not have been able to receive God's message

Priests: Care-takers of an institution



Prophets among the Pagans

In some religions, the persons who would gather together, sing and dance are named as the prophets; they would go into ecstasy. Whatever they speak during this time, is considered to be prophecy.

- **Mari Prophets**
- **prophets of Baal**
- **Phoenician**
- **Arameans**
- **Assyro-Babylonian**
- **Greece**



The Prophets in Israel

Uniqueness

- The Scriptures accept the existence of Prophecy outside Israel (Num 22-24)
- But their own specificity is in their contents (about God, about morality) and in their purpose.
- The ethical monotheism of the prophecy of Israel is a spiritual newness
- Prophets saw themselves as called or appointed, or commissioned to speak on behalf of Yahweh
- There is political, socio-economic character of the message from God (In the society of Israel, both religion and politics went together).
- Religion and society are the two sides of the same coin



The Prophets in Israel

Early Prophets in Israel

- The Rabbinic tradition holds of 48 male prophets and 7 prophetesses. The word Nabi is present already in the book of Genesis. But their role and function kept on developing, till it reached the climax in the 8th century BC. It reigned supreme in the 8th century BC, before it disappeared. The following persons are named as prophets in the Bible.

All of them did not play the role of a Prophet but contributed to the development of Prophecy in Israel



The false Prophets

- God did not call them to prophesy.
- They spoke falsely in the name of God.
- They were the great enemies of the true prophets of Israel.
- They prophesied to please the kings. Some were even members in the kings' court. They were also named as court prophets.
- The true prophets like Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zaphaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel condemned them. Their existence (1 Kgs 18:19; 22:24) and activities (Hos 4:5; Isa. 28:7; Mic 3:5-8; Zaph. 3:3; Jer. 5:31; 6:13; 8:11; 14:13-16; 23:13-30; 28:11-17; Ezek13:1-23) are confirmed by the Bible.



How to Identify The false Prophets

i. Their words will not come true (Deut. 18:21-22).

ii. The false prophets also performed things that appeared to be miracles. They attributed the glory to themselves.

iii. True prophets announced destruction too when it was needed. False prophets prophesied only to please people. They were deceivers.

In short, the true prophets led the exemplary life and inspired others to follow them. They condemned those who concentrated only in temple and their ministry without making efforts to reform their moral life (Jer 7:4-15; Mic 3:11; Amos 2:6-16). The true prophets were the religious conscience of Israel.



Features of true prophets

- men with passionate urging message
- run against the current at risk to themselves ready to suffer the consequences.
- responsibility to the establishment of the community, sharing its disasters but never deserting it. They always said “we have sinned” sharing its disaster.
- men of hope because they believed in divine justice
- always champion the cause of the poor
- men who comfort the afflicted & afflict the comforted.



Classification of Prophets

Literary Prophets

These are the Prophets who have books in their names

Classical Prophets

They have their messages in writings. They preach to the people

Canonical Prophets

They have their books in the Canon of the Bible. (Major And Minor Prophets)

Non-literary prophets

(who possess no biblical books in their names)

Samuel, Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah,

Elisha etc

Non- Classical Prophets

We have very little of Their messages but more of their lives ,deeds, Actions. They preach primarily to the rulers

Non-Canonical Prophets

They do not have writings in the Canon.





SAMUEL

NATHAN

ELIJAH

ELISHA

SAMUEL

- Samuel was the son of Elkanah & Hannaah(1Sam 1).
- He was the last in the series of Judges and first one among the series of Prophets
- He was a key figure in keeping Israel's identity and religious tradition alive during a period of defeat and occupation by the Philistines (1 Sam 4).
- In this time of confusion and dissolution, he, as a single individual played the role as priest, prophet and judge. He gathered the people at Mizpah and challenged them to maintain the covenantal obedience (1 Sam 7:3-6).
- He had the powerful Philistines under his control till his death (1 Sam 7:13).

SAMUEL

- He was not only a leader but also a judge (1 Sam 7. 15-17)*
- He was also a seer (1Sam 9. 3-10) See also 1 Chr 9.22
- It is in this context that the title 'Man of God' seems to have been more original (1 Sam 8:6-10).
- Samuel was the one who introduced Monarchy (King-Maker) in Israel
- He outlined the rights and duties the king (1 sam 8.1-22; 11.25; 12.1-25)
- He anointed Saul as the first king of Israel (1 Sam 10.1ff)#
- He was also a Priest (1 Sam 7.7-9)\$

SAMUEL

- He was an Ecstatic Prophet (1 Sam 10. 5-16)
- He was also a genuine Prophet = “The word of the Lord came to Samuel” (1 Sam 15:10), this phrase is normally used for the writing prophets (1 Sam 9:15; Jer 7:1).
- Yahweh made personal revelation to Samuel (1 Sam 9:15)
- He denounced the priesthood of Eli because of the corruption of his sons (1Sam 3:1-14).
- He became widely recognized in Israel as a trustworthy prophet (1 Sam 3:19-4:1)

NATHAN (=God gave)

- ❑ He worked in the time of king David
- ❑ He played a vital role in reforming the liturgy with the cooperation of prophet Gad
- ❑ Kings always had a link with the temple (this was to get the support of the people and also to get the divine approval)
- ❑ The prophet Nathan was the one who proclaimed, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16).

Nathan condemned the sin of David

(2Sam 12.1-25)

- ❑ Justice and Morality are to be respected by all
- ❑ Sin is a sin; be it a king or an ordinary man
- ❑ David , Bathsheba, Uriah
- ❑ Nathan gave a parable that made David to pronounce judgement on himself
- ❑ David repented

Nathan, the king - maker (1Kgs 1.5-40)

- ❑ Problem of succession and David functioned a court Prophet
- ❑ Adonijah was the rightful successor (1 Kgs 1. 5-10)
- ❑ Nathan played the role of a king maker
- ❑ David made Bathsheba to demand kingship for Solomon and he himself affirmed the request.

ELIJAH

- ❖ Elijah is from Tishbe from Gilead and that is the reason he is called Tishbite (1 Kgs 17.1; 21.17,28; 2kgs 1.3)
- ❖ He is the greatest of the non-literary Prophets
- ❖ Elijah means 'My God is Yahweh'
- ❖ His origin is unknown
- ❖ He was taken up into heaven (2 Kgs 2.1-13) like Enoch (Gen 5.24)
- ❖ He is expected to return in the last days (Mal 4.5) see also Mt 11.14; Lk 1.17; 9.30)
- ❖ He is praised in the book of Sirach 48.1,4

Elijah's Cycle

There are six episodes with eight miracles

1. Elijah decreed a drought (1kgs 17.1)
The Ravens fed Elijah (1Kgs 17.2-6)
Elijah fed the widow of Zarephat (1Kgs 17.9-16)
Elijah saved the son of the widow (1kgs 17.17-24)
Elijah met the king Ahab (1Kgs 18.16-19)
2. Elijah with the prophets of Baal (18. 20-40)
3. Elijah flees in fear of Jezebel (1 Kgs 19.1-14) And God reveals himself (1 Kgs 19. 9-13)
4. Elijah calls his disciple Elisha (1 Kgs 19. 19-21)
5. Naboth Vineyard and Elijah curses Ahab (1 Kgs 21. 19)
6. Elijah and Ahaziah the son of Ahab (2 kgs 1. 1-17)
Elijah calling fire from heaven to destroy two groups of people (2 Kgs 1. 5-18)

Elijah the Prophet

- Prophet Elijah lived like a hermit (1 Kgs 17:2-6).
- He functioned as the mouthpiece of God (1 Kgs 17:24).
- He is referred to as a man of God (1 Kgs 17:18; 2 Kgs 1:9)
- He called himself as a prophet of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18:22).
- Both the angel of Yahweh (1 Kgs 19:5-8; 2 Kgs 1:3,15) and the spirit of Yahweh (2 Kgs 2:16) played an important role in his life.
- The hand (symbol of power) of the Lord was upon him (1 Kgs 18:46).
- The word of the Lord came to him (1 Kgs 19:9; 21:17,28).
- He spoke in the name of Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:14; 2 Kgs 1:4).

Two events that make Elijah the founder of Prophecy

1. Defeat of Baalism

- 1 Kings 18

2. Revelation of God

-1 Kings 19



ELISHA

- ❖ Elisha means “My God Saves”
- ❖ His vocation 1 Kgs 19. 19-21
- ❖ He asked for a double share of his spirit 2 Kgs 2. 9-10. This is the right of the first born Deut 21. 17
- ❖ Members of the Prophetic guild looked up to him for guidance and assistance. He visited these groups in their places like Bethel, Gilgal, Mount Carmel, Samaria and Jericho (2 Kgs 2.25; 4. 25, 38)

Elisha the Prophet

- ❖ He was called as 'Man of God' (2Kgs 4.9, 40, 42)
- ❖ He is referred to as Prophet (2 Kgs 6.12)
- ❖ He called himself a Prophet (2 Kgs 5.8)
- ❖ A little girl called him a Prophet (2 Kgs 5.2)
- ❖ He spoke in the name of Yahweh (2 Kgs 3.16; 4.43; 7.1)
- ❖ Word of the Lord rested on him (2 kgs 7.1)
- ❖ He received visions (2 Kgs 8.13)
- ❖ He was aware of things happening around him. He had extraordinary power (2 Kgs 6. 12)

Elisha the Miracle Worker

- 1). Water is healed with Salt (2 Kgs 2. 19-22)
- 2). Miracle with Oil (2 Kgs 4.1-7)
- 3). Giving life to the Shunamite(2Kgs 4. 8-37)
- 4). Purifies the poison (2Kgs 4. 38-41;
- 5). Multiplication of loaves (2 Kgs. 42-45)
- 6). Naaman healed of Leprosy (2Kgs 5. 1-19)
- 7). Floating the Axe (2Kgs 6. 1-7)
- 8). Syrians war against Israel (2Kg 6. 8-23)
- 9). Miracle after Death (2Kgs 13. 20-21)

But he cursed the boys (2Kgs 2.23-25)

Jesus the Prophet: (not priest, lawyer, theologian, moralist monk...)

Jesus did not go along with the establishment
He was like a OT Prophet

He spoke about Theocracy and not about Monarchy

Jesus also attacked the religion and the politics of the religion

People considered him to be a Prophet

Gospel writers identified him with Moses, Jerermiah, Elijah or one of the prophets of old.

How to be a Prophet

- For the prophets God experience flowers in their involvement in the society. We should read and reflect on the society
- If an individual has God experience then it should affect the society to at least a minimum percentage. Otherwise there has not been a conversion or God experience
- We have no permanent city here. Because we await another city and neglect the duties of this world we falter. Anyone who refuses to do his duty to the society refuses to do his duty to his neighbour, yes even to God and thus endanger his own salvation (II Vat . On Church 43).

