CHAPTER 6

VIEWS CONCERNING THE
CESSATION OF PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In preceding chapters we have considered many complex factors concerning the rise and nature of prophecy in the Old Testament. These components have implications for the cessation of prophecy and set a necessary context for the assessment of what led to the "end" of prophecy or its demise, dormancy, and possible transformation according to biblical records. Scholarship has presented a variety of proposals concerning the process of prophecy which finally appears to cease in the Old Testament. In this chapter we present the major views concerning the final developments leading to the cessation of prophecy in the Old Testament which then usher in the "intertestamental period" (ca.400 BC). The following presentation of views is a brief synopsis of the primary perspective held by individual writers in regards to the cessation of prophecy. Due to the inter-relationship of some views such as the canonization of Scripture, political transitions, and the end of the monarchy, we recognize that these writers also discuss other aspects of the theme. However, in our synopsis the key points of view that form positions held will be presented. Writings from the intertestamental period which reflect on the "disappearance" of prophecy will also be considered since they may have a bearing on matters leading to cessation and may also

reflect views or interpretations that are carried over from the Old Testament texts. The various perspectives will then assist the author in analyzing and formalizing key conclusions regarding these developments.

1 THE OFFICE OF PROPHET ENDS ALONG WITH THE MONARCHIC ERA

The Old Testament prophetic record is very intimately tied to the historical period of kingship in Israel. With the call of Samuel to be Yahweh's prophet for Israel, and the instruction to anoint Saul as king, prophetic expression intensifies in the nation. This intensification of prophetic activity is presented in both the Former and Latter Prophets. Many of the prophetic books claim to present prophecies that were proclaimed during the reigns of specific kings and much of the content of the prophetic oracles are written with the monarchy in mind (1 Ki; 2 Ki; Is 6:1; Jr 1:2-3; Ezk 1:2; Hs 1:1; Am 1:1). Furthermore, the court of the king is often the venue for prophetic utterances which are usually directed to issues concerning the kingship.

The important relationship between prophets and kings cannot be diminished as the background texts surveyed in Chapters Two and Three indicate.[1] Even the precursors of Hebrew prophecy in the ancient Near East are usually focused on the royal court audience where the content of oracles are aimed at cultic and royal administrative concerns. This is especially evident in the court of Mari where many texts discovered in the royal archives contain prophetic type records from the mid-eighteenth century BC (Oppenheim 1964:183-197; Weinfeld: 1975:184, 193; Malamat 1995:50-73).[2] Therefore, many scholars follow Cross (1973:223; cf. Hanson 1983:40) concerning his view of the rise and fall of prophecy.

> It is fair to say that the institution of prophecy appeared simultaneously with kingship in Israel and fell with kingship. This is no coincidence: the two offices belong to the Israelite political structure which emerged from the conflict between league and kingdom. While

prophecy was not an institution of the league, the charismatic principle of leadership which obtained in the era of the Judges survives in its liveliest form in the office of the prophet.

Consequently, after Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the "traditional loci for prophetic performance had disappeared" and the close association between kings and prophets was no longer possible (Petersen 1977:97). Petersen emphasizes that the classical prophets disappeared along with the traditional venue for prophetic utterances, namely the royal court. The exception to this would be Haggai and Zechariah whom Petersen claims were a "last gasp" of prophecy since they tried to help in the restoration of the temple community with the hope of returning a Davidide to the throne (Petersen 1977:97).[3] Hence, when the royal court in Israel was no longer functional, the prophet had no other place to speak, but to the populace at large--that is if an audience could be gathered. "Consequently, the absence of a royal audience for prophecy resulted in the institution's decline" (Sommer 1996:45-46).

An additional phenomenological factor related to this is what Sommer (1996:46) refers to as the "loss of the ideological and imaginative world in which prophecy functioned." This concerns the philosophical view of the ancient Near Eastern cultures which understood that there was a close connection between heavenly and earthly events. "The structure of earth imitated that of heaven in that the institutions of kingship and temple below reflected parallel institutions above" (Sommer 1996:46). An important aspect of this pertains to the conception of the "divine council" of which an earthly prototype in the royal council was understood. It is in this context that expressions and forms such as prophecy, divination, prayer and sacrifice were localized. Conceptually, if there was no king on the throne, then communication between heaven and earth was fractured. "Hence, from 586 (or really 587) onward, the conceptual matrix in which Israelite prophecy existed was broken, and prophecy inevitably began to wane" (Sommer 1996:46).

Along with this development, the destruction of the temple led to a precarious situation since it removed the "central nexus between heaven and earth, the Temple allowed for the possibility of communication between God and human" (Sommer 1996:46). With the loss of palace and temple, prophets were clearly limited in expressing their normal functions. Moreover, with the end of the monarchic stories, the narratives indicating the relationships between prophets and kings also end. In the north, the dynasty of Jehu is the last one to receive prophetic legitimation, bringing kingship there to an end. Elisha passes from the scene as one of the last northern prophets (Rendtorff 1997:178; cf. Bergen 1999:177), followed much later by Amos, Jonah, and Hosea. Hosea indicates the end of the monarchy for the northern kingdom in Israel (Hs 1:4) while Amos notes the end of the monarchy for Jeroboam in Judah (Am 7:7-11).

1.1 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT THE OFFICE OF PROPHET ENDS ALONG WITH THE MONARCHIC ERA

We agree that according to the Old Testament, prophecy and kingship in Israel is integrally connected. Although the rise of prophecy together with kingship is quite evident in the Former Prophets, several passages in the Pentateuch characterize prophecy as present and active in some form from patriarchal times. Aspects of prophetic leadership and various expressions are noted before the monarchic era in the experience of Abraham, Moses, and Samuel. These important narratives clearly show that prophetic leadership is possible and essential during Israel's history even when kingship is not functional. Moreover, although the main venue for prophecy appears to be in the palace and temple, prophecy was also communicated to individuals and groups outside of these venues (1 Ki 18; Ezk 1:1-4). Prophecy was not only for kings but was for the populace at large. Texts which indicate the future expression of prophecy claim that all of God's people could anticipate being prophets! (Nm 11; Joel 3). Sheppard (1988:275) clarifies the situation as follows:

The mere fact that prophecy and monarchy coexisted for an extended period does not explain sociologically the interdependence of these two institutions. Moreover, the transformation of prophecy itself remains inadequately rationalized solely by an appeal to its association with monarchy. Long after the end of classical forms of prophecy, other types of prophetic activity appear to have thrived in the climate of post-exilic Judaism and even in still later rabbinic Judaism.

To a degree, both prophecy and kingship can be viewed as ending together but anticipated as rising together at some point in the future when messianic and prophetic roles are considered more or less combined. With the end of the history of the kings in sight, the relationship between prophets and kings diminished, and this has a bearing on the prophetic texts which indicate the messianic anticipation (Rendtorff 1997:178). The future expectation of a messiah opens the window to the belief that the monarchy can be re-constituted. Messianism in the context of Isaiah is "an expression of hope or expectancy with regard to a Jerusalemite king on the part of a particular group of his people (often described as 'the remnant'), headed mostly by a prophet" (Schibler 1995:89). Not only was a messiah expected but usually the king is announced and legitimized by a prophetic voice (1 Sm 10:24; Is 40:3; Ml 4:5). This is also evident in the development of eschatological views concerning the messiah (Is 7:10-17; 9:1-6; 11:1-9; Ezk 34:23-24; 37:22-25; Mi 5:1-2; Zch 9:9-10; 13:7-9). Perhaps due to the overwhelming realization that Israel was politically unable to rise above the empires around them, prophetic views cast political aspirations and messianic expectation into the distant future. This meant on the one hand that there was no hope for political aspirations under the ruling powers of the day and, therefore, hopes were completely deferred. On the other hand, hope was presented in the ideal messiah to come who would have prophetic gifts and be empowered to bring God's people under messianic rule. Even Sommer (1996:47), who claims that Jews in the Second Temple period ceased to believe in the continued existence of prophecy allows that, "They looked forward to a renewal of prophecy with the arrival of the final redeemer." The implication is that prophets presented their inspired messages until they had nothing more to say, and until their traditional audiences no

longer gathered to hear them. They then become silent until the time when Yahweh should call, inspire, commission, and send another prophet with a divine message and task.

2 CHANGING POLITICAL EVENTS AFFECT LEADERSHIP ROLES AND STRUCTURES IN SOCIETY

Within any society it is to be expected that political events will affect the predominate leadership roles and structures in a community. Therefore, it is anticipated that something so significant as the demise of the monarchy in Israel would bring major changes to community life in Israel. Not only was the monarchy affected but various societal changes also mitigated against prophetic expression in Israel. The importance of societal changes is captured in this summary of the situation:

> Israelite society underwent severe restructuring after the defeat of 587 BC. The community was fractured, some Israelites were taken in exile to Babylon, others went to Egypt, while a sizeable group remained in Palestine. Furthermore, governance in the community was disrupted; the Davidic line no longer exerted control over all worshippers of Yahweh. That the exiled Jehoiachin, though he remained the source of hope for restoration, had significant power over his fellow countrymen in Babylon is doubtful. Concomitant with these disruptions in Israelite life, classical prophets also disappear from the scene.
>
> (Petersen 1977:97)

Transitions in societal needs after the exile, as well as some of the leadership changes imposed on Israel by the Persians around 520 BC, apparently led to the displacement of prophets in favor of priestly leadership. Concerning the context that gave rise to this transition, in addition to the implications of the exile, Meyers (1995:716) says, "Whether it is the extent of corruption within prophetic circles (Zch 11:7-14), corruption in the cult (Mal 1:7-9), or the malaise in Judahite society (Ezra 9-10; Neh 13), there is a sense of urgency ascribed to conditions in Yehud by the

mid-fifth century and later." Furthermore, the return of the exiles who initially had great hopes for restoration and anticipated economic revival, were disappointed with the difficulties, limited autonomy, and a relatively small population. "Unable to bring sixth- and fifth-century realities into alignment with the more uninhibited visions of earlier generations, the latter prophets were forced to express themselves increasingly in more eschatological and apocalyptic language" (Meyers 1995:718). Thus, the latter prophets appear to be involved in the transformation of prophecy to apocalyptic forms and project their political aspirations for an eschatological future realization. "Hence, Israel's glorious hopes were transferred to the eschatological realm, and only by supernatural and trans-historical means could such a restoration be envisioned" (Meyers 1995:719). Once these oracles concerning the future were recorded, what more could be said?

Perhaps the most important development around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah's leadership was the formation and finalization of the Torah. This view is discussed separately below but is also integrally related to the matter of changing roles in leadership. The "dissemination of the Torah as the law of the land by Ezra ranks as an event in Israelite history that is not unlike the Mosaic legislation" (Meyers 1995:719). The availability of the Torah and its reading in the community brought major changes for prophets at this time. Grabbe (1993:61) indicates the impact this has on leadership roles after the exile by noting that,

> The religious needs remained much the same, but there was a readjustment among religious specialists to meet these needs in the changed and changing situation. With the development of a canonical literature, written scripture became an important source of knowledge about the future and God's will, and thus the biblical interpreter took over in part the former job of the priest, prophet and diviner.

Furthermore, "By the mid-fifth century BC, despite the fact that there were many prophets still

around, there was a growing perception that prophecy in its traditional form was at an end and that authoritative prophetic works of the past needed to be collected for future generations" (Meyers 1995:720). This resulted in two important developments.

Firstly, during this time, the writing prophets used many of the earlier prophetic materials in order to interpret their meaning for the community and to focus their attention on written laws and the Torah. The prophets "became increasingly dependent on the inspired and authoritative words of their forbears" (Meyers 1995:722). In this process of relying more on the past written prophetic works, the need for oral messengers in the style of prophets was no longer a necessity.[4] Secondly, the prophetic role was increasingly replaced by the priest as interpreter of Torah and the role of the priest was broadened and anticipated the role of inspired sage or rabbi in Judaism (Meyers 1983:69-76; 1995:721). "As the prophet depended more and more on the preserved word(s) of Torah, both pentateuchal and prophetical, there was an increasing realization that an informal canon already existed" (Meyers 1995:721).[5] In this regard, texts that indicate the demise of prophecy are those edited by priestly forces and reflect the decline and disappearance of prophecy or even assist in bringing about the demise of prophecy (Johnstone 2001:174). The role of the priestly interpreter of the Torah, therefore, overshadows and replaces the typical role of the prophet who was involved in the process of providing the canon of Scripture for Israel. Prophets became socially isolated and ignored while the teaching priest increasingly took the prominent role of leadership in the nation with the blessing of the Persian authorities. Ezra is the prime example of priest, scribe, and leader (Ezr 7:5-10). Therefore, prophetic roles were transferred to the priesthood, while prophecy was no longer recognized and authorized as a contemporary relevant expression.

2.1 PROPHETS, SAGES, AND SCRIBES: CHANGING ROLES IN PROPHETIC, APOCALYPTIC, AND WISDOM LITERATURE

Closely related to the matter of changes in politics and structures are the different leadership roles that take certain prominence during periods of transition. With the decline of prophecy and the influence of prophets, other roles apparently take over. However, in recognizing the changes in leadership roles, Grabbe (1993:60) reminds us of the fluidity and variety of possibilities in roles.

> All one can say is that there was enormous variety, especially among the different sorts of prophets, and that the interrelationships were not constant but changed over time and geographical area. The functions of priest, prophet and the like were sometimes clearly distinct; also, some prophets were opposed to some priests as well as to some individuals labeled as sages, but this is all that can be said. The complexity and constant readjustment of the relationships must be recognized.

These different roles are also evident in the authorship of Old Testament materials as seen in prophetic, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature.

In the history of the interpretation of wisdom literature, questions arise concerning the origins, background and authorship of these Old Testament books (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). Wisdom and apocalyptic literature is markedly different from that of the prophets and narrative forms of literature. Additionally, the final form of the wisdom documents appear to have been compiled fairly late in the Old Testament period. Clements (1976:100) notes that in recent centuries, some interpreters often considered that "wise men were regarded as the heirs of the prophets in that they took the great moral principles of justice and of the divine government of the world revealed by the prophets, and applied them to the more mundane and everyday experiences of life." The prophets apparently influenced the wisdom materials with ethical teaching and shared some of the same presuppositions (Von Rad 1972:62). Von Rad claims that wisdom literature was influenced by early Jewish apocalypticism, rather than the common understanding that apocalyptic views grew out of prophecy. He felt that the emphasis in prophetic literature was

more on prediction and history whereas apocalyptic had more to do with future realities and a sequence of ages. The matter of Daniel being referred to as a wise man also led him to distinguish prophet from wise man. Von Rad (1972:278) argues that, "Of absolute central significance for apocalyptic is the looking to an end to the present course of events, to a judgment and the dawning of a time of salvation, that is, its thoroughgoing eschatological orientation." To a degree, he finds a closer connection to eschatology in wisdom literature than in prophecy.

Perhaps on a more stable footing is the view that the authority for the communication of God's truth was transferred from the prophets to the wise man and the priest. This is the general view of Meyer (1968:828) who claims that once the canon was fixed, "the schema triumphed whereby the wisemen were the legitimate successors of the prophets." Furthermore, "Prophecy was by no means swallowed up by the cult, but with the passing of time transferred its function in part to the priest and in part to the wise man" (Bullock 1988:76). Evidence for this can be gleaned from the Old Testament documents as well as the intertestamental materials (see below). But the social world and identity of the sage or wise man is difficult to elucidate (Crenshaw 1993:161-172).

Concerning the connections between the prophets and the sages, there is evidently both continuity and discontinuity since the prophets who prophesied after the canon closed do not have the same canonical validity. Meyers (1968:818) contends that, "If the prophets of the classical period are at root no more than interpreters of the Law speaking with the authority of the Spirit and charged to unfold only what the law contains, then they differ only in degree and not in kind from the wise. Both prophets and wise men belong to the same series, and there arises the chain of bearers of the "oral Law" which is summarised in Seder Olam." This intertestamental text claims that, "Until then the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, 'incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise'" (Seder Olam Rabbah 30). Meyer (1968:818) also

quotes the Aramean Jishaq (ca. 300 BC) to indicate how close the connection between prophets and the wise men was. "Yet not only did all the prophets receive their prophecy from Sinai but the wise men also who arise from generation to generation–each of them received what he had to say from Sinai." This claim alludes to a connection between prophets and wise men but also implies a transfer of responsibility from prophet to sage. But the identity of the "wise" or "sage" is not clear (cf. Gn 41:8; Is 44:25; Dn 2:12).

In wisdom literature the scribal and interpretive role of the sages is more evident than with the prophets. The scribalism of the wisdom and apocalyptic writers seems to be more interrelated than with the prophets. Although there are different views concerning the identity of the sages and scribes, Smith (1983:103) contends that, "The scribes were an elite group of learned, literate men, an intellectual aristocracy which played an invaluable role in the administration of their people in both religious and political affairs." He argues that the paradigmatic thought of the scribe which is pragmatic and speculative, gave rise to both wisdom and apocalyptic thinking (Smith 1983:106). The impetus for wisdom literature over prophecy according to Crenshaw (1975:123) was the despair caused by the destruction of the temple and exile. This event not only showed up the failure of prophecy but indicated "Yahweh's impotence." Therefore, "wisdom with its creation doxologies, its proverbs based on experience and its healthy suspicion of prophetic revelation could alone provide a viable faith for those who rightly felt betrayed by prophetic promises" (Crenshaw 1975:123). To illustrate this transition more fully, Sheppard (1988:278) claims that,

> In the place of classical prophecy, the sages within the deutero-prophetic schools added to their earlier editorial skills learned interpretations of older, authoritative prophecies. This augmentation of the classical prophetic traditions, often in deference to the Torah of Moses, provided a more appropriate conclusion to the canonical prophetic literature than would an anachronistic and potentially disruptive claim to fresh revelation in the manner of the earlier biblical prophets. Through a sort of charismatic exegesis (sometimes associated with later 'midrash'), the biblical prophetic literature was eventually given its final canonical shape within a context attentive to future generations who would seek to be

obedient to the Torah of Moses.

As far as the setting for this type of scribal work, it probably took place in the court circles of Israel during the monarchy. During the post-exilic period however, "the circles that studied, catalogued and passed on wisdom were concentrated around the temple" (Grabbe 1993:58). In this way, the scribal work of priests and sages is highlighted and evident in the Old Testament, and intimates the transition from prophets to other functionaries.

2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT CHANGING POLITICAL EVENTS AFFECT LEADERSHIP ROLES AND STRUCTURES IN SOCIETY (PROPHETS, SAGES, AND SCRIBES)

It is presumed that new circumstances will bring significant transitions in leadership, especially when a crisis situation occurs. Due to oppressive political realities, prophetic language often had to be veiled. With the pressures of exile and deportation, the shift from oral to written records was intensified. However, the work of priests, prophets, and sages are all evident in the writing and interpretation of Scripture. Even if the priestly views placed negative perspectives on prophets and prophecy, the prophets also had many negative allegations against the priests.

Whereas scholars since Wellhausen speculated that the prophets came before the law, it is generally recognized that "the tradition of law in ancient Israel antedates the prophets" (Day 1995:231). Day's many examples from Old Testament texts reflect the prophet's interpretation of the law and priestly themes. A marked tendency of the prophets to cite earlier prophetic texts is noted in the post-exilic period. "The reinterpretation of earlier prophecies clearly became one of the most characteristic features of prophecy in that period, especially in those works sometimes dubbed proto-apocalyptic" (Day 1995:240; cf. Is 26:13-27:11; Hs 13:4-14:10). With the

canonization of the prophetic corpus, there follows an interpretation of prophetic literature that recognizes that the religious traditions have a close connection with the Torah which also interprets the prophets (Rendtorff 1997:187). Therefore, the prophets were intimately involved in the writing and editing of the prophetic corpus of books.

It is informative to ask how the roles of prophet, priest, sage, and scribe are to be distinguished. What role does a prophet have that a priest or a sage does not? Discoveries in the ancient Near East, make it clear that wisdom schools and literature have a long history of development which precedes Hebrew wisdom by many centuries. Old Testament wisdom literature reflects home and school settings where teachers were influential in passing on wisdom to pupils. The Solomonic wisdom reflects not only the parental setting for wisdom transmission (Pr 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1; 10:1; 30:11, 17) but also the royal setting for advisors, counselors, and wise men (2 Sm 16:20-23; Jr 8:8; 18:18; Ec 12:9). Therefore, the development of wisdom and prophetic literature in Israel coincide and their traditions are formed at the same time in Israel.

Prophets, priests and wise men proclaim the words of God. Whereas the priest focused more on teaching and interpretation, the prophetic call to covenant loyalty was much more intense, dramatic, and confrontational. Leadership roles have different emphases. The nature and roles of prophets are unique as observed in Chapter Three. But in time, it is evident that the scribal work of recording, interpreting, and preservation of the word eventually takes prominence. Prophets apparently have a role in this process but they take a less dominant position and eventually appear to be inactive or at least not in the fore-front of such activities.

3 THE POST-EXILIC COMMUNITY FORGED "A NEW RELIGION" WITH NEW THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

A related factor which influenced changes in prophecy during and after the exile has to do with theological and religious perspectives. In regards to the reason for the decline of prophecy in Israel, some scholars generally agree with Greene (1989:178-179) "that it declined because the post-exilic community forged a new religion (or performed a radicalectomy on the old one(s) which ultimately witnessed the prophet's disappearance from the Israel of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures, too, contain in Zechariah 13:2b-6 a final judgment on prophecy and prophets; oddly enough by a prophet." According to Hammershaimb (1966:109), the "almost complete disappearance of the pre-exilic prophecy of doom in its characteristic form" was due to the "change in structure of Israelite society which was already far advanced in the time of the later monarchy and was further hastened by the exile." Some of this is evident in the reaction of the prophets against the eroding social and economic conditions for the majority of people. Themes of injustice and oppression are frequently raised by the prophets (Is 58:6-12; Jr 8:4-12; Am 5:7-15; Mc 3:4; 6:6-12; Hab 2). Whereas the covenant is appealed to by many, the prophets indicate that even the covenant with Yahweh cannot spare them from impending judgment if they mistreat fellow citizens. A new perspective regarding corporate guilt for sin is changed to emphasize that each individual is responsible for their own righteous behavior. Thus the idea of a righteous remnant takes hold with the majority of the nation facing deportation (Hammershaimb 1966:110-111). Surprisingly, even priests are often confronted by prophets concerning social concerns, and are held accountable for deteriorating ethical practices (Ml 2:1-7) .

Another major element in social and religious reforms in Israel concerns the loss of national independence. With the monarchy, Israel still had a level of independence in national affairs but when kingship fell, internal governance transitioned to the leadership of the priesthood in matters of cultus and the Persian governor for matters of political authority. However, the loss of prophecy in its classic form was not due to the disappearance of the monarchy according to Hammershaimb, but to the loss of national independence and social, theological changes. He

claims that "the fate of the single individual became important and when, in contrast to earlier times, the opinion spread that each in his own generation received his full reward of punishment, there was more use for a down-to-earth morality concerned with the advantages and disadvantages of observing the commandments of the law, than for a radical prophecy of doom" (Hammershaimb 1966:112). Therefore, a major change in perspective transpires as prophetic literature is superceded by wisdom and apocalyptic literature as well as the historical views presented by the Chronicler. This literature provides other answers for the dilemma faced by the people regarding man's fate, judgment, and future vindication.

With the drastic social changes brought about by judgment and invasion, prophetic messages were scrutinized more closely to determine why things had transpired as they did. Petersen (1977:97) observes the bifurcation evident within post-exilic Israelite society which was represented by the Chroniclers history written by the Levitical members of the Jerusalemite hierocracy on one hand, and the deutero-prophetic corpus of literature, on the other hand. It is to be expected that different perspectives would arise. Moreover,

> A transition in pre-exilic prophecy and ascertaining the credentials of a prophet had been set in motion. Throughout this transitional period a shift from the orthodox theology was noticed; a theology which had guaranteed Israel security from surrounding enemies, prosperity, sanctification, and salvation forever, (all of which found their point of confluence in the favorable oracles of the orthodox cult prophets), to a prophetic view which challenged this theology.

(Greene 1989:177)

Greene (1989:177) supports his view with this quote from Fohrer, that "Ezra's reform finally set the mainstream of Yahwism on the course that turned its back on the insights and principles that had previously prevailed, above all on the message of the prophets. Here we are dealing with more than a reshaping of Israelite Yahwism–a new religion was in the making."

3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT THE POST-EXILIC COMMUNITY FORGED "A NEW RELIGION" WITH NEW THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

Changing circumstances will always cause review, revision, and reform in theological views, but this does not mean that old views are wrong or obsolete. There is a cumulative aspect of religious and theological thought that forms a compendium of all Israel's beliefs. In the course of progressive revelation, new perspectives are added to former ones in order to present a complete picture of faith. Rather than supposing that a new religion is formed, it is preferable to note the different views as being part of the prophetic canon which together were received as authoritative by the community of faith in Israel. The different views actually helped to fortify and complete 'older' biblical views. For example, the changing views concerning the value and responsibility of individuals that developed in the late pre-exilic period, supplement the emphasis of the Deuteronomist concerning the corporate responsibility of the nation. That view explained the judgments that came upon the nation, but during the exile, the individual's responsibility is featured (Sanders 1997:54-57). This was a natural development of understanding for the community of two important truths. Ultimately, these changing tenets and theological perspectives helped to present a wholistic belief system for the people of God, and rather than replacing religious views, they supplemented and completed them. Therefore, it cannot be substantiated that prophetic views were considered obsolete, and that prophets were rendered redundant just because theological perspectives changed.

4 THE WRITTEN LAW BECOMES AUTHORITATIVE AND CANONIZED MAKING PROPHECY VIRTUALLY REDUNDANT

A major transformation in the history of Israel comes about when the books and laws of the nation are recorded, collected, and considered as authoritative sacred Scripture. Koch

(1982b:187) concludes that, "Not only did the composition of prophetic books cease after the early Persian period; prophecy in general evidently came to an end in Israel." The process of preservation and canonization which ultimately views the written word as authoritative, is a dominant development regarding the end of prophecy in the Old Testament. This process intensifies towards the end of the Judean monarchy, as records such as the Book of Deuteronomy, the Law of Holiness (Lv 17-26) become increasingly accepted as "divinely inspired legislative texts" (Tournay 1991:53). Eventually, the key gift of God to the exilic community was the Torah.

According to Sanders (1997:58), "whether one agreed eventually with the belief that prophecy or revelation had ceased in the time of Ezra, Torah displaced the pre-exilic oracular priests and prophets in Judaism as that which they would *drash* to seek guidance and help in ever changing circumstances." Prophets were no longer sought out for an answer for the Jews now consulted the Torah which was "edited in Babylonia and brought by Ezra to Jerusalem in mid-fifth century BCE." The regular reading of the Torah provided identity and strength to the exiled people of God (Sanders 1997:58-59).

When the words of God are recognized and received as his revelation, there comes a point where the lack of another inspired word indicates that God is apparently not adding to his former words. The evaluation of prophetic messages is intensified in order to determine their veracity and to assess whether they should indeed be added to the collection of received books. The perception that Yahweh was not inspiring his word by the Spirit, in addition to political pressures, gave impetus to the collection of recognized prophetic materials. "The official promulgation of a written law, in fact, marked the first step in that process which progressively elevated the law until it became in post-exilic times the organizing principle of religion, and, at the same time, the first step in the concomitant process whereby the prophetic movement, its word rendered

progressively superfluous, came to an end" (Bright 1972:322; cf. Pfeiffer 1962:501-506). Sheppard (1988:275) similarly states, "In my judgment, the key event that ended classical Israelite prophecy for the majority of Jewish believers in the fourth century was the promulgation of the Torah by Ezra."

Canonization is the process whereby the perceived inspired text is written and viewed as unalterable and authoritative. Such was the awareness concerning the written tablets of the law which were deposited in the ark of the covenant. Grottanelli (1999:180) captures the important aspects of this perception.

> Crystallized in writing, prophecy would henceforth constrain reality and force every subsequent prophecy to proceed from that revelation, written once and for all. The mechanisms of prophecy, with their direct communication between the divine sphere and humans, seemed to guarantee the possibility of continuous revelation. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely that originating direct communication from the deity to a prototypical prophet which limits that fluidity of revelation. The means by which this limitation occurs is the writing down of prophecy.

In other words, once written, and no other inspired messages are forthcoming, prophecy at some point is considered to be over. This process is further clarified in regards to the selection and addition of the Writings to the Torah and the Prophets:

> The Ketuvim reflect clearly the Pharisaic/rabbinic understanding of Judaism and that of other Judaisms from the period, and offer a review of the situation since the Exile from the point of view of surviving rabbinic Judaism in the middle to late second century of the common era. For them prophecy or revelation had indeed ceased at the time of Ezra. All the massive Jewish literature stemming from others of the diverse forms of Judaism that are found in Septuagint codices at Qumran and elsewhere, that engaged so heavily in speculation about what God would do in history to bring it to fulfillment or closure, was simply to be set aside. What one added to the Torah and the Prophets showed clearly what Judaism meant to those who did the adding.

The dominant incentive to the "final" formalization of the canon was the political situation that came during the Persian empire which introduced significant foreign policies. Under the new policies, "Israel was not able to engage in political activity, and therefore postponed all eschatology to the far-off future" (Koch 1982b:188). This does not suggest that the prophetic collection was only undertaken until this period but that an intensification of collection, reception and usage occurred at this time. In fact, the preservation of authoritative records is always intensified during times of threat and persecution in order to preserve records for future generations. Under Darius (522-486 BC) and Cyrus (539-530 BC), there was a desire to enforce an orderly form of government that included local authorities and those communities that were repatriated to their former habitations (Ezr 1:1-4; 7:14, 25-27).[6] The way to implement this involved the writing of religious laws or constitutions that could be used in governing local communities. Talshir (2001:387) claims that "both the crystallization of the Torah as a defined corpus, as well as the need to teach it to the people and implement it in daily life, could have been urged by Persian policy, which along with the return of the exiles to their lands of origin and the reconstruction of their temples, initiated the establishment of their constitutions." There are examples for this in the Demotic Chronicle which required Egypt to enact a corpus of laws as its constitution (Talshir 2001:388). Whether or not this included the whole Torah is not clear but the importance of finalizing key documents for a nation's existence and guidance is evident. What this involved is summarized by Sheppard (1988:276) as follows.

> In exchange for codifying and making public the secret Jewish religious laws, the Persian government would recognize the leadership of those involved in the process and would honor their local administration of that law. In this way, the likelihood of subversion based on secret religious traditions was minimized. The generosity of the Persians toward the colonial administration of its own regional religious laws would be reciprocated by strict Jewish obedience to Persian civil and international law. Those who participated in such a

codification naturally received recognition by the Persian government as leaders in the new government, while groups outside of this agreement were subject only to its restraints.

Under these conditions, the nation was persuaded to formulate its charter, and according to Tournay (1991:53), "The putting into writing of the laws, rites and customs of Israel sounds the death knell of the prophetic word entirely oriented to the future."

It is during this period that the importance of the Torah is strongly featured in Israel's history (Meyers 1995:720-721). The revitalized perspective of the law was necessitated by the difficult situations experienced by the exiles. Johnstone (2001:159) adds to the discussion by demonstrating careful redactional work which features the influential role of Moses and the redundancy of prophecy in the face of the growth of Scripture. The Chronicler views prophecy as "an unbroken succession of written normative interpretation" that ends with Ezra, and which focus on the canons of Torah (Johnstone 2001:160). This is further outlined in his compressed statement,

> Though the Chronicler also records an unfailing succession of prophetic voices interposing whenever the king of the House of David makes a wrong decision, that is for him always in accordance with the canons of Torah; prophecy also becomes for him the celebration of the already known acts of God through the song of the Levitical choir in the liturgy of the Temple (1 Chr 25:1). Prophecy is thus relegated by absorption into the tradition of approved routine religious practice and affirmation, as defined by Torah.
>
> (Johnstone 2001:160)

He contends that the criteria for true prophecy in Deuteronomy 13:2-6 and 18:14-22 are elaborated on in redacted Old Testament books to indicate reasons for the decline of prophecy in the exilic and post-exilic periods. The key is the emphasized requirement that continuity with Moses and his Torah is the standard of prophecy to be followed.

Johnstone (2001:161) refers to the D-version and P-edition of texts which indicate "the idealisation of prophecy in the persona of Moses, its fictionalised archetypal figure, provides in the D-version of Exodus/Numbers the criteria for the evaluation of prophecy; these criteria become in the P-version an instrument for the control of prophecy which leads to its assimilation into normative religious observance and ultimately to its cessation." He claims that "In Deuteronomy 13 the chief criterion is conformity with the Torah, as focused in the Decalogue and the Shema. In Deuteronomy 18 the chief criterion is eventuation." Additionally, "conformity with the role of Moses in both form and content" is required. The special Mosaic role as mediator at Horeb is envisioned. However, "These criteria set unattainable standards in both form and content for subsequent prophets by contrast with the incomparable Moses; they thus represent a relativisation of the prophet by subordination to Torah." Furthermore, "The two levels within the Exodus, the D-version and the P-edition, thus provide evidence for two points on the profile of the decline of the acceptability of prophecy in the exilic and post-exilic periods; indeed, they are likely to have functioned precisely as instruments of that decline" (Johnstone 2001:163). In other words, what prophet could actually arise and claim authority which rivaled that of Moses! The main two features of Moses as prophet *par excellence* that Johnstone (2001:167) analyzes are Moses as mediator and intercessor. Moses is "portrayed as mediator of the Decalogue in its entirety, as well as of the Book of the Covenant." Moreover, "at the intercession of Moses, the prophet *par excellence*, the gracious mercy of God enables the remaking of the covenant on its original terms" (2001:171). The importance of all this is to feature the Mosaic role and its unattainability. However, "In the P-version of Exodus, the prophet is relativised to the point of redundancy" and priestly roles are featured more prominently (Johnstone 2001:174).

The essential facet is to indicate that during the post-exilic period, the Mosaic Torah is elevated over the typical work of prophets who are generally held in low esteem now that the Torah is available for the people of God. According to this view, the texts that indicate the demise

of prophecy are those edited by priestly forces and "thus reflect the decline and disappearance of the phenomenon of prophecy, at least officially. It is probable that the production of these two editions is attributable to the same hierocratic forces that account for the demise of prophecy; they functioned precisely as instruments of that demise" (Johnstone 2001:174). Therefore, with the collection of prophetic literature now contained in the Old Testament, the canon was closed and received as containing all of God's word and specific messages for his people at that time. This word not only explained the circumstances and events that had formed Israel into a nation but also indicated future events that should be anticipated.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT THE WRITTEN LAW BECOMES AUTHORITATIVE AND CANONIZED MAKING PROPHECY VIRTUALLY REDUNDANT

The canonization of the books included in the Old Testament marks the dominant argument concerning the cessation of prophecy. Once the prophetic books were recognized and received as authoritative, the discussion of the "closing of the canon" became essential. The collection and assessment of books that followed the Old Testament books were appraised as apocryphal and pseudepigraphal. It was assessed that they did not have the same element of inspiration and authority. The process of selection was rigorous, as Sanders (1997:54) indicates:

> It makes it all the more remarkable that what survived through a process of review, repetition, and recitation in Jewish communities was the monotheising tough stuff. The canonical process might well be thought of as the survival of the toughest thinking about God and reality, those traditions and reflections on them that stressed the Oneness of God. The prophetic literature that made it onto a tenure track toward canon was that which began in Exile gradually to make sense to them by re-reading in the new context. Yahweh was really a universal God who alone made sense of what was happening to them. God was One.

Once it was considered that the 'Spirit of prophecy,' who oversees the process of collection, was

adding nothing new to the inspired words–the canon was considered closed. All the nation has to hold on to are the inspired words and the anticipation of their fulfilment. Aune (1983:106) asserts that "The formation of the Old Testament canon, a process which was completed by the first century BC, appears to have had no connection with the view that prophecy had ended in Judaism." Furthermore, he claims that, "Certainly there was no antithesis between a divinely inspired and centrally authoritative collection of sacred writings on the one hand and the continuing role of inspired prophecy on the other. Early Christianity itself was a sect within Judaism that revered the Old Testament and yet was characterized by a flurry of prophetic activity." However, this view must be tempered by the note that the characteristic features of Old Testament prophecy are almost entirely absent from various kinds of intertestamental revelatory speech and writing that is not included in the Old Testament documents.

For Utzschneider, prophecy can continue after canonization but it is mainly observed to have an interpretive role. The role of the priestly interpreter of the Torah, therefore, overshadows and replaces the typical role of the prophet who was involved in the process of providing the canon of Scripture for Israel. But Utzschneider (1991:380) claims that it is prophets who through their redactional work have the greater role of formulating the prophetic Scriptures that form the final canonical books. For him the question is not just whether the law marks the end of prophecy but in how far the formation of the canon puts a limitation on prophecy.[7] The main limitation for written prophecy established in the canon is the standardized reception of the text. This limitation is a formal one rather than a functional one, because texts will always be interpreted in a specific context for a given audience (Utzschneider 1991:380). Thus, the Torah does not end prophecy, but together with the prophetic canon, it is the medium of Scripture and its grounds for authority. In this sense, prophecy is always possible when it interprets the Scriptures (Utzschneider 1991:392).

In short, the canonization of Scripture did indicate a strenuous process of evaluation of texts which intensified the selection and finalization of received books. While it did mean that prophetic utterances diminished and ultimately ceased, it did not mean that prophetic expression could never begin again. The main point is that the kind of prophecy required to be considered inspired and canonical, did in fact end, but it was considered possible and in fact likely, that the Spirit of prophecy would once again speak and reveal prophetic literature at some point in the future.

5 THE DEGENERATION OF PROPHECY AND FALSE PROPHECY ISSUES

Due to the nature of prophecy, the possibility of a communication breakdown or an apparent "degeneration" of legitimate prophecy created the possibility that prophecy could be rejected by the populace and, therefore, lead to its inevitable demise. Additionally, there are times when prophecy seems to be viewed with suspicion and disrespect. The distrust with which prophetic oracles came to be treated led to the very credible possibility that prophecy would destroy itself (Johnson 1962:66-68). This is elaborated on by Crenshaw (1971:103) who feels that the main problem with prophecy is the lack of any criteria to determine if it is true or false, human or divine in origin. Many factors including issues of inspiration, reception, revelation, authority, character and morality, speculative theology, ideology, lack of fulfilment are potential areas in which prophecy could fail. Not only so, but an "Unescapable dilemma for the people was to distinguish between the theological content of Israel's faith and its application in the day of God's judgment" (Verhoef 1997:1076). The issue of covenant blessings and curses was often confused theologically by the false prophets. Furthermore, these different theological views illustrate the strong differences of opinion held by opposing prophetic groups and show the antithesis of true and false prophecy (Meyers 1968:813).

To a degree, the degeneration of prophetism and the problem of false prophecy involves the assimilation of prophecy to various forms of social culture which diminished its role in confronting the negative aspects of culture which it was to be in conflict with (Eichrodt 1961:332). Institutionalisation and the regulation of prophetic functions within the monarchy and the temple leads to conformism, ritual, and predictability in its social roles and expressions. The possible manipulation of the word in support of individual and community interests, led to the exploitation of the prophetic office. The very nature of prophetism requires that the prophet remains exclusive or independent from the very social culture that he seeks to address regarding relationship with Yahweh. Those individuals who remained separate from the king's interests, as well as the regular cultus, were able to censure those who strayed from Yahweh and his requirements. Those who were assimilated, could no longer see the practices and beliefs that were undermining Yahwism (cf. 1 Ki 22), and promoted the interests of the monarchy. On the one hand there are threats to individual charismatic expression that arise with the formation of a professional class, and on the other hand there are threats that come from an institutionalizing of the prophetic message (Eichrodt 1961:332-333). The strength of the prophetic movement was the powerful influence of charismatic individuals who were inspired with a message that was independent of social and monarchic interests--they presented the message they considered was divinely inspired regardless of the consequences. Therefore, a real danger for prophecy came with the royal affiliations that developed into a practice which believed itself capable of controlling the divine revelation. False prophecy is not only the communication of messages that are not inspired but a misrepresentation of accurate information. A danger is evident when prophets gained respectability as advisors in the king's court and often succumbed to pressures exerted by the monarchic interests of the day (Eichrodt 1961:335).

Moreover, it appears that most problems associated with prophecy arise due to the mediation process which could not only undermine the value of prophecy but lead to its

minimization by the majority of the populace. People doubted the veracity of the prophetic message which amounted to a degeneration of a role that was once held in high esteem. Furthermore, the Scriptures also portray several prophets in a negative way. Balaam was intent on harming Israel (Nm 25:1-18; 31:16; Dt 4:3; 23:4-6; Jos 24:10). The prophet in 1 Kings 13 is presented as a deceiver while the man of God gives the word of the Lord to Jeroboam. The majority of prophets in 1 Kings 22 are liars. Prophets are often referred to in derogatory ways (Is 9:15; 28:10; Jr 23:32; 29:23, 32; Zph 3:1-4), and even called fools and maniacs (Hs 9:7b). Jonah is presented satirically as a prophet without zeal for Yahweh and his mission (Jnh 1:3; 4:1-3, 8). Elisha's overall influence and effectiveness is also questionable (cf. Bergen 1999). Therefore, in many different eras of prophetic expression in Israel, there are different assessments as to the value and importance of prophecy.

Additionally, the ecstatic expressions of prophecy caused concern and gave rise to some negative statements and depictions. Saul's prophesying while nude raises questions and draws comparisons with his other depressive behavior. The behavior of the prophets of Baal and their ecstatic manifestations is presented in a negative manner in 1 Kings 18--it is not to be emulated. Hosea serves in a period when prophets are considered fools and those with ecstatic behavior are called maniacs or inspired men (Hs 9:7; cf. 2 Ki 9:11). Hosea is characterized by the people as one who babbles unintelligibly and is out of control. They refer to him as a "man of the Spirit" in a derogatory way for his ecstatic behavior. For some groups and prophets, possession by the Spirit was undesirable and, therefore, avoided in their literature. In Jeremiah's time, such "madmen" who act like prophets are placed in stocks (Jr 29:26). Perhaps because of the Spirit-ecstasy association, particularly in the eighth century, there is evidence of a growing disdain for Spirit-induced ecstatic behavior. For many prophets the close association of ecstasy and the practices of the prophets of Baal became too closely connected to foreign gods and were increasingly rejected.

Whereas some may claim that prophecy was a complete failure (because truth was hard to determine at the right time; Carroll 1981:172-173) since some prophecies did not come to fulfilment, prophecy had a vital function in the nation throughout Israel's history. False prophecy was exposed by true prophets, and in time, the true prophet was able to be authenticated by the community of God's people, as the community received authorized documents into the Hebrew canon. "The strife between prophet and prophet was decided for outsiders only by the fall of Jerusalem; the "writing prophets" were recognized as true messengers of Yahweh and, as the "former prophets" (Zch 1:4; 7:7, 12) were distinguished from the prophets in and after the exile" (Jeremias 1997:708).

Obviously there was a decline in the acceptability of prophecy in the exile and post-exilic periods. Political changes also had an impact on this. "Israel was not able to engage in political activity, and therefore postponed all eschatology to the far-off future. Itinerant *nabis* did exist. But some verses in Trito-Zechariah (13:2-6) make it clear that they were viewed with contempt by the general public" (Koch 1982b: 188). The text in Zechariah 13:2-6 has often been used as a proof-text for the demise of prophecy "as well as evidence that there may have been a general ban on prophetic activity accepted by the cultic establishment" (Rhea 1995:288). These verses are an obvious attack on prophecy and satirize it. Therefore, in addition to the political restraints, the prophets were viewed with disdain and one could see the time when no one will don the "haircloth cloak or prophetic mantle." Lamentations 4:12-13 implies that prophecy is part of the societal disorder that actually contributes to the exile, and the issue of prophetic disputes adds to this perception.

5.1 DEGENERATION OF PROPHECY IN THE NORTH: THE PROPHET ELISHA

Bergen (1999:11) makes an important case for the view that in some social circles of

Israel there was a significant perception that prophecy was no longer an important or relevant form of leadership--especially in the north. His study, "Elisha and the End of Prophetism" seeks to "explore the effect Elisha has on the understanding the reader of Genesis-2 Kings gains concerning the role of the 'prophet' in Israel." He demonstrates that "the Elisha narrative provides a negative judgment on prophetism and confines prophets to a rather limited scope of action in the narrative world" (Bergen 1999:11). His narratological reading of the Elisha narratives indicates a belittling portrayal of the prophet and prophetism in general, which ultimately leads to the end of prophecy in the northern kingdom.[8] This negative portrayal of Elisha is never presented in an explicit way because for the most part Elisha is depicted as a powerful prophet of Yahweh. However, there are questions which arise concerning Elisha's relationship with Yahweh, his character and the nature of his prophetic service, as well as the whole issue of prophetic activity after Elisha in the north. Since this type of "degeneration" is an important issue concerning cessation, the experience of prophecy in the north can illustrate how the end of prophecy came about there and might provide clues on the end of prophecy in the south as well.[9]

In Bergen's reading of the Elisha narratives, he notes two distinct scenarios which are raised as possible roles for the prophet which are then discarded. The first concerns the option that prophetic leadership could be an alternative to the monarchy. Similarly to the prophet-king confrontations of Samuel and Saul (1 Sm 15), Nathan and David (2 Sm 12), Elijah and Ahab (1 Ki 17-18), Elisha also acts as a threat to kingship at times. But usually he does not confront but actually supports evil kingship that still has links with Baalism. Concerning the 'usefulness' of prophetic power, there are issues regarding the non-fulfilment of expectation where Elisha does little if anything to eradicate Baalism from Israel as he is commissioned to do (1 Ki 19:16). Jezebel continues to have influence and nothing is said concerning the Baal conflict (2 Ki 9). Therefore, Elisha does not confront evil kingship in Israel, rather he seems to be in a good relationship with the kings and actually seems to help them. "In every case where the prophet

encounters the king of Israel, he aids the king by performing specific tasks. While he may perform this task grudgingly or only under threat, he works at all times to aid the king when the king needs him" (Bergen 1999:45). Elisha even rescues Jehoram, the wicked son of Ahab and Jezebel (Bergen 1999:178). Yet, the role of messenger to the king is the most positive role presented for the prophet to this degree: "Prophets are carefully put in their place, a place of subservience to YHWH in the cosmic world, and to the king in the human world" (Bergen 1999:47; cf. 179). So Elisha serves as a prophet of the court, but it is the king who often accomplishes the will of Yahweh without the help of the prophet (2 Ki 9:25-26; 10:11, 17, 18-27).

The second scenario involves the possible societal alternative to Israelite society as seen in the sub-culture of the 'sons of the prophets.'[10] However, this is "rejected as a viable alternative, as the sons of the prophets are shown to be inept, foolish and simply unable to provide for their own needs, at least without the continued assistance of the miracles of Elisha" (Bergen 1999:43). Elisha is instrumental in providing for the sons of the prophets but the narratives seem to highlight their helplessness and hopelessness in providing a successor. Moreover, there are no potential successors for the continuation of wonder-working miracles among the sons or in Gehazi. "These are continuously shown in a negative light, and do not occupy the role of heir to the prophetic mantle" (Bergen 1999:45). This theme of prophetic continuity is raised in the light of Elisha's call narrative. Elijah found a successor but the question is raised--will Elisha also find one? If the sons of the prophets and Gehazi are the only options--likely not.

Another role concerns that of wonder-worker, where Elisha is presented as accomplishing things that are naturally impossible. "What he predicts comes about, and he single-handedly defeats armies, cures and causes leprosy, and creates military victory for both Israel and Aram. Questions arise, however, in connection with the source, the usefulness and the continuation of prophetic miracles" (Bergen 1999:43). Whereas it is implicitly Yahweh who empowers Elisha for

miracles, it is usually claimed "according to the word of Elisha" rather than "according to the word of Yahweh." Evidently the narrative lacks divine initiative. "YHWH has no direct speech in any of the stories; neither is there any sense of larger divine purpose to Elisha's actions. The prophet appears as a loose canon, wandering around Israel firing off miracles at random. This is most striking given the explicit directions of YHWH that initiate his prophetic ministry" (Bergen 1999:44).

In addition to the Elisha narratives, there are other references in 2 Kings which also indicate prophetic activity. However, Bergen shows that these references which concern both named and unnamed prophets do not suggest a continuation of prophetic activity after Elisha. Jonah, son of Ammitai, is mentioned in the context of giving a royal oracle for the evil king, but the prophecy had already been fulfilled (2 Ki 14:25). Huldah is another named prophet of whom the king inquires of (2 Ki 22:13). The last one is Isaiah who gives oracles in response to Hezekiah (2 Ki 19:2-7; 20:8-11). In each of these cases, the prophets seem to serve the kings at their request but their roles are generally limited and inconsequential.

The unnamed prophets which are mentioned in five references do not function as actors in the story. The reference in 2 Kings 17:13 is a summary note concerning the unheeded warnings of the prophets which provides a rationale for the final destruction of Israel. Yet, Bergen claims that this type of prophetic activity is not always evident. In fact, "This is one way in which the narrative casts doubt upon prophetism in the Elisha stories, by showing a prophet who warns neither kings nor people concerning their evil ways" (Bergen 1999:171). Prophets are known to have done this before Elisha but their absence after him when prophets seem to be needed, gives rise to the probability that they are no longer functioning. In 2 Kings 21:10-15, the passage also provides an explanation for the destruction of Israel, and could refer to "the sons of the prophets" who are often spoken of in negative terms. In 2 Kings 23:2, rather than giving prophetic oracles,

the prophets mentioned are listening to the written word of Yahweh read. "In this way, prophetism is placed beneath the written word as a means of accessing God's will" and prophets are mentioned after the priests (Bergen 1999:173). Reference to the "man of God" of 1 Kings 13 and in 2 Kings 23:18 indicates a positive role in that he brings the word of God to the king but a negative role for the prophet who was a tempter. In the wider context of this verse, Bergen (1999:173) says that "the story instructs us that prophets are (dead) people whose bones are not to be disturbed, rather than living people whose actions are crucial for the survival of the nation." Another reference to unnamed prophets occurs in 2 Kings 24:2 concerning the prophetic fulfilment of Yahweh's word that came by his servants the prophets. In short, the role of the prophets mentioned in 2 Kings are limited and ineffectual. Without the monarchy and with the word of God codified, prophets are replaced by priests. "Prophetism can now be understood as a useful phase in the history of Israel, but one devoid of ongoing purpose or power" (Bergen 1999:174).

The problem in Elisha's role is made evident in this query and response. "If Elisha is not at work opposing Baal, what exactly is he there for? He does not lead Israel as Moses or Samuel did. He does not challenge the people to return to YHWH as Elijah did. He does not act as conscience to the king of Israel as Nathan did. He brings no ethical imperative to either king or people" (Bergen 1999:176). Furthermore, the meaning and value of the miracles is demeaned by the association between miracles and the sons of the prophets who are an unsustainable group. The main value is evident in the power attributed to Yahweh over fertility (2 Ki 2:19, 21; 4:16), hunger (2 Ki 4:43), and death (2 Ki 2:21; 4:32-35). However, the meaning of the miracle where forty-two children are mauled when Elisha curses them seems pointless (2 Ki 2:22-24). "The connection between Elisha's miracles and the word of YHWH is also questionable by the lack of specific ethical or teleological framework for the miracles. The miracles may be welcome (2:19) or gratuitous (4:16), but they do not function to bring Israel back to YHWH or to root out evil in

the land. The miraculous power of Elisha serves no larger purpose for the people of Israel or for YHWH" (Bergen 1999:177; cf. Rendtorff 1997:177). Therefore, the cumulative and subtle references to prophets in these narratives presents a negative picture which leads the reader to the assumption that prophets no longer fill an important role in the nation. According to 2 Kings, Elisha is the last prophet in northern Israel and he has no successor to take his place.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT PROPHECY DEGENERATES AND ALONG WITH FALSE PROPHECY, THREATENS THE END OF PROPHECY

Although false prophecy was a serious threat to the communication of the divine will in Israel, the Old Testament presents such conflicts in order to show that discernment and assessment was always required. If false prophecy was viewed as a development which could destroy the function of prophecy in Israel, surely the editors could have reduced the intensity of conflicts noted in the narratives. Instead, they presented the issues in clear terms to show that Yahweh would still use prophecy to communicate his message to Israel. In the end, texts show that the consensus of opinion prevailed and false prophecy was recognized for what it was. Yahweh always had his remnant of faithful prophets who would fulfill their call and commission to speak on behalf of God to Israel but even their messages required on going evaluation. The canonization of the Scriptures was essential to assist the community in this development. False prophecy was clearly a problem in Israel but it was not the reason that prophecy in Israel would cease or radically change in its main functions.

Furthermore, the prophetic corpus highlights the good and the bad prophets. It presents some in a superior role (Moses; Samuel, Jeremiah), and others in a lessor role (Jonah; Elisha), and some in a clearly negative role (Hananiah; Balaam). It, therefore, presents a very realistic view of the prophets who are referred to in many positive ways such as 'my servants the

prophets,' and 'man of God.' Some prophets are weak and frail, yet they fulfill the calling and mandate which they are given (Jeremiah). Even false prophets can be overruled by the Spirit in order to effect the divine will (Balaam; Zedekiah)! Neither ecstasy, cultural syncretism, nor satirical figures can thwart the purposes of Yahweh.

Elisha is also depicted as a powerful prophet with special abilities, but the extent of his prophetic influence is presented as limited. His leadership as prophet is characterized as part of the reason that prophecy in the northern kingdom is sporadic. However, Elisha is not the last prophet in the north. His prophetic ministry probably took place between 852-795 BC during the reigns of Jehoram and Jehoash. Then there was an apparent prophetic silence until matters under Jeroboam II became religiously and socially intolerable. The prophecies of Amos, Jonah, and Hosea addressed these issues during the eighth century from about 762-721 BC (cf. Boshoff 2000:102-112). Although Elisha had no immediate successor, Hosea sees himself as a prophet in a long row of prophetic successors to Moses (Rendtorff 1997:172-179; cf Hs 12:11-14). These eighth century prophets presented a powerful message against the religious aberrations of their contemporaries and emphasized the consequences of judgment which would come upon the nation. In accordance with their prophetic warnings, the judgments that were administered by the Assyrians led to the end of the monarchy in the northern kingdom.

Therefore, rather than hide or reduce the negative aspects of prophetic expression, the Old Testament presents them all to form a realistic and truthful picture of the complexity and nature of prophecy. In the end, true prophets are victorious over the tests, temptations, and challenges that they face in their leadership roles, and successfully record their oracles and experiences for the people of God. Prophecy is a predominately positive and necessary enterprise according to the Old Testament.

6 TRANSFORMATION, ANTICIPATION AND THE CONTINUATION OF PROPHECY

The overview of the nature of prophecy in Israel indicates that changes to the style, role, and even message occur throughout Israel's history. Thus, a type of transformation and development is to be expected. Moreover, some scholars hold to the view that prophecy did not really end, but was only transformed into other forms and expressions. Mainly based on his interpretation of intertestamental texts, Greenspahn (1989:37) asserts that prophecy did not come to an end in a temporary or other manner. Aune (1983:103) rejects the widespread opinion that prophecy ceased in Judaism during the fifth century BC and claims, "Rather, like all religious and social institutions, it underwent a number of far-reaching and even radical changes during the period of the Second Temple" (516 BC - AD 70). According to Blenkinsopp (1983:178), the message of judgement and salvation went through a different understanding and prophecy was "reabsorbed into the cult," as is evident in Joel and Chronicles. Also apparent is the reinterpretation of prophecy in the light of eschatological views (Blenkinsopp 1983:192, 249-252, 263). Cross (1973:343) agrees that earlier traditions and narratives were reworked to interpret history and were transformed into eschatological themes. Meyer (1968:816) claims that prophecy was expected to continue in that "the age of prophecy is extended to cover the early post-exilic prophets, and the possibility of prophetic inspiration is not entirely ruled out even for the period which follows." This may not refer so much to the individual prophetic representatives as depicted in the Old Testament but is expanded to include "a future age of salvation with a general outpouring of the Spirit" (Meyer 1968:817). This anticipation of the Spirit which revives prophetic expression is indeed quite common. "Israel herself was to be the prophet, the servant of the Lord. The people Israel was to be ambassador to the nations bearing the law to the peoples" (Cross 1973:346).

According to Overholt (1988:112) the question of whether prophecy ended depends on

whether those who are acknowledged by members of their society as performing the role of a

prophet are present or not.

> To say that in a given social context prophecy came to an end is not to deny the *theoretical possibility* of valid prophetic activity, but rather to note the failure of members of that society, at least for the moment, to credit (authorize) specific instances of prophetic behavior. Within a given society prophecy cannot be said to come to an absolute end until such time as the social prerequisites for this type of intermediation have ceased to exist. Until that happens, prophetic behavior itself will always (at least potentially) be with us; societal acknowledgment and toleration of such behavior, however, may wax and wane and even sometimes disappear altogether.[11]

(Overholt 1988:112)

Overholt (1988:113) does not claim that prophecy ended or was transformed into something else,

but notes that it is always a potential expression "based on that society's particular religious

beliefs and past experience." His view "allows for the intermittent appearance of prophets within

the society, defining the conditions under which prophecy can be said to 'end,' as well as begin

again" (Overholt 1988:113). This anticipation is evident in Deutero-Isaiah, according to Petersen

(1977:98) who asserts that the task of prophecy can be thrust upon other persons of groups (such

as Zion or a servant).

> Furthermore, prophecy gained a future connotation; it was something expected rather than a contemporary practice. Just as the poet expected a glorious new Exodus and a mighty new Jerusalem, so he looked forward to the reinstitution of earlier Israelite social structures, including Kingship and prophecy, albeit in revised form (so the democratized Davidic throne, Isaiah 55:1-5).

(Petersen 1977:98)

The main point is that prophecy may often be regarded by a community to be silent or non-

functioning during certain periods but that there is still an anticipation that prophetic expression can recur when inspired by the Spirit of God. The resumption of prophecy would come as a final eschatological drama initiated by Yahweh. "The return of prophecy was viewed in two ways: As a distribution of prophetic gifts to all true Yahwists and as the return of a prophet who was to prepare the true Yahwists for survival through the apocalyptic terror" (Petersen 1977:98).

An example of the transformation of prophecy is evident in the Second Temple period as exemplified by the Asaphites and Korahites. They were involved in expressing messages from God in a prophetic manner although they were 'temple singers.' Their prophetic expression in the temple was more of a liturgical form, rather than freshly inspired oracles. The psalms attributed to them are "ascribed to individuals, just as prophetic words were attributed to specific persons" and include Psalms 42-49, 84-88 (Korahite Psalms), 50, and 73-83 (Asaphite Psalms; cf. Petersen 1977:99). The Chronicler identifies them as prophets and their psalms could be referred to as a 'prophetic corpus.' Even so, this material should be distinguished from prophecy in the past. It is a transformation of classical prophecy but prophecy in the classical sense could only be anticipated in the future–that type of prophecy was over. The Deuteronomistic view of prophecy held that it would resume when Yahweh determined it should. "One major configuration of the tradition was the return of prophecy to all true Yahwists. Israel was to become a prophetic people by the pouring out of Yahweh's spirit when the new age arrived" (Petersen 1977:100). Therefore, prophecy went through transformation and periods of silence, but could be anticipated in the future.

6.1 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT PROPHECY IS TRANSFORMED, WILL CONTINUE, AND SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED IN THE FUTURE

Transformation in prophecy is evident throughout the Old Testament materials and

differences in thought and expectations are noted. Transformation is also intensified during times of transition such as the exile and in the Second Temple period. Prophets also re-interpreted former prophecies in the light of changing circumstances and events. Yet, this process is part of what was involved in the writing and compilation of Old Testament materials. The question is whether this type of transformation, composition, and compilation continued into the intertestamental period. There came a point when the community considered the canon as closed and no other changes were permitted of the standardized text. No other documents were admitted into the canon.

Nevertheless, the possibility of prophets arising and proclaiming fresh revelation from God was still considered as probable at some point in the future. Key Scriptures regarding this anticipation included the promise of succession: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him" (Dt 18:18). The potential for a continuation of prophecy rather than its cessation is implied. Individual prophets were expected to speak on behalf of Yahweh in an unbroken succession.

Furthermore, the coming or 'return' of the Spirit involved a democratization of the Spirit to include all of God's people. Intermediaries such as priests and prophets will no longer have a monopoly on the personal knowledge and Spirit of God. Yahweh will not forsake his people forever. "I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord" (Ezk 39:29). Joel also features God's eschatological activity in pouring out the Spirit of God on all people. "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour my Spirit in those days" (Jl 2:28-29). The coming of the Spirit of God would re-institute prophetic utterance once again as in the past (Nm

11:29; 24:2; 1 Sm 10:10; 19:23-24). Moreover, the analysis of Numbers 11 indicates that prophecy was a desirable experience for all of God's people (Nm 11:29b). According to Stronstad (1995:146), "Moses' earnest desire that Israel would be a nation of prophets remained unfulfilled across the advancing centuries, until God himself raised up the eschatological prophet like Moses, who, in turn, became the fountainhead of a community of prophets." Numbers 11:29 and Joel 2:28-29 anticipate a time when prophecy will not be restricted to a select few but will be enjoyed by all the people of God (cf. Stronstad 1999:84). The recurrence of prophecy will be extended to all flesh at some future point as is signified by the phrases "after this" and "in those days." Therefore, concerning the question of whether prophecy was over for good, the preponderance of weight indicates that the answer is no–prophecy is to be expected at some point even after the Old Testament canon is considered closed.

7 PROPHECY IS OVERTAKEN BY APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Along with the end of the monarchy and significant changes in the social structures of society, major changes developed in Israel that had eschatological dimensions. The crux which ushered in changes to prophetic perspectives appears to be the calamities experienced by the nation and the ultimate loss of national independence. When prophetic expectations for restoration were dashed and hope was deferred, apocalyptic views developed in order to address this situation. For Carroll (1979) the cognitive dissonance evident in the different theological views of the prophets during the exilic period led to the various apocalyptic perspectives. This type of literature, therefore, marks a definitive transition from prophetic to apocalyptic views which replace traditional classical prophecy (Eissfeldt 1965:561).

Differences are evident in prophetic viewpoints of eschatology compared to those of apocalyptic eschatology which have a unique system of beliefs. Whereas the former expected the

kingdom of God to arise in the context of human history on earth, the latter held to a notion that the kingdom of God would be ushered in differently in a supra-historical way by a cosmic act of God (Ladd 1979a:152). Also, the way these theological perspectives are communicated differs from the prophetically inspired word of the Lord given by the Spirit of God. The apocalyptist receives revelation by dreams, visions, and heavenly journeys and thereby discovers truths which interest the people of God. Moreover, "In apocalyptic, visions and dreams have become a form of literature" (Ladd 1979a:152). Prophetic materials are often re-written by the apocalyptic authors to address concerns of the community in order to assist God's people in times of historical crisis. The context for much of the apocalyptic literature is usually crisis. "In the catastrophe of the Exile the older forms of the faith and tradition came into crisis, and Israel's institutions, including her religious institutions, collapsed or were transformed" (Cross 1973:343). For Hanson (1975:7-10) the context was the new setting of Israel in the post-exilic community where pessimism over their social-historical circumstances gave rise to apocalyptic expression. "Classical prophecy" which was normally directed to king and court was transformed into literature which required insight, interpretation, and at times, instruction from heavenly mediators.

Therefore, as prophecy diminished, it appears that apocalyptic gradually took over and dominated perspectives during intertestamental times. However, most of the apocalyptic literature written during this period was not received as canonical by the religious community (Charlesworth 1983:xxiii). Furthermore, apocalyptic materials are evident in several books of the Old Testament, and appear in combination with prophetic literature. "Proto-apocalyptic" roots could have developed as early as the sixth century BC. According to Cross (1973:346) "it is in the late Exilic and early post-Exilic literature that we detect the rudimentary traits and motives of apocalypticism." Whether or not apocalyptic literature had its roots in the Old Testament documents at this early period is disputed and to a degree depends on the definition of what apocalyptic entails (VanderKam 1998:311-313). According to the popular definition of Collins

(1983:69), apocalyptic literature is limited to writings written after the third century BC during the intertestamental period. "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (Collins 1979:9). Although this summary may be instructive, the origins of the genre are also apparent in several Old Testament documents such as Isaiah 24-27, 34, 56-66, Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah 9-14, and Daniel 7-12 (cf. Charlesworth 1983:3).

Some scholars see aspects of the transformation from prophecy to apocalyptic in Ezekiel. "The transformation of classical prophecy into proto-apocalyptic takes place in the oracles of Ezekiel before one's eyes, coinciding with the fall of the house of David" (Cross 1973:223, 343). Hanson (1983:45) agrees with this view because Ezekiel "integrates his elaborate visions of the cosmic Yahweh into the events and institutions of the mundane sphere." Furthermore, so many of the antecedents of apocalyptic literature are derived from prophetic literature and Old Testament eschatological views that prophecy must be considered a forerunner of apocalyptic thought (VanderKam 1998:312). Russell (1964:88) refers to the Old Testament prophetic material of the post-exilic prophets as the "soil from which later apocalyptic works were to grow." Hanson (1983:9) emphasizes this in his assertion that, "Apocalyptic eschatology is seen primarily as a development out of prophecy abetted by the bitter experiences of the exilic and post-exilic period and the pessimistic attitude arising in visionary circles that Israel's sin was so deeply ingrained as to necessitate a radical break with the past and a new beginning initiated by Yahweh." But in addition to this, the symbolism, images, motifs, and language of apocalyptic are also taken from mythological forms of thought evident in the writings and sculptures of the ancient Near East (Sweeney 2001:134-138; Lucas 2000:68-72).

The decline and transformation of prophecy, therefore, and the development of apocalyptic literature are closely related. "With the fall of the kingdom, classical prophecy ceased. Haggai and Zechariah are only apparent exceptions. They are the last flicker of the old prophetic spirit which briefly flared when Zerubbabel rose up as pretender to the royal office. Prophecy and kingship in fact expired together" (Cross 1973:343). After this observation, Cross claims the earlier traditions were reworked to explain and interpret history and prophecy was transformed. Older narratives were transformed into eschatological themes, and royal and prophetic offices were democratized. The nation of Israel would be a prophet, ambassador, and the servant of the Lord to the nations (Cross 1973:346). Yet, continuity and discontinuity in thought are evident. Whereas prophecy features oral communication, apocalyptic has more of a scribal emphasis where wise men like Joseph and Daniel interpret and unravel the revelatory significance of dreams through divine wisdom and insight (Aune 1983:113). The functions of prophecy and apocalyptic have several similarities. Both genres of literature evoke anticipation, provide encouragement, and motivate covenant allegiance. There is also theological continuity but the communicators of prophetic and apocalyptic literature, experience revelation and present their impressions in different ways. There is a movement away from oral presentations which in the past could lead to subjective, false, wrong, or misleading interpretations. In apocalyptic, the written record is the focus of attention and the need for interpretation prominent. The scribal emphasis is, therefore, more pronounced in apocalyptic literature (Smith 1983:103).

This is also evident in "Second-Zechariah" where the prophet is "concerned with gathering up expectations of the earlier prophets and interpreting them or showing how they are to be fulfilled" (North 1972:51). This is an important feature of apocalyptic where "the citation of earlier prophecies and preoccupation with their fulfilment is one of the traits which is considered most distinctive" of this genre (North 1972:52), and may indicate that prophecy was a thing of the past. Russell (1964:182) agrees with this in that "The apocalyptic writers were essentially students

of prophecy who believed they had been raised up by God to make known its meaning to the people." Recognizing the differences within the Book of Zechariah, North (1972:70-71) claims that,

> First-Zechariah, like the greatest classic prophets, is completely enmeshed in a concrete moment of history which his oracles depict and interpret and improve. Second-Zechariah like Daniel and the apocrypha plainly grows out of a special historical ferment, but nowhere identifies it (at least for us later readers), and is concerned with remoter and more cosmic aspects of history.

Thus, the apocalyptists provide interpretive keys to make known the meaning of history and significant events. They focus more on the interpretation of events in the light of contemporary situations in order to update past prophetic pronouncements.

Finally, the Book of Daniel is an important witness on developments that take place near the end of the period of prophetic inspiration before a silence in prophecy becomes conspicuous, and the community of God considers prophecy to be dormant. The blend of prophecy and apocalyptic literature in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel is the precursor to those writings in the inter-testamental period which take the various apocalyptic literary images and motifs employed in the Old Testament and develop them. In addition to the apocalyptic features of Daniel 7-12, Daniel takes a scholarly approach to prophecies of the past in order to reinterpret what was revealed to other prophets (Fishbane 1985:475-485). With the assistance of an angelic figure, he is able to interpret and update prophecies made by Isaiah (10:23), Jeremiah (25:9-12), and Zechariah (2:1-4), and his writings mark a distinctive difference from other prophetic books. In fact, Daniel's theological assertions add to the theological views of the major prophets who indicate that the exile is a result of Israel's sin. According to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, God uses conquering nations to punish Israel. Daniel however, "maintains that the time of punishment has come to an end and that YHWH now identifies with the overthrow of foreign oppressors and

the establishment of an autonomous Jewish state" (Sweeney 2001:127). Furthermore, Daniel's apocalyptic theological views are not only for Israel but they represent a more universal hope for all humankind. "The visions of Daniel point to the end of human history in which the heavenly realm will replace earthly reality" (Sweeney 2001:133).

Even so, Sweeney indicates the historical significance of Daniel's message. "Although Daniel is often considered as an outgrowth of prophecy or wisdom, it is indeed a priestly work that is concerned with the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple, the assertion of Jewish identity, and the maintenance of Judean independence in the face of a foreign threat" (Sweeney 2001:139). The purpose of the book is to provide hope and instructions for the people of God in history. The intention of the book can further be noted by identifying the interests of those who finalized Daniel. This is an important consideration because the historical record of Daniel in the first part (Dn 1-6) is considerably different in scope and attitude in the apocalyptic section (Dn 7-12).

Although, there is no consensus on who the *maskilim* (those who are wise) are (Dn 1:4; 11:33; 12:3), there are clues in the book which help to identify the values advocated. Lucas (2000:66-67) attempts to make a profile of those he considers are responsible for the views contained in Daniel. He believes that they lived in the eastern Diaspora but sought to be true to Jewish identity and religion. They are skilled in interpreting dreams and visions, and show concern for Jerusalem and the Temple. They have a positive attitude to gentile rulers, are trained advisors and knowledgeable in the language and literature of the Chaldeans. They are committed to their work and, "For them this service is a way of bringing recognition and praise to the God of Israel, who controls all kings and kingdoms and whose rule will eventually break into history" (Lucas 2000:77). However, some aspects of this perspective changes in the second apocalyptic part where urgency and crisis leads to a more negative attitude to gentile rulers. The apocalyptic section could have been inspired by a drastic social calamity such as the persecution of faithful

Jews.

> This challenged the group's central assumption: that serving a gentile ruler, with the greater end of bringing praise to the God of Israel, was possible for the faithful Jew. The 'cognitive dissonance' this produced prompted the apocalyptic re-interpretation of their traditions. We have examples of this in Daniel 7, which re-interprets the theology of history found in Chapter 2, and in the re-interpretation of Jeremiah's seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27.

(Lucas 2000:79)

He proposes that, "There is an historical, social and geographical continuity between the group which preserved the stories of Daniel and that which produced the visions. The change in ethos in the book is the result of the catalytic effect of the Antiochene persecution in transforming the group's world-view" (Lukas 2000:79). Hence, Daniel advocates faithfulness to God in the midst of very difficult circumstances and indicates an immanent coming of the kingdom of God.

Therefore, when prophecy diminished in its unique nature and function, the scribal phenomenon of interpretation and written apocalyptic views replace those prophets who stand to proclaim contemporary oracles to an audience and say, "thus says the Lord."

7.1 ANALYSIS OF THE VIEW THAT PROPHECY IS OVERTAKEN BY APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

There is no doubt that apocalyptic literature marks a clear distinction from prophetic literature. The focus from earthly to supra-historical perspectives is quite evident. There is a movement away from a purely contemporary focus which included proclamation, to a more eschatological dimension. When life became insecure and chaotic, people asked questions and

prophets were expected to answer them. If the prophetic answer was not appropriate, the veracity of the prophet was in doubt. The alternative was for people to resign themselves to the situation of exile, and to believe that they were under God's judgment. In this context, the ability of prophecy to provide contemporary messages of hope was diminished. The critical point to remember, however, is that it was the prophets who initiated both the prophetic message and the apocalyptic one! Interestingly, the Book of Daniel also indicates a transition in perspectives concerning revelation, and reflects a change from prophetic to apocalyptic traits. Initially, Daniel's perception and insight is attributed to the "spirit of the holy gods" (Dn 4:8, 18; 5:11-14; cf. 2:8). That is, his ability to interpret dreams comes from Yahweh, as indicated in the text, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery" (Dn 2:47). The *ruah* provides his inspiration (cf. Hildebrandt 1995:143-144). In the second part of Daniel, however, the interpretation of the visions comes through an angelic mediator (Dn 7:15-23; 8:13-19; 9:20-22; 10:10-14; 12:8-10). Clearly, major changes in perspective take place which also show the transition to the apocalyptic emphasis during the intertestamental period.

Questions of authorship are of course rife and deutero and trito designations are used. In the end however, the prophetic corpus included books of the prophets which were attributed to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel. They all include prophetic and apocalyptic materials, and in doing so, provide the roots of eschatological views that shape the books. With the acceptance of Daniel into the Old Testament, however, prophetic books cease! Apocalyptic thinking takes over but it is the prophets who lead the way. In short, prophetic involvement is evident in the compilation of apocalyptic literature, but with the closing of the canon, other apocalyptic materials are not deemed to be equal and are rejected.

8 INTERTESTAMENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON CESSATION AND INSPIRATION BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

According to the Old Testament, true prophecy is inspired by the Spirit of God. Claims to inspiration usually involve the Spirit of God who fills a prophet or prophetess and motivates them to prophesy (Nm 11:25-29; 1 Sm 10:6). Claims to inspiration or possession include several expressions. "The hand of the Lord fell on me" (Ezk 8:1; Is 8:11; 1 Ki 18:46; Jr 15:17); "the Spirit lifted me up" (Ezk 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5), "the Spirit entered into me" (Ezk 2:2; 3:24); "the word of the Lord came to me" (Jr 1:4; 2:1); "the Spirit rested on them" (Nm 11:25-26); and, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Is 61:1). For example, Yahweh puts words in Jeremiah's mouth (Jr 1:1-3, 9). Jeremiah is to say whatever Yahweh inspires him to say and he faithfully proclaims the inspired word for twenty-three years (Jr 25:1-3). Conversely, when the Spirit of God no longer inspires a prophet, the purported prophecy is not to be recognized as an oracle from God.

At times the method of reception of an oracle is in question and at other times, the validity of inspiration may be doubted. Therefore, a claim to an inspired oracle may be false or manufactured. On the other hand, some prophets prophesy by Baal (Jr 2:8) or claim to have new oracles from Yahweh. False prophets maintain that they receive revelation through dreams (Jr 23:25, 32) and then attribute their inspiration to Yahweh. They claimed they were speaking on behalf of Yahweh and in his name (Jr 14:15; 23:25; 27:15; 29:8-9; 21). Yet, their auto-inspiration indicates their deception, boldness, and casual approach to the name of Yahweh. Their prophesies are a delusion of their own minds or their imagination (Jr 23:26) and are not to be taken seriously. The main problem in all of this is that the prophets speak their views in the name of Yahweh (Carroll 1981:163). Jeremiah 23:33-40 takes the matter of inspiration and authority further. He emphasizes in this text that only those who are entrusted with Yahweh's word are "entitled to proclaim it" (Thompson 1980:503). Those who make a false claim to authority for individual

prophecies will be punished. This text prohibits claims to new oracles since there were many appeals to oracles that could not be verified. Prophetic inspiration by the Spirit must be evident and true prophets of Yahweh must be faithful in declaring the inspired words.

In short, the overwhelming view according to the Old Testament Scriptures is that prophets receive their oracles and messages through the revelation and inspiration of the Spirit of God. With this strong connection between the inspiration of the Spirit and prophecy, any kind of incidence which would impede this connection would be tantamount to the end of prophetic inspiration as some texts may indicate. The continual rejection of God's word ultimately leads to a period where God chooses not to inspire his prophets and to withhold the prophetic word. Amos warns of this time using the imagery of famine, not of food but of the absence of the words of God (Am 8:11-14). Due to the persistent rejection of the prophetic word of the Lord, inspiration would no longer be available (Ezk 7:26-27; Hs 5:6; Mi 3:4, 6-7). While several Old Testament passages implicitly refer to the loss of inspiration, it is mainly intertestamental texts that reflect on past events where present perspectives on the lack of inspiration are noted. One Old Testament theologian states,

> The spring of prophetic inspiration dried up. From Deutero-Isaiah onwards we find in the prophetic books an increasing number of references to earlier prophets, which clearly arise from the consciousness that the great classical period of prophecy is over. Finally, in about the third or second century, the prophetic charisma comes completely to an end, as is shown by 1 Maccabees 4:46 and other passages, and it makes way for apocalyptic erudition in which the writings of the older prophets become simply the normative rule for their prophecies or even provide methods of calculating the future (Dan 9:2). Thus are fulfilled the necessary conditions for the formation of a collection of prophetic writings enjoying canonical validity.

(Eissfeldt 1965:561-562)

With the book of Malachi, the Old Testament prophetic canon closes and no other prophetic

oracles or books are added or ascribed to prophets who lived after the period when the book of Malachi "closed the canon."

8.1 SELECTED INTERTESTAMENTAL TEXTS

Although several intertestamental texts mention perspectives related to prophecy, there are different opinions concerning the interpretation of these views. Some say they indicate the continuation of prophecy and the presence of prophets. Others say they clearly indicate that prophets disappeared and prophecy ceased. During the intertestamental period, which is usually considered to be from 400 BC onward, pseudonymous writings and apocryphal literature appear to be popular but are not considered canonical. "The pseudonymity of intertestamental apocalyptic suggests that claims of direct revelation were by that time no longer credible, and indeed the biblical canon includes no prophetic works ascribed to figures who lived later than Malachi" (Greensphan 1989:37).

Cases for the cessation of prophecy due to the lack of inspired messages by the Holy Spirit, and alternatively, for the continuation of prophecy, are mainly based on views contained in rabbinic statements. The vast array of rabbinic writings include the Tosephta, which is a collection of additional comments made by Tannaim to explain views based on Old Testament texts. The Mishnah and Talmud are a very extensive collection of commentaries, discussions, supplements and observations relating to Old Testament teachings. The Apocrypha, particularly First Maccabbees, contains historical perspectives that also present views concerning prophecy during the intertestamental period. For our purposes, we will first quote the key texts that are used by scholars to form their opinions concerning the cessation of prophecy and then look at the interpretations given to the quotations. In doing so, Aune (1983:103) reminds us that the rabbinic literature must be carefully evaluated because,

(1) Some of these texts are relatively late (the rabbinic texts, for example, do not antedate the second century AD). (2) Early Judaism exhibited great variety, and the views expressed in particular texts reflect only the opinion of that segment of Judaism which produced those texts. (3) Although these texts are often lumped together, they do not all refer either to the phenomena of the low esteem in which prophecy was purportedly held or to its ultimate cessation in Judaism.

Furthermore, we should note that in the mainstream of orthodox Judaism, the prophets were not as important to the rabbis as was the Torah. This is evidenced in the limited liturgical use of the prophets as well as in the *midrashim* (Sawyer 1995:569-570).

8.1.1 QUOTATIONS FROM INTERTESTAMENTAL SOURCES

"When the former prophets died out, the Urim and Thummim were cancelled" (Tosephta Sotah 9.12).

"With the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel. Despite this, they were made to hear through a *bath kol*" (Tosephta Sotah 13:2).

"Until then the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, 'incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise'" (Seder Olam Rabbah 30).

"The Second Temple lacked five things which the First Temple possessed, namely, the fire, the ark, the Urim and Thummim, the oil of anointing and the Holy Spirit [of prophecy]" (Jer. Taanit 2:1; Jer. Makkot 2.4-8; Baba Yoma 21b).

"The wise are superior to prophets" (Tosephta Horayot 2:8-9).

"Since the destruction of the Temple, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the sages" (b. Baba Batra 12a).

"Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them" (1 Maccabees 9:27).

"And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise" (1 Maccabees 14:41).

"So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them" (1 Maccabees 4:45-46).

This latter text concerns the cleansing of the sanctuary and altar which had been profaned, and refers to the restoration of the temple. They thought it best to tear it down after its defilement but were not sure on what to do with the cultic materials.

Other important quotes are from Josephus the historian. In his defense of prophecy and its accuracy concerning the Scriptures, Josephus claims that,

> Not every one is permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration.

(Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.37)

He goes on to claim that the Old Testament record includes twenty two books "which are justly believed to be divine." These include the five books of Moses, thirteen prophetic books, and four books of hymns to God.

> It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly , but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.

(Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.41-42)

Concerning the completion of the Scriptures, he also claims that,

No one has been so bold as to either add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willing to die for them.

These intertestamental texts are the main quotations that will be referred to in the following discussion.

8.2 PROPHECY ENDED

In general it can be said that a typical perspective in Judaism was that the inspiration of prophecy as understood in the Old Testament had come to an end at some point after the First Temple. Sommer (1996:32) asks, "Did the Jews in the Second Temple period tend to accept the possibility that God still communicated with the Jewish people by speaking directly to certain individuals?" With his focus specifically on materials outside of the Old Testament, Sommer (1996:32) concludes that, "The notion of the end of prophecy was known and widespread in antiquity." Beckwith (1985:370-371) generally agrees with this view and says "It is therefore a perfectly legitimate generalization to say that, in the time of the Second Temple, unlike the time of the First, the Holy Spirit of prophecy was not present; for, except for the initial 34 years of the Second Temple, this was indeed the case." Factors which led to this situation include the intensification of false prophecy and prophetic failure--when this state of affairs became universal, this would indicate that true prophecy had ceased. "If it should be asked how the cessation of prophecy and inspiration was detected, the probable answer would be that it was detected by a cessation of those indications which had previously shown it to be present" (Beckwith 1985:373). Thus, there was a marked difference in prophetic expression and the observable lack of inspiration in those who claim it.

Josephus emphasizes the special status of the Old Testament prophets over others who also claimed the term.[12] In his view, prophets "had the privilege of recording the history of the Jewish people, and that the accuracy and consistency of their records are guaranteed by the fact that they were divinely inspired" (Feldman 1990:387). Josephus stresses that the knowledge of ancient history was inspired by God to prophets who then recorded the information that was

eventually received by the community as Scripture. This indicates his view that the Old Testament prophets were different than other so called prophets who arose after this time. Furthermore, he believed that prophecy ended with the return from Babylonian captivity, in regards to the writing of prophetic material. Concerning 1 Maccabees 9:27 which indicates that a prophet was not seen among them, Josephus asserts that the catastrophe faced by the Jews at the hands of Bacchides was the worst they experienced after their return from Babylon. According to Feldman (1990:298), Josephus "equates the return from Babylon with the cessation of prophecy. We may add that while it is true, as we shall note, that Josephus, like the Talmudic rabbis, regarded the sages as the true successors to the prophets, there were two prophetic functions which the sages could not and did not claim, namely the inspiration to write books of Scripture and the authority to record history." For Josephus, only biblical prophets could produce inspired writings for the canon of the Bible (Feldman 1990:402). Another indicator that Josephus did not believe that prophecy in the sense of composing Scripture, is evident in the way he talks about the seventy translators of the Torah into Greek. He carefully avoids the language of prophecy and indicates that they took on the work "as ambitiously and painstakingly as possible" (Feldman 1990:399).

Furthermore, Josephus speaks of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets in the reign of Artaxerxes. Rather than saying the "cessation of prophecy," Josephus prefers to talk about the issue of the succession of prophets since the genealogy of the prophets was no longer certain after the time of Artaxerxes. This implies that prophets thereafter no longer had the same sure authority. "Hence it is not a question of degree of prophetic inspiration; the very credentials of prophets after the Biblical period cannot be accepted" (Feldman 1990:405; 400).

Concerning the difference in the role of prophecy in Old Testament as compared to 1 Maccabees, Goldstein (1976:12-13) claims that, "Prophecy is absent from the narrative; so are miracles in the sense of direct supernatural intervention. Even the dying Mattathias' prescient exhortations are not called prophecy. For our author it was an article of faith that prophecy had ceased after Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and had not reappeared during the events covered by his history. The return of prophecy would come shortly before God's ultimate victory...There is thus

no reason to consider remarkable the absence of miracles and prophecy from First Maccabees." However, the identification of such prophets who might come is not easy to determine. Goldstein indicates that the author of 1 Maccabees likes to show that Daniel was a fraud and that prophecy was over. "Prophecy had ceased; the seer of Daniel was a fraud. Josephus, who believed in the seer's veracity may have perceived the author's bitter meaning. He replaces, 'since the cessation of prophecy' by 'since their return from Babylon'" (Goldstein 1976:48). Therefore, Goldstein claims an end to Old Testament prophecy after Malachi, but leaves the door open for an eschatological recurrence of prophecy.

Not only do some intertestamental texts imply the end of prophecy, but they indicate secondary or supplemental roles to Old Testament prophecy. Until the recurrence of prophecy should occur, God would make his will known through other means. "The idea is that God's will which was normally communicated through the prophets is now revealed by the *Bat Qol* to those who in another age would have merited the holy spirit" (Greenspahn 1989:43). This term literally means "daughter of a voice" and implies a secondary form of communication or a mere "echo" of God's voice (Sommer 1996:39). This indicates the anticipation of a prophetic voice but also reflects a reticence to claim prophetic inspiration (Goldstein 1976:281). Indeed, the key purpose for a recurrence is so that the prophet can name a designated leader. Concerning the true prophet, "The provision here also surely reflects the practice in the time of the Israelite kingdoms: the founder of an Israelite dynasty should receive designation from a true prophet. In Simon's time no true prophets were known to be alive" (Goldstein 1976:508). In short, Old Testament prophecy was over but other types of communication replaced it. "Prophecy was a thing of the days before and immediately after the destruction of the First Temple; whatever occurred later--whether one calls it a type of prophecy or by some other name--was inferior to (or at least different from) the sort of divine communication that preceded it" (Sommer 1996:40). Moreover,

> By the time of the Hasmoneans, true prophecy was largely acknowledged to have ceased. Several other practices took the place of direct access to YHWH's word: reuse and interpretation of older texts; pseudepigraphy; and various secondary forms of contact with God, such as the rabbinic *bat kol*. These practices share features with classical prophecy,

and scholars are correct to stress the continuity between them. Nonetheless, even those who participated in these practices displayed an unmistakable sense that they were secondary. While Jews in the Second Temple period ceased to believe in the continued existence of prophecy, they looked forward to a renewal of prophecy with the arrival of the final redeemer.

(Sommer 1996:47)

Therefore, prophets like those who were active during the Old Testament period were no longer considered to be functional during the intertestamental period.

8.3 PROPHECY WILL CONTINUE

For several scholars, the intertestamental texts indicate that prophecy continues after the Old Testament era. Although certain changes may be evident, the functions of prophecy continue. However, Greensphan (1989:37) cautions that, "One must distinguish what actually happened from what was later believed. The presence of individuals claiming to speak for God (i.e., prophets) is very different from whether they were accepted as authentic in their own time or, more important, by later authorities." He then goes on to claim that, "Careful analysis will show that the available texts rarely assert that prophecy had come to an end, temporary or otherwise" (Greenspahn 1989:37). Moreover, Sanders (1997:40-41) asserts,

> For most Jews, indeed, it would appear that prophecy or revelation had not ceased in the time of Ezra/Nehemiah. It certainly had not ceased for the Qumran Jewish community, the Christian Jewish community, or the other Jewish communities that produced most of the literature of the so-called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha.

As is the case in the Old Testament documents, several intertestamental texts quoted above indicate the assumption that prophecy must be inspired by the Spirit of God. Some rabbinic views held that the gift of prophecy was still available and various "sects of the late Second Temple period do not appear to have regarded either prophecy or the Holy Spirit as completely absent from Jewish religious experience. The Spirit of God was widely regarded as an

eschatological gift, but those apocalyptic groups which regarded the eschaton as imminent (particularly the Qumran community and early Christianity) firmly believed in the presence of the Holy Spirit (Aune 1983:104). Yet, based on several passages, it seems that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel sometime between the sixth and fourth pre-Christian centuries. Jeremias also summarizes the conviction of the synagogue that claimed the Spirit of God was quenched during the intertestamental period.

> In the time of the patriarchs, all pious and upright men had the spirit of God. When Israel committed sin with the golden calf, God limited the spirit to chosen prophets, high priests and kings. With the death of the last writing prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the spirit was quenched because of the sin of Israel. After that time, it was believed, God still spoke only through the 'echo of his voice' (*bat qol*), a poor substitute.

> (Jeremias 1971:80-81)

In the Judaism of the time, the impartation of the spirit almost always means prophetic inspiration. "For the synagogue regarded the possession of the holy spirit, i.e., the spirit of God, as the mark of prophecy. To possess the spirit of God was to be a prophet" (Jeremias 1971:52).

The rabbis preferred to speak of the Spirit's departure rather than to prophecy's end. Furthermore, "Jewish tradition regarded prophecy as a gift of the holy spirit. For example, *ruah nebu'a* (spirit of prophecy) and *ruah qudsa* (holy spirit) are used almost interchangeably to translate biblical references to God's 'spirit' in various targumim" (Greenspahn 1989:37). Therefore, if the rabbis believed the Holy Spirit was not inspiring prophets, prophecy was understood to be non-functional. However, Greenspahn (1989:48), interprets this to mean that "Rather than claiming that prophecy had come to an end, these traditions assume that it still existed, but that leadership had been given to others." He sees polemical aspects in the rejection of prophecy.

> The statement that the holy spirit had departed from Israel is thus not an empirical observation as to the absence of prophets, whose existence is clear from numerous sources, but a denigration and even denial of these figure's legitimacy, albeit one whose

roots are deeply embedded in biblical tradition. Rather than challenging Christianity, which emerged centuries after the holy spirit's purported departure, or apocalyptic, whose proponents rarely preached in their own names or those of their contemporaries, the polemic appears to have been directed against a much broader phenomenon of continuing Jewish prophecy.

(Greensphan 1989:48-49)

The main reason for the rabbinic denial that the Holy Spirit was inspiring contemporary prophets is that charismatic figures would pose a severe threat to the existing social order and destabilize their political situation (Greensphan 1989:48).

In regards to inspiration and texts which allude to the chance of another "authentic" prophet arising, Meyer (1968:816), notes that it is often concluded that a prophet could arise when the "extinguished prophetic gift should be kindled again in an authentic bearer of the Spirit." Therefore, the expectation of an eschatological prophet who is inspired by the Spirit is an important rabbinic perspective and belief. Although Meyer indicates that the general trend of 1 Maccabees is against any such long-term expectation, he also accepts the contemporary fulfillment of this anticipation. John Hyrcanus, according to 1 Maccabees 16:11-22, fulfills a number of roles as high-priest, king, and prophet. A prophet who is "charismatically empowered to make valid decisions in temple matters" has appeared and the age of salvation has come (Meyer 1968:816; 825-826). Based on his interpretation, Meyer sees the anticipation for prophecy to continue but affirms that prophetic functions will differ from those exhibited in the Old Testament period. "There was never in Israel a prophetic age in the sense of a fixed historical period. Prophecy was always accompanied and opposed by living and fruitful rational or anti-charismatic trends. Furthermore, it was always challenged from within by the question of its legitimacy. What distinguishes prophecy in Israel is its tremendous ability to live on in ever new forms" (Meyer 1968:828). Thus, Meyers sees the ongoing reality of prophetic expression after the exilic period but in different forms and in what he refers to as "nomistic rationalism."

In reference to the passage regarding the great persecution, "Thus there was great distress

in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them" (1 Maccabees 9:27), Greenspahn (1989:40) says that this could just mean that no prophets were around--not that there was no prophecy available. "Intertestamental authors may have sensed an absence of prophets--something noted in other periods as well (cf. 1 Sm 3:1)--but they simply did not state that prophecy had come to an end, temporarily or otherwise." His conclusion is that "those living in the post-biblical period considered prophecy--however that term was understood-- as possible, at least in principle" (Greenspahn 1989:41).

Generally, Koch (1982b:188) also affirms that an anticipation of prophetic expression in some form was to be expected. In reference to 1 Maccabbees 4:46; 9:27, he claims that prophets, "need only to be looked for again when the eschatological future dawns." Concerning Malachi and the anticipation of Elijah, who was considered a "highwater mark" in the Old Testament--it was easy to imagine that he might return. "Where the religion of the Old Testament and its history is concerned, the idea shows how Jewish circles continued to ponder over the interpretation of prophetic utterances, even after literary prophecy had come to an end" (Koch 1982b:180). In the meantime however, the writings of the canonical prophets are authoritative, and "the prophetic books continued to be passed on, read and used, even in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods--centuries of which we know very little. So at that time it was not so much the living prophets as the dead ones who exerted influence" (Koch 1982b:188).

Concerning some of the rabbinic statements, Meyer (1968:816) claims that "one finds sophisticated theological deliberation aimed at restricting the rise of legitimate prophecy to an ideal classical period in the past." This speculation is based on the understanding that the canon is complete and includes the writings inspired by the Spirit of prophecy which ended with the destruction of the temple in 587 BC. However, "the age of prophecy is extended to cover the early post-exilic prophets, and the possibility of prophetic inspiration is not entirely ruled out even for the period which follows" (Meyer 1968:816). This may not refer so much to "individual representatives of the sovereign Spirit" but includes "a future age of salvation with a general outpouring of the Spirit" (Meyer 1968:817). Moreover, the rabbis generally emphasized that any

so called prophets were obliged to base their speech on the Torah and that they were not to be given canonical validity like the Old Testament prophets were. According to this view, "The prophets are thus the oldest expositors of the Law authorised by the Spirit, and they have their specific and limited task in the divine plan of salvation. Hence it is emphasized continually that there was a plentitude of prophets in Israel" (Meyer 1968:817).[13]

8.4 ANALYSIS OF INTERTESTAMENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON CESSATION AND INSPIRATION BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

It seems clear from the intertestamental perspectives considered here that Old Testament prophecy cannot take place when the Spirit of God is not actively inspiring prophets. The loss of the Spirit came about due to the continued rejection of Yahweh's messages and his messengers. Judgment on Israel included the withdrawal of the Spirit of God and the prophetic word (Ezk 7:26-27; Hs 5:6; Mi 3:4-7). Yahweh's warnings came into reality as Amos 8:11-12 forewarned. "The days are coming, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it." Similarily, Micah 3:5-7 claims, "Therefore, night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them. The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God." Prophetic vision will cease and revelations end (Jr 37:17; Ezk 7:26; Lm 2:9; Ps 74:9). The absence of inspired prophecy is the inevitable result of persistent sinfulness in Israel. Often, reference is made to past prophecies as those presented in "former days" when prophets were more active–an indicator that things had changed (Ezk 38:17; Zch 1:4-5; 7:7). The implication is that all prophecy will once be relegated to that of the "former days." The intertestamental passages dealing with prophecy seem to confirm this perspective.

Although the intertestamental views are important, the paucity of verses pertaining to the

theme of cessation of prophecy is notable. With such an abundance of intertestamental material, the assumption could be made that there would be more references concerning prophecy and prophetic themes. Perhaps this limited material is an indicator of the absence of prophets and prophecy. Whatever the case may be, the majority of references recognize that the kind of inspiration which results in canonical prophecy is over. Contemporary expressions in the intertestamental period were not equivalent to inspired prophecy. Other forms of communication of the divine will took over, such as re-interpretation of Old Testament texts, pseudonymity, and the *bat kol*. Yet, these secondary forms of communication were clearly recognized as inferior to prophecy. Furthermore, intertestamental literature generally refrains from much reference to the Spirit of God and prefers to mention angelic mediation. In this context then, it is evident that the anticipation for a renewal and recurrence of prophecy was rife–people looked for a prophet to come with a word. In the meanwhile, prophecy was dormant. Prophets were silent. Only the words of dead prophets lived on in the hearts and minds of God's people. And there they considered the texts which indicated that at some point in the future, the Spirit of God would once again rekindle prophecy and the word of God would be presented in a new and fresh way. They firmly believed that a prophet would arise and announce the coming of the messiah and his kingdom.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. Rendtorff (1975:164) makes this clear in his comments, "Die Propheten der frühzeit stehen einerseits in deutlicher, enger Beziehung zum Königtum; anderseits ist von Anfang an ein ausgeprägter kritischer Zug erkennbar, der besonders dort hervortritt, wo der König mit den altüberlieferten Traditionen des israelitischen Jahwebundes in Konflickt gerät. Der Prophet erschient oft als eine Art charismatisches Korrektiv zu den sich verselbständigen Königtum."

2. Gordon (1995:69) states, "At Mari, then, the contents of auditory and visionary experiences by certain individuals, often in a cultic setting, were written down for communication to their intended beneficiary--normally the king of Mari--and so they have been preserved in the city's

royal archives."

3. Although Petersen (1977:98-100) observes this as a major factor resulting in the end of classical prophecy, he does allow for the transformation and a recurrence of prophecy at some future point in Israel's history (discussed below).

4. Meyers (1995:721) does not deny that prophets were no longer around or that there was an absolute end to prophecy at this time. Rather, "Prophecy remained a potential to be realized within society at some future time." However, the low esteem with which prophecy was viewed (Zch 13:2-6; Jr 23:34-40) led to their limited and diminished role in society.

5. An important indicator for this is the example of Malachi 2:7 which emphasizes the role of priest and Torah. Also Malachi 4:4-6 emphasizes the influence of the Priestly Code. "Moreover, the anonymous attribution of the book to "my messenger" (1:1; 3:1) indicates that the phenomenon of prophecy as it had been known in Israel was over" (Meyers 1995:721).

6. Tournay (1991:53) indicates that Ezra proclaimed the Torah of Moses which became the law of the nation (Ezr 7:14-; Neh 8:1-8) "during the reign of the Persian King Artaxerxes, either Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC) or more likely Artaxerxes II (409-359 BC). The seventh year of Artaxerxes II (Ezr 7:7; cf. 9:9) would then be 398 BCE, a date accepted by many historians and exegetes."

7. His complete comment in this respect is important regarding whether the closing of the canon actually ends the possibility of prophecy or not. "Damit erfährt die Frage nach dem Ende der biblischen Prophetie noch eine wichtige Weiterung: zur Diskussion steht nicht nur, ob das Gesetz das Ende der Prophetie sei, sondern auch ob und inwiefern die Bildung des hebräischen (oder irgendeines anderen) Kanons eine Grenze biblischer Prophetie darstellt"(Utzschneider (1991:380).

8. Bergen's reading of the narrative includes some important methodological issues. He reads the Elisha narratives in the context of the Genesis to 2 Kings section of the Bible and does not consider that these narratives are largely influenced by a reading of the Latter Prophetic books back onto the Elisha narratives. He treats the narratives as realistic, having a narrator, characters, plot, and action. In addition, he affirms the historical value of the narratives in that they present the history of Israel and a people who lived in a society made clear in the text. Concerning the miraculous elements, he states that "the miraculous is so important to the work of Elisha that any attempt to naturalize the miracles would demonstrate that the reader is unwilling to fully enter the world of the narrative" (Bergen 1999:12-13). Furthermore, Elisha's role in the narrative is to be understood as the 'correct' role for a prophet in the reader's society.

9. The narrative reading of all the Elisha narratives by Bergen is presented in substantial depth (1999:42-169) but for our purposes, the general tenor of his conclusions and salient comments are accepted as an accurate reading of the texts in 2 Kings which belittle the role of Elisha and prophetism in general. It is important to note the subtlety of the way in which the narratives make this point. "The difficulty with reading Elisha as an exemplary prophet arises in the details and

intricacies of the text, and the mental gymnastics that are required to uphold his status" (Bergen 1999:46).

10. Bergen (1999:57-61) gives an important overview of positive and negative perspectives concerning the sons of the prophets. Although it is assumed by many scholars that the sons of the prophets are responsible for collecting the stories about Elisha, it is questionable as to why they would depict themselves in a negative way. They are depicted as a social underclass, a group in poverty which requires alms, and as a group heavily dependant on Elisha.

11. The examples that Overholt (1988:112) gives are Zechariah 13:2-6 which "polemicizes against prophetic behavior on the grounds that those currently indulging in it were speaking falsehood in Yahweh's name" and does not claim that visions ceased. Also, Jeremiah 23:34-40 mainly criticizes current prophetic behaviors. Meyers (1968:813) states that "Zechariah 13:2-6 can hardly be invoked as a witness, however, either to the absence of the prophetic spirit or to the illegitimacy of the prophecy which arose in post-exilic Israel."

12. Of the twenty books or tracts written by Josephus and collected by 93 AD, *Against Apion* has the most significant comments concerning the end of prophecy and his views regarding the status of Old Testament prophets. Josephus does not mention all the prophets in his writings and in addition to the Former prophets like Moses and Samuel, seems to discuss Jonah, Nahum, Isaiah and Jeremiah more than any others. He especially points out how prophetic predictions get fulfilled (Begg 1995:562). Whether Josephus claims to be a prophet himself is disputed. He mainly presents himself as a historian.

13. Greenspahn (1989:48) makes a similar note in this regard. "By accepting prophetic leadership as one stage in Jewish history, the rabbis relegated it to the past. Canonizing prophecy protected them from its contemporary practitioners."