

CHAPTER FIVE

OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF PROPHECY

During the course of Israel's history, the importance of prophecy as the divine communication of God to his people cannot be underestimated. The role of prophecy was often held in higher esteem than that of the priesthood or the monarchy, as is evident from several prophetic texts which rebuke these institutions. To a degree, there is some indication in the Old Testament that prophecy will always be a necessary and desirable function in the nation. Yet, at certain times in Israel's history, it is apparent that a variety of problems concerning prophetic communication threaten the veracity and value of prophecy. To complicate issues concerning the end of prophecy, the Old Testament does not provide much biographical material or detail concerning the prophets, their prophetic writings and time of service, or their challenges in communicating the divine word. Also, the period of writing, collecting, editing, and final endorsement of the prophetic books by the community are often clouded in mystery. However, it is our intention in this chapter to discuss specific texts that reflect upon the future development of prophecy, as well as texts that imply the possible transformation, dormancy, or demise of prophecy.

1 OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS INDICATING THE CONTINUOUS NATURE OF PROPHECY

In chapters two and three we have come to several conclusions regarding the nature and importance of Old Testament prophecy. Although there are many distinctive and unique experiences limited to some prophets, the main function for the called and commissioned prophet was as mediator of divine messages. God's people could not endure the divine presence directly and requested mediation (Ex 20:19; Dt 5:23-27). This request was permitted, but in relegating prophecy to individuals, it limited the prophetic role to a few who passionately promoted Yahweh's covenant with his people. However, as prophecy develops, there are indicators which show that perhaps this limitation was temporary and restricted to a few periods in Israel's history.

1.1 THE LAW: NUMBERS 11:16-30

Moses is presented in the Pentateuch as the prime paradigm of prophet for Israel. As far as immediate revelation, leadership, and power is concerned, Moses towers above other prophets (Ex 33:18-23; Dt 34:10-12).¹ His stature as prophet is unrivaled and prophets who follow him are to be of the Mosaic type (Fishbane 1985:536; 258-259). From the Mosaic period onward, prophecy in Israel was viewed as essential and Yahweh committed himself to ensuring prophetic 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. The crucial function of communicating the word of God to his people was assured (Craigie 1976:262-264).

This same theme arises in Numbers 11 when the Spirit of God upon Moses is shared with the elders. The sharing of leadership was already presented in Exodus 18:24-26 where Moses selected capable leaders to assist him with issues of judgment. However, the Numbers 11 passage

emphasizes the selection of elders for leadership and the great endowment of the Spirit on Moses who leads Israel as prophet. According to other Old Testament texts where the Spirit of God comes upon individuals, the majority of passages refer to the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of individuals (Ashley 1993:211). When the Spirit of God comes upon individuals, an external manifestation of prophecy or powerful act typically follows (Jdg 3:10; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 1 Sm 10:6, 10; 19:20). Therefore, the source of the Spirit and the resulting manifestation in this text comes from Yahweh. The implication is that the Spirit of God on Moses will now be shared with the elders, and they will be authorized to serve in Israel. The Spirit will be imparted to enable their ministry. When the Spirit comes upon the elders, they prophesy (Nm 11:25). Even though they prophesy, they remain elders and do not become prophets. The text indicates that they prophesied only on this occasion. “They are not prophets as such, and so it is a once-for-all experience, but the spirit of leadership and the spirit of prophecy are closely related (Budd 1984: 130).” There is no indication in the text that this external evidence of prophecy is ecstatic—nor is there any evidence in the Pentateuch that Moses had ecstatic experiences. This text serves to publically authenticate the elders for their leadership roles in Israel.

In this context, Joshua is concerned that Eldad and Medad, who are apparently in addition to the seventy elders, are also prophesying. In the context of Numbers 12 and the leadership conflict presented there, Joshua is probably concerned for a possible leadership challenge that could arise for Moses. It is this issue that leads to Moses’ programmatic declaration regarding the hope that all of God’s people would be prophets! But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” (Nm 11:29). If the concern for leadership challenge is the context, then the solution would be for God’s people to have the presence of the Spirit of God so that they could be leaders and prophets as well. According to this text, all of God’s people are eligible for Spirit reception and prophetic ministry. Petersen (1977:40) notes that, “Even at this stage there was a conjunction

between Yahweh's bestowal of spirit and consequent prophecy. The Numbers text provides the conceptual raw material for the contention that a pouring out of the spirit will result in prophetic gifts for all Israel." This implies that God's people could potentially enjoy divine revelation directly, be involved in mediation, and enjoy a more intimate relationship with Yahweh. The fostering of a personal, individual, and intimate relationship with Yahweh is an Old Testament goal. Yahweh desires that all of his people will know him personally and have the same access to him as the prophets did.²

1.2 THE FORMER PROPHETS

The books of Joshua and Judges are considered as prophetic material in the Hebrew Canon and are listed among the Former Prophets along with 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. However, there are only a few examples of actual prophetic activity presented between the period of conquest and the monarchy. Perhaps this was due to the charismatic succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua and then to the charismatic judges (Blenkinsopp 1983:63-64). That is, the same Spirit that inspires prophecy, also enables other leaders like Joshua and the Judges to give deliverance and direction to the nation.

1.2.1 BETWEEN MOSES AND SAMUEL: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

Joshua was among the seventy elders who received the Spirit of God (Nm 11:28). He was an assistant to Moses (Ex 24:13; 32:17) who became a military field commander and successor to Moses (Ex 17:9-13; cf. Schäfer-Lichtenberger 1989:210-212). Joshua was specifically set apart for leadership by Yahweh and commissioned for his military and administrative tasks (Nm 27:16-23; Dt 31:1-29). Joshua is never presented as a prophet. His main responsibilities included the leading of Israel into holy war (Jos 1:2-5; Dt 3:28; 21:7), as well as the administration and

supervision of the land inheritance allotments (Jos 1:6-9; 13:7-33). The nature of his charismatic leadership is indicated by the note that he was filled with the Spirit of wisdom (Dt 34:9; Nm 27:18). Furthermore, his activities often match those of Moses who did many miracles through the Holy Spirit (Is 63:11-14). One miracle involves the parting of water (Jos 3:17; Ex 14:21-23). The transfer of power from Moses to Joshua served to give authority to Joshua before the people (Jos 3:7). Yahweh was present with Joshua as he was with Moses (Jos 1:5). Both leaders interceded for the nation (Jos 7:7; Dt 9:25-29), and both met the Lord on sacred ground (Jos 5:15; Ex 3:5; cf. Kissling 1996:78-82). Although Joshua is not called a prophet, his activities certainly reflect prophetic functions, including the important role of leading Israel in covenant renewal (Jos 24). During the period of conquest, there is no reference to any specific prophetic message—God speaks and works through Joshua.

The book of Judges, however, does make reference to Deborah the prophetess (Jdg 4:4-5), and an anonymous prophet (Jdg 6:7-10). This is the first text in the Former Prophets that makes reference to a prophet who is sent by Yahweh in answer to the cries of Israel (similar to the call of Moses in Ex 2:23; 3:7). The prophetic message emphasizes Israel's sin in worshiping the gods of the Amorites.³ In fact, the whole tenor of the Book of Judges is prophetic in nature--it speaks to the nation like a prophet to present the consequences of apostasy. Regarding Judges 6:7-10, Auld says that "This late addition to Judges rather takes away some of the force of 1 Samuel 3 because it is the first prophetic passage in Joshua to Kings." In his view, "This preface deftly claims prophetic influences in other episodes of the Judges even where the actual accounts use different terminology—so helping to make explicit the prophetic character of yet another part of this whole narrative corpus" (Auld 1983:23). Thus, the few references to prophecy in Judges are only a part of the overall prophetic message gleaned from the book of Judges.

In answer to the supplication of Israel during this era, God usually raises up charismatic

leaders to bring deliverance to his people. Judges were raised up to give general leadership (2 Sm 7:11; 1 Chr 17:10), but they are also referred to as ruler or official (Jdg 8:14; 9:30; 10:18), leader (Jdg 11:6), or head (Jdg 11:6). Deborah served as leader and also held court as judge. Although the nature of their judicial leadership was sporadic and localized, the activities of the judges were for the benefit of “all Israel,” not just for the clans. This is noted from the predominant use of the name “Israel” throughout the narratives which appears more times in Judges than in any other Old Testament book (Block 1988:41). Therefore, the overall concern of the book remains Israel’s fidelity to Yahweh as a nation. The problem addressed is the same issue which prophets generally seek to address—the religious apostasy and spiritual disintegration in Israel. In a similar way, the judges sought to address this situation (Jdg 2:17). Apostasy and syncretism is the main theme of the book of Judges which is emphasized by the theological pattern that occurs throughout the book.⁴

To address the situation of apostasy and supplication, Yahweh raises up individual judges or savior figures who are then endowed with the Spirit of God (Jdg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25). The term “charisma” is a theological notion that “conveys the idea of God’s spiritual gifts, bestowed upon people who function as His emissaries and carry out His mission upon the earth” (Weisman 1977:404-405). However, the term emphasizes the Spirit’s role to help the judge to meet the crisis at hand (Dumbrell 1997:76). It is the coming of the Spirit of God on the individual that is responsible for the supernatural power exhibited by the judge and thereby was recognized as God’s messenger. “The deliverer-judge, distinguished by extraordinary qualities and gifts, appeared in his own estimation and in that of his devotees as a divine agent delivering his people from national crisis, an act which imbued him with supreme authority within his society” (Malamat 1976:159). The theme of charismatic leadership during this period, therefore, shows Yahweh’s active participation in Israel. Yahweh hears Israel’s cries of repentance and intervenes to alleviate their suffering. The Spirit that he gives these leaders, is the same dynamic, explosive

power that prophets receive for their prophetic functions. In this way, Yahweh protects his people during “those days that Israel had no king” (Jdg 21:25). Yahweh maintains the unity of Israel through charismatic deliverers whom he raises up when true repentance is exhibited—the same repentance that the prophets appeal to. The overall purpose of the book can be viewed as a prophetic message to encourage the exiles who are in a similar situation as the people were during the days of the Judges--just as Yahweh intervened on behalf of Israel then, so would he intervene to help his covenant people in the future (Dumbrell 1997:81-82).

In summary, although the succession of prophecy is not evident in the period between Moses and Samuel, the books of Joshua and Judges do present prophetic perspectives and present some examples of prophetic activity. This era naturally looks forward to a new period when prophetic activity will be realized by the people of God.

1.2.2 SAMUEL

Preceding the narratives of Samuel, an anonymous prophet appears to denounce the Elites and foretell the future appointment of a faithful priest (1 Sm 2:27-36). This prophecy signals an important transitional event where Yahweh will raise up a prophet like Moses for his purposes. With the appointment of Samuel as prophet, the divine promise to provide a successor to Moses is fulfilled. “The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. And Samuel’s word came to all Israel (1 Sm 3:21).” Samuel is here authenticated and presented in a very positive way as the ideal prophet who is fully capable of leading Israel by the divine word, in contrast to the negative narratives concerning the people’s request for a king (McCarter 1980:19). In addition to other roles such as priest, judge and man of God, Samuel becomes the prophetic leader of God’s people and is the paradigmatic fulfilment of the Mosaic promise. He is the first major successor to Moses as far as prophetic leadership is

concerned and functions prophetically in a variety of ways. He foretells events, anoints Saul and David, presides over other prophets, and leads the nation from the period of the judges into the monarchic era. Due to the variety of roles ascribed to Samuel, Blenkinsopp (1983:67; cf. Auld 2001:31-44) claims that it is almost impossible to know anything about Samuel as a historical figure, but he does say that, “One of the most historically trustworthy of the traditions about Samuel presents him as leader of a band of ecstatic prophets, and there can be no doubt that both he and they were involved in the political and military events of that critical period in the consolidation of the tribes.”

The narratives in 1 Samuel also set forth the way in which prophecy and the monarchy will function. Samuel will continue as mediator and intercessor between Yahweh and the people, and will instruct and admonish the king according to Yahweh’s directions (McCarter 1980:21). In relation to the kings, Samuel is a “paradigm of prophetic opposition to kingship” (1 Sm 13:8-15; 15:1-31; Blenkinsopp 1983:65). This theme is featured in an oracle which warns Israel of the negative tendencies which kings will implement over the people. The price of kingship will involve a labor force of Israelites in the military, agricultural and manufacturing sectors in addition to heavy taxation (1 Sm 8:11-18). In spite of this warning, the people remain indignant and demand a king to rule over them and lead them in battle (1 Sm 8:19-22). Grotanelli (1999:89) comments that, “The legitimation of this kingship is thus amply expressed and guaranteed by the will of the people (who having been forewarned, thereafter forfeited the right to complain about the negative consequences of their own stubborn insistence). The kingship also is legitimized by acceptance on the part of Yahweh and Samuel.” Whereas Samuel is clearly successful in limiting Saul’s abuse of kingship in some of these and related areas, not all prophets were as effective.

From Samuel on, there is a succession of prophets who carry on the tradition of speaking for Yahweh during the monarchy, exile and post-exilic periods. Prophets are presented as key leaders in each transitional period who monitor Israel's covenant relationship and provide the specific divine message necessary to lead the nation through key events. Although seemingly limited, nevertheless, prophetic succession from Samuel can be traced through the Former Prophets who include the prophetic words and actions of Nathan (2 Sm 7-12; 1 Ki 1:8-45), Gad (2 Sm 24:11-19), Ahijah (1 Ki 11:29-39; 14:1-16), a man of God from Judah (1 Ki 13), Jehu ben Hanani (1 Ki 16:1-13), Elijah (1 Ki 17-2 Ki 2), a prophet and a man of God (1 Ki 20:33-43), Micaiah (1 Ki 22:8-28), Elisha (2 Ki 2-13), Isaiah (2 Ki 19:1-7; 20-34; 20), and Huldah the prophetess (2 Ki 22:14-20). With the death of Solomon, prophets continue to be active in the Northern Kingdom, and are involved in the events surrounding the monarchy as well as in social aspects. When the kingdom is split, the prophet Ahijah appears to Jeroboam in order to communicate his selection by Yahweh (1 Ki 11:29-39). However, Jeroboam is soon confronted by another prophet for the religious reforms he initiates (1 Ki 13), and is then condemned by Ahijah (1 Ki 14:1-16). The man of God from Judah who pronounces the powerful word of judgment upon Jeroboam, signifies a new emphasis for the monarchic era--kings will be subject to the prophetic word which is clearly shown to be fulfilled in the writings of the Former Prophets (2 Ki 23:16-18). Prophets are, therefore, intimately involved in the history of Israel. In addition, the canonical prophets set the contexts of their prophecies within the reigns of the kings, indicating succession and representation during the extensive period of the monarchy. During the generations living in the monarchic era, the prophets spoke directly to certain kings regarding their reigns and in general, the Lord warned them "through all his servants the prophets" (2 Ki 17:23).

1.2.3 ELIJAH AND ELISHA

Much has been written regarding the purpose and role of the narratives concerning Elijah and Elisha. Few prophetic figures match the character and power exhibited by these two individuals. Although scholars often attribute these narratives to hagiographic material (Blenkinsopp 1983:70), or non-historical stories (Thompson 1999:58-60), the key concern for us is to note the theological role which prophecy plays in the numerous chapters of 1 and 2 Kings which are devoted to Elijah and Elisha.⁵ Although they exert tremendous influence during their period of service, they also exhibit considerable human weakness and frailty (cf. Kissling 1996; Bergen 1999).

In order to understand these stories, it is necessary to know the context and religious formation going on during this time. There is very little biographical information given regarding Elijah the Tishbite. He appears suddenly before King Ahab with a dire prediction of drought which emphasizes the potency of the prophetic word (1 Ki 17:1). The historical period is that of the Omride Dynasty of four monarchs (876-840 BC) whose second king is Ahab. Generally, the sons followed their father Omri who is referred to as one who “did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him” (1 Ki 16:25). During the period of the Judges, the threat to Israel’s faith derived from the infiltration of Canaanite religion. Syncretistic religion was always a threat during the period where Israel was still forming its theological views (Ringgren 1966: 58, 96). Several kings in Israel apparently accommodated Canaanite practices and gave recognition to Baal, the prominent god of the Canaanite pantheon. However, Omri elevated the worship of Baal to appease the indigenous population (Dumbrell 1986:12-13). This syncretistic trend continued with the marriage of Ahab to Jezebel. Even though Ahab gives his sons Yahwistic names, his religious affiliation is clearly syncretistic. Baalism generally threatened to replace Yahwism in the north (1 Ki 18:4-19; 19:10-14), but during Ahab’s reign, Jezebel made the bold attempt to replace Yahweh with the Tyrian Baal cult. Jezebel’s hostility toward the prophets increased to the point that their extermination was threatened, and her pogrom against Yahwistic prophets was planned

and systematic (Zevit 2001:193). Prophets of Baal were given official status while prophets of Yahweh were forced to seek refuge (1 Ki 18:19).

It is in this context of grave religious apostasy that Yahweh raises up the tenacious prophets called Elijah and Elisha, along with peripheral assistance from a remnant of seven thousand (1 Ki 19:14). While we can agree that the stories of Elijah and Elisha may be difficult to reconcile with other prophetic stories, they have an important role and message. Some seek to explain a few of the narratives as similar to “the conceptual world of shamanism, widely attested in cultures distributed around the world” (like the narratives which describe resuscitation; 1 Ki 17:17-24; 2 Ki 4:8-37; Overholt 1996:104-105). Whereas the motifs of drought, rain, control over nature, provision, resurrection, and healing, may be spectacular and may be polemics against Baal worship (Bronner 1968), they all seem to have a covenantal focus and connection to Mosaic themes. Although Moses did not resuscitate people from the dead, he was instrumental in the provision of food, water, healing, and many other miraculous events like the plagues and the parting of the Reed Sea. Therefore, the main emphasis of these narratives is to show Yahweh’s faithfulness to the nation in raising up prophets who will fight to preserve the faith of God’s people when the covenant is under threat. In this way, Elijah is presented as the condemner of idolatry, the defender of the law, and successor to Moses (Collins 1993:130). At the same time, Elijah and Elisha are concerned for the poor and oppressed in Israel (Zevit 2001:496). Moreover, the Deuteronomistic history emphasizes the importance of prophetic succession. There is a strong belief in the “constant, if intermittent, presence of prophetic intermediaries” who direct the nation by God’s word (Collins 1993:135).

Within these narratives, there is an important account which indicates that Elijah the prophet will be replaced by another—Yahweh has other plans for Elijah which bring his prophetic career to a seemingly premature end. I Kings 19 records the story where Elijah, after a great

victory, seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many of the narratives are a polemic against key Canaanite tenets concerning Baal (Bronner 1968), and the show down on Mount Carmel has to do with who will be named the national god of Israel (Dumbrell 1986:14). Not only so, but it is a confrontation between four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah against Elijah to determine who Israel will serve.⁶ It is a narrative which confronts Israel with a decision to serve Yahweh alone, much like Joshua 24 (1 Ki 18:21). Elijah views himself as the only remaining faithful prophet and puts all others to the test of fire. The main theme of these narratives concerns the religious conflict between Baalism and Yahwism (1 Ki 17-19; 18:21). When Yahweh answers to the challenges by sending fire, the conflict begins to intensify with Jezebel's threat to kill Elijah. At this point he flees to no other place but Horeb, and on the way, dismisses his servant. This action and those that follow could indicate his desire to abandon his prophetic ministry (Dumbrell 1986:14; Childs 1984:135).

Mosaic typology is quite evident throughout this account. "Indeed at Beersheba Elijah like Moses before him, groaning under the cares of office, wishes for death (Nm 11:15), i.e. now requests the termination of his office" (Dumbrell 1986:14-15). In other words, Elijah, like Moses before him, sought to be free of his leadership responsibilities and bring an end to his prophetic vocation. Quite possibly he also feared death, possibly at the hands of Jezebel, which was the fate of some prophets in Israel (1 Ki 18:4; 19:2, 10). Furthermore, Elijah seems to think that the Mosaic covenant was broken beyond repair. He repeatedly claims that Israel has broken their covenant with Yahweh, torn down his altars, and killed all of Yahweh's prophets (1 Ki 19:10, 14)! When this narrative is compared with the Mosaic covenant, the terminology highlights the fact that Elijah goes to the place where the covenant with Israel was first given, in order to provide Yahweh with the opportunity of renewing the treaty that he claims is broken. Elijah desires a new covenant experience--he flees to Horeb hoping for a new covenant and a theophanic experience like Moses had, but instead discovers that Yahweh has nothing to add to the Mosaic

covenant (Dumbrell 1986; Childs 1984). Yahweh did not tell him to go to Horeb. Yahweh is not in the wind, fire, and earthquake! While Elijah might be a successor to Moses, he is not a second Moses and rather than being at Horeb, he should have been elsewhere. Yahweh had nothing more to add to the Mosaic covenant, which is apparently what Elijah hoped to receive. The covenant was still in effect. However, Elijah is now commissioned to fulfill some final tasks. He is to “anoint Hazael king over Aram,...Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel,...and, Elisha son of Shaphat,...to succeed you as prophet” (1 Ki 19:15-16). This instruction implies the transfer of Elijah’s prophetic role to Elisha which thereby, effectively ends Elijah’s service as prophet. Therefore, “Elisha is the only example of a prophet, appointed as the direct successor of another” who is commissioned to continue the work of the prophet Elijah (Collins 1993:136). Elijah is replaced by Elisha, and rather than taking early retirement, is carried by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Ki 2:11).

1.3 THE LATTER PROPHETS

Perhaps the two main themes of the majority of prophetic oracles in the Old Testament revolve around judgment and salvation. The threat of judgment which the prophets expressed “by the word of the Lord” came to pass on Israel, Judah, and their enemies. However, this was not the last word, for intermingled with the destruction oracles came words of hope and restoration. During the period of exile, the prophets often expressed that new life, transformation and renewal would be brought about by the work of the Spirit of God. Through the Spirit, the people realized Yahweh’s continued presence with them and this revitalized their hopes as a nation for restoration to their land (Skiba 1984:1-3).

The association of the Spirit and prophecy in this regard, therefore, is an important aspect to consider in relation to the anticipation of a continuation of prophecy. In this section we discuss

texts that specifically address the future hopes of the nation concerning prophecy.

1.3.1 ISAIAH 32:15; 44:3; 59:21

The hope for restoration and all that it implied is particularly evident in Isaiah 40-55 where many vivid images of renewal are presented. Fertility and an abundance of water will be available (Is 40:1-11; 41:17-20; 49:19-26). The covenant relationship will be re-established (Is 55:3-5; 45:9-25). Cities will be rebuilt, repopulated and God's blessings will abound (Is 44:24-28). The content of Isaiah 32 refers to a future time when renewal within the nation will take place. Some of the social problems such as injustice, unrighteousness, and rebellion, which prevailed in the nation will now be addressed. Isaiah points to the Spirit of God as the necessary element for constructive change in the nation. Things would be bleak until "the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high" (Is 32:15a).

The phrase "from on high" refers to the heavenly abode of Yahweh from where the Spirit of God descends (Is 57:15; Jr 25:30; Ps 144:7). Verbs that refer to the Spirit as being "poured out" are frequent in prophetic literature (Is 32:15; 44:3; Ezk 39:29; Jl 2:28-29) and metaphorically they portray the blessing brought about by the Spirit just as the rain brings about the fructification and fertility of the earth. The pouring of oil during anointing rituals also symbolized the presence and enabling of the Spirit on individuals in the Old Testament (1 Sm 16:13; Is 61:1). The result of the Spirit's presence will be justice and righteousness, security and peace. The human heart will be transformed and a new attitude will prevail among God's people. This same phrase is used in Isaiah 44:3 where the prophet presents a similar word of encouragement concerning a future salvation. "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."

In these two texts the focus of God's work by the Spirit is to bring about the renewal of his people. Prophecy is not mentioned as a direct result of the Spirit being poured out. In the context, the primary emphasis is on the divine power to renew life, to bestow vitality, fertility, and blessing. However, when this same phrase is used in Isaiah 59:21 and in Joel 2:28, it indicates that the offspring and descendants of the people would be the recipients of the Spirit and these sons and daughters would prophesy. The close connection between the Spirit and prophecy is implied. Furthermore, Isaiah 59:21 is quite clear. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord. 'My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and for ever,' says the Lord." This prophecy alludes to an expectation of the realization of the prophetic word for all of God's people. The Spirit and the word operate together and assert the reality that the covenant promises will be fulfilled from generation to generation in the experience of God's people (Is 42:6; 48:16; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 61:8). The motif of preparing the mouth often occurs in the commission scenes of the prophets (Ex 3:12; 4:10-16; Is 6; Ezk 2). In Isaiah 59:21 the motif is used to "forecast that upon the redemption of Zion and the spiritual renewal of Israel the entire people will have the divine teachings placed in their mouth" (Fishbane 1985:374).⁷ The word gives assurance that the Spirit will not depart from the people of God-- mediation will be available and some day in the future, all of God's people will experience the gift of prophecy.

1.3.2 EZEKIEL 36:27; 39:29

Similar to Isaiah's oracles regarding an eschatological work of the Spirit, Ezekiel also anticipates a future dimension of blessing involving the Spirit of God. Ezekiel prophesied during the period of 593 and 571 BC. The theme of his prophecy before the exile was focused on judgment but afterwards he encouraged the exiles with words of comfort and restoration

(Hammershaimb 1966:98). It is notable that for some time, other prophets avoided the use of the term *ruah* for the Spirit of God because it had been associated with ecstatic behavior (Jr 29:26; Hs 9:7). Perhaps because of the Spirit-ecstasy association, particularly in the eighth century, there was a growing disdain for Spirit-induced ecstatic behavior (cf. Fenton 1997:32). In fact, at certain times in Israel's history there was an attitude that prophets were abnormal and that ecstatic behavior could presage the demise of prophecy itself. Therefore, "the 'new' prophets of Israel and Judah distanced themselves from the old prophetic frenzy" (Fenton 2001:133). Although this type of behavior is downplayed and restrained by the predominance of "the word" in the writing prophets, the association of Spirit and ecstasy always remained a factor in Israel's prophetic circles—it is mainly observed in the earlier and latter historical periods. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet begins to emphasize the work and nature of the Spirit's role once again.

In the context of judgment and exile, Yahweh promises to vindicate his name which had been profaned among the nations because of Israel's situation (Ezk 36:20-23). However, the vindication of Yahweh's name and the cleansing of the people could only be effected by divine intervention and a new creative act that would restore the people to a covenant relationship with Yahweh (Zimmerli 1983:566-568). The process of this vindication involves the work of the Spirit who will bring about a new covenant experience. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezk 36:26-27; cf 11:19; 18:31; 37:14).

In this text, as well as in Jeremiah 31:31-34, the granting of the Spirit does not imply the ability to prophesy. It mainly indicates a better covenantal response. Although the new covenant indicates some new features such as the universal knowledge of God, universal peace, security, prosperity, and possession of the Spirit (Jr 31:34; 32:41; Ezk 34:25-27; 37:26; Hs 2:18; Jl 2:32),

it was not new in the sense of “better.” It was new in the sense that Yahweh was prepared to put the law in the hearts of the people, enabling them to live in accordance with the covenant obligations through the power of the Spirit (North 1980:236). Nevertheless, the giving of the Spirit in this way, democratizes 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. With a new heart and a new spirit and with the Spirit of God, his people would be motivated to follow the divine decrees and laws. A reaffirmation that Yahweh will restore his people follows in Ezekiel 39:29. “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.”

1.3.3 JOEL 2:28-29

The post-exilic book of the prophet Joel is most likely to be dated around 500 to 450 BC (Israel 1985:2; McQueen: 1995:19-20). The two main parts of the book of Joel consist of a judgment oracle (Jl 1:1-2:12), and an oracle of salvation (Jl 2:18-3:21). More specifically, the literary structure includes oracles of lamentation (Jl 1:1-2:17), salvation (Jl 2:18-3:5) and judgment (Jl 4:1-21; Wolff 1977:4-6; McQueen 1995:21-23). At the heart of the book of Joel is a passage concerning 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). This promise of the Spirit is God’s response to the people’s repentance and the resultant blessings will include spiritual as well as material aspects. Joel 2:28-32 functions in the book “as a reversal of the significance of the Day of the Lord for Israel, from judgment to promise, from threatened destruction to safety” (Israel 1985:4). The close connection between the Spirit of God and prophecy for Joel is to be found in Israel’s prophetic heritage where the coming of the Spirit on individuals often caused them to prophesy

(Nm 11:29; 24:2; 1 Sm 10:10; 19:23-24). The passage refers to an eschatological event at some point in the future (cf. Rendtorff 2000:76-78).

The Joel text functions as an answer to the rhetorical question of Moses (Nm 11:29). The unclean spirit generating evil prophets (Zch 13:2-6) is an obvious contrast to the prophetic spirit of Yahweh which will be poured out upon Israel in the future. Joel 3:1 also provides a contrast with certain texts in Chronicles (2 Chr 15:1; 20:14; 24:20) which describe the bestowal of the spirit as the gift of prophetic certainty, a gift which the Chronicler contends has been given to the Levitical prophets and a gift which the Deutero-Joel author argues is only to be manifest in the future.

(Petersen 1977:40)

Although the main focus of the promise is Judah, the text anticipates the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh at some future point as is signified by the phrases “after this” and “in those days.” The qualification for blessing and salvation is for “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord” (Jl 2:32a). The text implies that the presence of God will bring about a new and vibrant relationship through the Spirit. “The pouring out of God’s spirit upon flesh means the establishment of new, vigorous life through God’s unreserved giving of himself” (Wolff 1977:66). This action of pouring out the Spirit has extensive effects.

The thrust of the passage indicates that the coming transformation brought about by the Spirit will radically change social conditions in the community. All people will be privileged possessors of the Spirit, not just the prophets. In fact both sons and daughters will function as prophets. In Joel 3:1-2, “the writer has synthesized thoughts about a pouring out of the spirit with the return of prophecy for the whole people” (Petersen 1977:39). All people will have access to the words of Yahweh and to communion with him. Social status will no longer be a criterion for Spirit reception. The programmatic desire of Moses is here affirmed and moved a step closer to fulfillment (Nm 11:29). The charismatic endowment of the gift is extended to the whole

community and the recipients will prophesy, dream, and see visions (Hildebrandt 1995:98). With these prophetic qualities and functions that describe the work of a prophet, the people can anticipate a special relationship with God. A renewal of prophecy is something to be hoped for in the future. “Once more the privileged position of the prophet emerges, this time in a direct declaration by Yahweh” (House 1990:190-191). To this extent, the people of God will become a “prophetic community” and will not only be able to receive revelation, but will become messengers of Yahweh. “To be a bearer of the spirit of Yahweh is to be a witness not only of salvation but also of the judgment which is coming upon all the world” (McQueen 1995:43). Thus, these verses indicate the anticipated continuation of the prophetic Spirit rather than the demise or cessation of prophecy.

1.3.4 HAGGAI

The oracles of Haggai in 520 BC mainly address Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high Priest of Judah. Although the oracles are primarily addressed to the leaders of Judah, they are also for the community which was either distressed by the opposition to their temple building, or just negligent in rebuilding the temple (Hg 1:3-12; cf. Ezr 5:14-16). Rebuilding the temple did not only concern the construction but the reordering of temple worship (Ackroyd 1968:156-157). Yahweh sends his messenger Haggai to encourage the remnant by affirming the presence of Yahweh with them (Hg 1:3, 12-13; 2:1, 5). Yahweh “stirs up” the spirits of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the whole remnant through the prophetic word and motivates them to action (Hg 1:14). In Haggai 2:5 it is specifically the Spirit of Yahweh that is with the returnees to encourage and assure them: “And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.” Although Haggai confronts the people for their sins, his words are mainly given in reference to the temple building, and the need for their cooperation. In fact, it is the failure to address the rebuilding of the temple that has led to their present circumstances (Hg 1:5-6, 10-11). In addition, Haggai affirms that the rebuilding of

the temple must be completed in order for the messiah to come (Hg 2:20-23). In this sense, the prophet functions as those prophets who focus the people of God on issues which have brought about their negative situation in order to bring about repentance and the restoration of God's presence among them. Clearly, Haggai is among the prophets who mediate God's message to the people at a crucial period in Israel's history.

1.3.5 ZECHARIAH

If Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (Zch 1:1; Ez 1, 6:14) is the same Zechariah of Nehemiah 12:16 who was head of the priestly family of Iddo, he was both a priest and functioning prophet (Hammershaimb 1966:102). Similarly with Haggai, Zechariah is influential in encouraging the rebuilding efforts for the temple as advocated by Joshua and Zerubbabel, but he emphasizes the restoration of Jerusalem. Along with Isaiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah envisions the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In addition, Zechariah "expects the day of the Messiah to come with the coronation of Zerubbabel" (Hammershaimb 1966:107; Zch 1:6; 4:1-10). However, the key emphasis is placed on the need to rebuild the temple and prepare the way for Yahweh to bless the community.

The rebuilding of the temple and city will actually authenticate the veracity of the prophet's word. "Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the Lord, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the Lord your God" (Zch 6:15). In this major task, Zechariah assures the people that it will only be possible through the Spirit of God among them. "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zch 4:6; cf. Hg 2:4-5). This stress on the work and presence of the Spirit of God not only emphasizes the assurance of success in regards to the rebuilding but indicates the reality of prophecy among them by God's

messengers. This is an important element for both Haggai and Zechariah. “Neither prophet loses sight of the underlying truth that the rebuilding of the Temple, even if it seems to be undertaken as a result of human effort, is in fact brought about by the working of the spirit of God” (Ackroyd 1968:177). The close association of the Spirit of God and prophecy which is typical in the Old Testament is summarized in Zechariah 6:12. “They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.”

1.3.6 MALACHI

The book of Malachi probably represents the period between 475-457 BC. Priests and prophets appear to work together but the priesthood is predominately presented in a negative way (MI 2:4-9). Malachi focuses his prophecy on the relationship of God’s people and their need to conform their behavior to the Mosaic laws in an anticipation of a final redemption (Fishbane 1985:524). The general tenor and import of two texts in Malachi anticipates the return of prophecy at some future point. The first text refers to an anonymous prophetic messenger who is presented as the one who will prepare the way for Yahweh to appear amongst his people (MI 3:1). The second text comes at the end of Malachi, and is often referred to as a “second appendix” by scholars. However, the ending of Malachi is in agreement with the main themes of the book.

As intimated in several of the prophetic books, there is an end to classical prophecy envisioned at some time, but then at some future point, when God’s people respond to Yahweh as desired, there will be a recurrence or continuance of prophecy in some form. In Malachi “there is an expectation of the return of prophecy for an elect portion of Israel” and this return seems to involve an individual (Petersen 1977:42). Specifically, Malachi 4:5 says, “See, I will send you the

prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.” Elijah was one of the great prophets in Israel and represents those prophets who served Yahweh with zeal and devotion. Furthermore, the reference to Moses in Malachi 4:4, makes an important association between Elijah and Moses. This connection between these two great prophets at the end of the prophetic corpus connects the first two major sections of the Hebrew canon together--the *Torah* and the *Nebim* (Rendtorff 2000:84-87).

This verse at the end of Malachi and at the end of the prophetic corpus, indicates that Israel should anticipate prophecy in the future. “It expresses an expectation that once the time of the prophets comes to an end, God will send ‘still one more prophet’ he will be like the first of the prophets, Moses” (Deutsch 1987:114).⁸ Elijah will be like a forerunner and an announcer of the messianic period, but perhaps the application made by Kaiser (1984:107) is overstated when he says that Malachi “opens the door for a succession of announcers all the way up to the second advent of messiah when the first and last Elijah would step forth as the beginning and the end of the prophets.” However, clearly implied is the hope that the succession of prophets has not ended. The role of the prophet is to prepare God’s people for his appearance, much like Moses did during the Exodus (Ex 23:20-22; MI 3:1). Elijah is to appear before the Day of Yahweh, to bring unity through covenant allegiance or Yahweh will come to smite the land with a curse (MI 4:4-6; Bullock, 1988:76).

The following summary by Petersen (1977:45) regarding texts from Jeremiah to Malachi indicates what he thinks the deuteroprophetic collections after 520 BC thought about Israelite prophecy, its problems and future.

Classical Israelite prophecy was a thing of the past and claims for contemporary manifestations of prophecy were to be denied. The appropriate task for prophetic traditionists was not to be prophets but was instead to reflect on the earlier prophetic

words and to interpret them for their own age. Such work was performed by prophetic traditionists who placed their compositions, the deuteroprophetic literature, within the collections of the classical prophets. These writers expected prophecy to return as a necessary sign of the times just prior to Yahweh's theophany in the *yom yhw*. This return was conceived of as a return to prophecy for all the people and as the return of a single prophetic figure. Both expectations lived on as viable traditions, as Acts 2 and Matthew 17:10 demonstrate.

While Petersen sees the end of classical prophecy occurring around 520 BC, the evidence of the Old Testament indicates a definite anticipation of the recurrence of prophecy, not only for individual prophets, but for all the people of God.

1.4 THE WRITINGS

The role of prophecy in the Second Temple period is addressed by Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicler. They indicate several areas where prophecy continues to function in the life of the nation.

1.4.1 EZRA

The book of Ezra mainly indicates that prophets have an important role in the rebuilding of the temple. "Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them...And the prophets of God were with them, helping them" (Ezr 5:1-2). According to Ezra, prophecy did not cease with the fall of the monarchy but continued with the encouraging words of Haggai and Zechariah. These two prophets are instrumental in the rebuilding of the temple and serve by inspiring the community in their efforts. The prophets were with the community and helped, "So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo" (Ezr 6:14; cf. Zch 7:3; 8:9).

1.4.2 NEHEMIAH

A reference in Nehemiah from around 445 BC indicates the popular understanding of prophets in regard to their role with monarchy. Sanballat sends a message to Nehemiah about a report which claims that Nehemiah has appointed prophets to proclaim his enthronement as king in Judah (Neh 5-7). However, Nehemiah makes it clear that this is a false report--in fact, it was false prophets who sought to intimidate him and mislead the people. This passage indicates the perspective of the people at that time regarding the on-going role and activity of prophets during this period. Prophets were often appointed by the kings and were responsible for the promotion and advocacy of the monarchic programs (cf. 1 Ki 22).

1.4.3 FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

1.4.3.1 The Importance of Prophecy and the Prophetic Word

In 1 and 2 Chronicles there is a clear emphasis on the importance of historical prophecy as well as a recognition that prophecy in Israel has had a significant transformation. The Chronicler names many prophets who had various functions in Israel's history and the following list is indicative of the importance of prophets to the Chronicler. Samuel (1 Chr 11:3; 2 Chr 35:18), Nathan (1 Chr 17), Gad (1 Chr 21:9), Gad and Nathan (2 Chr 29:25), Ahijah of Shiloh (2 Chr 10:15), Shemiah (2 Chr 11:2; 12:5), Iddo the seer (2 Chr 12:15; 13:22), Azariah, son of Oded (2 Chr 15:1), Hanani the seer (2 Chr 16:7), Micaiah, son of Imlah (2 Chr 18:7), Jehu, son of Hanani the seer (2 Chr 19:2), Jahaziel, son of Zechariah (2 Chr 20:14), Eliezer, son of Dodavahu of Mareshah (2 Chr 20:37), the prophet Elijah (2 Chr 21:12), prophets (2 Chr 24:19), the priest Zechariah, possessed by the Spirit of God (2 Chr 24:20), a man of God (2 Chr 25:7), a prophet (2 Chr 25:15), Isaiah, son of Amoz (2 Chr 26:22; 32:20, 32), Oded (2 Chr 28:9), Hozai (2 Chr

33:19), Huldah the prophetess (2 Chr 34:22), Jeduthun, the king's seer (2 Chr 35:15), Jeremiah (2 Chr 35:25), messengers and prophets (2 Chr 36:15-16; cf. Tournay 1991:34 and Petersen 1977:88). This long list of prophets, who had influence with Israel's kings, shows the importance of prophecy as the "primary mode of divine communication to the Davidic state" (Petersen 1977:56).

The potency of the prophetic word when it confronted the kings is illustrated when a letter from Elijah comes to Jehoram, a king of Judah who did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Chr 21:6, 12-15). The prophetic word judges Jehoram and is followed by a punishing sickness which leads to his death. The words of the prophets explain the demise of individual kings and are gleaned from a variety of court records that are no longer extant (1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 13:22 20:34; 32:33). Thus, the key purpose of the prophetic words recorded by the Chronicler were to indict kings who ignored the prophetic warnings and led Israel into idolatry and apostasy. The prophetic message was faithfully sent to Israel "But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy" (2 Chr 36:16). Prophetic messages condemned political alliances (2 Chr 16:7-12; 19:1-3; 20:35-37; 25:7-10), as well as deviations from cultic purity (2 Chr 15:1-15; 21:12-19; 24:20-27; 25:14-16; Zevit 2001:505). It is apparent that the Chronicler carefully selected his prophetic material from a variety of sources in order to emphasize that restoration for Judah is possible if they heed the inspired message of the prophets (2 Chr 20:5-21). Prophecy is featured to stress the importance of the prophetic word and that the Holy Spirit continues to speak to the community of God's people.

1.4.3.2 The Temple and Cultus

A key emphasis is made by the Chronicler to highlight the importance of the temple and

the reabsorption of prophetic activity into the cultus (Blenkinsopp 1983:251). David is given much credit for the establishment of the cultus and is presented as the organizer of the Levitical worship in the temple (1 Chr 15). The temple becomes a central focal point for the prophets who encouraged the restoration of the temple along with priestly functions. The prophets are supportive of the cult and encourage the necessary observances in order to welcome the presence of God into the temple. The individual kings of Israel are evaluated according to how they served the cult, and the majority of them are shown to have neglected their role.

Within this reabsorption of prophecy into the cult, prophets and priests work together but in different ways. In fact, the Chronicler chooses to identify the Levites with the prophets of the past by changing the phrase from 2 Kings 23:2 “the priests and the prophets” to “the priest and the Levitical singers” in 2 Chronicles 34:30 (Petersen 1977:85-87). This marks part of the substantial change in perspective from the classical prophets to the Levitical singers who continue similar forms of prophecy. As Bullock indicates, a transition of thought and roles takes place. “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). There is a clear recognition that with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, a change from classical forms of prophecy takes place. In this context, the Levitical singers “were aware that they still carried on a certain prophetic activity, in order to make up in their own way for the silence of classical prophecy” (Tournay 1991:56). Therefore, it can be concluded that prophecy continues to be a crucial function in the second-temple period and brings a comforting word to the people which at the same time explains their circumstances during the exile.

1.4.3.3 The Spirit of Prophecy and the Inspiration of Levitical Priests

For the Chronicler, prophecies are inspired by the Spirit of God (2 Chr 15:1; 20:14-17;

24:14-20). The coming of the Spirit on the Levitical priests results in an oracle or word of encouragement and in this way they discharge their prophetic functions (Blenkinsopp 1983:254). The prophetic sermons have several elements which include the quotation of an ancient or prophetic source, the selection of a theological principle with corresponding application to Israel's circumstances in the past, and a call to the present community to act on the word of the Lord (Von Rad 1965:271-272). Amasai is clothed with the Spirit that inspires him to offer David an eloquent word of reassurance (1 Chr 12:18). In this case, Amasai helps David in the selection of leaders in a manner similar to the practice of some prophets who gave directions in holy war. Azariah is inspired by the Spirit of Yahweh to exhort Asa to enforce cultic reforms (2 Chr 15:1). The authority of his prophetic word is recognized by the king and this results in the removal of detestable idols from the land. Subsequently, Asa leads the people in a rare covenant renewal where the people are encouraged to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul (1 Chr 15:12). The importance of the prophetic word that is inspired by the Spirit and set in the context of the exile concerns the future reign of Yahweh through his leaders. "The Chronicler goes to great lengths to affirm his belief that the kingdom came into being in response to the prophetic word and that the word was active in guiding and sustaining the kingdom" (Newsome 1975:203). Therefore, the Chronicler is emphasizing the importance of the prophetic word in the nation's historical transitions and affirms Yahweh's presence and guidance.

The theme of the Levitical priests as inspired singers provides a strong connection to the continuation of prophecy and indicates that the sacred anointing is also bestowed on priests (Ex 30:30; Ps 133:2). Tournay affirms that, "From now on, the anointing, like the Spirit of Yahweh, is the prerogative not just of the priests but of the whole community" (1991:65). The whole community of believers are "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6), and as indicated in Isaiah and Ezekiel, can anticipate a collective out pouring of the Spirit (Ezk 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Is 44:4; 59:21; Hg 2:5; Jl 3:1-2). "In this way, in the period of the Second Temple, the

pneumatological and eschatological dimension of the *qahal* or liturgical assembly of Israel was prepared, directed by the priests and Levites under the inspiration of the Spirit, while awaiting the day of Pentecost” (Ac 2:5-8; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 1 Pt 4:10-11; Tournay 1991:66).

2 OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS INDICATING THE DEMISE OF PROPHECY

As we have seen in this last section, there is a strong belief in the Old Testament that prophecy must continue so that the people of God will know his will and his immediate word to them. However, there are also texts that indicate potential problems which will thwart prophetic succession. This has partially been addressed in Chapter Four concerning the veracity of God’s word and prophetic evaluation. It was not always clear to Israel what God’s word really was and this threatened the prophetic process of communicating the divine will. Furthermore, there is evidence that the prophetic word was sporadic with long periods in Israel’s history where prophetic activity is apparently limited or silent. For example, after the extensive period of the Judges, a text records that, “In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions” (1 Sm 3:1). This means that “an oracle or revealed message, communicated to man by God” was not regularly available but was sporadic (McCarter 1980:97). This was due to the charismatic succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua and then to the charismatic judges (Blenkinsopp 1983:63-64), before the rise of kingship in Israel. That is, the same Spirit that inspires prophecy, also enables other leaders like Joshua and the Judges to give deliverance and direction to the nation. Nevertheless, prophecy was limited to a few examples during this time. In addition, it is also evident that prophecy was silenced during eras of the monarchy when the kings tried to quell confrontations from the prophets. Not only did kings keep prophecy marginalized, but the general population did not always attend to the prophetic word with open ears. Additionally, Yahweh was perceived to be silent and did not always inspire prophets as he did in the past. These are all important themes that will be analyzed in this section.

2.1 THE LAW

The only specific threat against prophecy made in the Pentateuch is in reference to the death penalty for prophets who seek to lead Israel astray from their monotheistic devotion to Yahweh. A prophet who employs miracles or signs to capture the peoples confidence and then says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them” (Dt 13:2), are not only to be ignored but, “That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the Lord your God...he has tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you” (Dt 13:5). Therefore, a serious threat is imposed over prophets who would use their abilities to promote the worship of any gods other than Yahweh. This important criteria is a primary guideline used to evaluate prophetic expression, and indicates the potential threat to the Mosaic covenant--surprisingly, it intimates that prophets can undermine the very covenantal role they are to uphold in the nation by advocating foreign gods!

The requirement of this law is illustrated in Numbers 25 when Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor and many leaders of the people were killed for their role in this sin (Nm 25:4-9). Balaam is apparently put to death for practicing divination (Jos 13:22), but is also implicated in his role with the pagan Midianites (Nm 31:8; cf. Donner 1977:112-115). Furthermore, “a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death” (Dt 18:20). These criteria indicate the severity of punishment that prophets would face for apostasy and emphasize the importance of fidelity to the covenant and to Yahweh in communicating only what was divinely inspired. In the Former Prophets, prophets of Baal and Asherah are killed for their role in leading people away from the strict observance of worship to Yahweh alone (Dt 5:6-10; 1 Ki 18:40; 2 Ki 10:18-28). Prophecy would always be jeopardized by those who would not solely encourage strict devotion

to Yahweh.

2.2 THE FORMER AND LATTER PROPHETS

In the prophetic books there are several issues that require discussion concerning changes in prophetic expression which imply problems and interruptions in the course of prophetic mediation.

2.2.1 THE ISSUE OF SPORADIC PROPHECY

From examples provided in a previous section, we can see that prophecy between Moses and Samuel is very limited. God mainly uses charismatic leaders to bring about his purposes in relation to the period of conquest and during the era of the judges. While these individuals do not function characteristically like the prophets who speak oracles, they are given the Spirit of God for enablement in ministry. Usually this has to do with military aspects where Israel is fighting for the land provided by Yahweh as a gift or in fighting against oppressors who have subjugated the nation to foreign rule. Rather than sending messengers to call Israel to repentance, Yahweh implements the covenant curse of oppression against his people, and then raises up deliverers to bring freedom from oppressors in answer to Israel's supplication (Jdg 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:7).

However, in addition to military leadership the judges also spoke to the people. "Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them (Jdg 2:17a). Israel's initial request for mediation is not repeated during times of crisis (Dt 18:16b).

Rather, the people of God mainly cry out for relief from their oppressors. Only in Judges 6:7 does Yahweh send an anonymous prophet in answer to Israel's cry for help--a prophet who summarizes the reason for their oppression. The explanation for the sporadic activity of prophets can only be speculated upon but perhaps this can be done based on observations arising from some texts.

Since the Old Testament emphasizes that it is God who raises up the prophets and that it is God who puts his words in the prophet's mouth (Dt 18:18), we can deduce that there are periods when God decides not to raise up a prophet and not to inspire a prophetic message. Rather than having prophets continually active in speaking to the people, he raises them up during critical historical periods and key transitions in the history of the nation. They appear during times of crisis and change to chart the way forward for the people of God. During the period of conquest, military leaders were essential for the work of God and men like Joshua were capable of providing the necessary functions of leadership. With the development of the monarchy, however, the tensions between covenantal requirements and the propensity of kingship to use the nation for the accouterments of power and monarchy, the prophetic role becomes essential (1 Sm 8:10-18). The prophet is to keep the monarchy in line with covenantal expectations. Therefore, it is to be expected that in the prophetic corpus, there will be periods where Yahweh decides not to call, inspire, or send a prophet, according to his determination. Additionally, perhaps the lack of a prophet during certain periods is to reveal to the nation the need for the prophetic voice, just as they also came to realize their need for a king (Jdg 21:25; 1 Sm 8).

2.2.2 THE QUENCHING OF PROPHECY DURING THE MONARCHY:

THE REIGNS OF DAVID, SOLOMON, AND MANASSEH

With the rise of kingship in Israel, the role of the prophet takes official shape. Samuel is

presented as a strong leader who anoints Saul as Israel's first king. Samuel is clearly superior to the king and has an influential position over Saul--he not only anoints Saul as king but eventually deposes him from his position (1 Sm 15:1-23). However, Samuel is unable to stop Saul's relentless pursuit of David even though Samuel anointed David to the throne after deposing Saul. King Saul is still in power to follow his chosen path and serves as regent for many decades. Even when Samuel confronts Saul, and the king realizes his sin, he has to beg the prophet for forgiveness (1 Sm 15:22-25). This example illustrates the difficult relationships between kings and prophets that become typical in Israel.⁹

When David finally does take the throne, his relationship to the prophets is depicted as limited and usually reserved for times of confrontation (2 Sm 12). In fact, David almost behaves like a prophet in that he is anointed and said to have the Spirit of the Lord come upon him in power (1 Sm 16:13). He experiences times of inspiration and writes psalms. Prophetic functions are ascribed to him. "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs: The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me..." (1 Sm 23:1-3a). Furthermore, rather than call prophets for assistance at times, David consults Yahweh through Abiathar the priest for direction (1 Sm 23:9-12; 30:7-8). Particularly in the Chronicles, David is understood to be very involved in cultic and prophetic affairs. He strengthened the role of the Levites and temple musicians who often discharged their functions under the influence of prophetic inspiration (Blenkinsopp 1983:254). David himself is referred to as a "man of God" (2 Chr 8:14; Neh 12:24, 36).

During his reign, David is influenced by the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. Although David is inspired and enjoys relationship with the Lord, he is still confronted by the prophet Nathan when his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah is not dealt with. However, the prophet apparently

waited almost nine months before confronting the king (cf. 2 Kings 11-12). Not much is known about Nathan or his background but he functions as an important prophetic advisor to David (Löwenclau 1980:202-215). He evidently performs as a court prophet and is active in regards to the proposal of the temple and the confrontation of David's moral behavior. Through Nathan, Yahweh also communicates the promise of an eternal kingdom for the Davidic dynasty (2 Sm 7:1-19). Gad likewise serves as a prophetic advisor to David (1 Sm 22:3-5) and helps with the choice of a site for the sanctuary (1 Sm 24:18-19; 1 Chr 22:1). He gets involved when David takes a military census (1 Sm 24:1-25). Apart from these important events, the prophetic voice in Judah is rather quiet and very limited during this period. Saul and David are both observed playing certain prophetic functions at times.

In the Solomonic period, it is even more conspicuous that the prophetic voice is virtually silent. Nathan is only involved with the intrigues that lead to Solomon's coronation and anointing and initially is supportive of his rise to the throne (1 Ki 1:8-45). Before that Nathan is sent by the Lord to give Solomon the name Jedidiah (2 Sm 12:25). But during all of the amazing developments that Solomon initiates in Israel, the prophets are quiet. In fact, Solomon has direct access to God who speaks personally to him (1 Ki 3:14; 6:11-13). This is not frequent but the texts make it clear that Yahweh appeared to Solomon on two specific occasions (1 Ki 3:4-15; 11:9). Additionally, Solomon performs priestly functions of sacrifice to the Lord (1 Ki 8:3-5, 14, 22, 54)--the very thing that Saul was denounced for. However, for all of the positive accomplishments of Solomon mentioned in 1 Kings 1-10, there are a number of activities and characteristics that he is involved in which depict his reign as controversial.

Through narrative subtlety, the narrator is critical of Solomon's reign when assessed from the perspective of Deuteronomy and 1 and 2 Samuel (Hays 2003:156-160). This is very evident when one compares Deuteronomy 17:15-17 and 1 Kings 10:26-29. Deuteronomy has clear

instructions regarding the role and functions of prophets (Dt 13:1-5; 18:14-22) as well as kings (Dt 17:14-20). The text regarding a king states,

When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it, and settle in it, and you say, 'Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,' be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite. The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again.' He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

(Deuteronomy 17:14-17)

In summary verses concerning Solomon, it is clear that he goes against all of these instructions. He accumulates many horses and chariots from Egypt, he stockpiles enormous amounts of silver and gold, and he loves and marries many foreign women (1 Ki 10:21-11:3). This comparison of texts is indicative of the tension between kings and prophets. Solomon went against many stipulations in the law and basically operated as a pagan monarch. No prophet is recorded as speaking against his abuses. What the prophets were not able to tell Solomon to his face, however, they indicated in the Deuteronomic records. Therefore, "the narrator develops a fascinating but negative critique of Solomon throughout the Solomonic narratives. His critique is subtle, employing irony, word associations and implicit rather than explicit references to Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel and the rest of Kings" (Hays 2003:174).

Prophetic silence is evident during the events that take place when Solomon ruthlessly establishes his throne (1 Ki 2). Interestingly, when Solomon's officials and governors are presented, prophets have no role or mention (1 Ki 4). In spite of many characters being present during the transition of kingship, "Neither David, Nathan the prophet, nor Zadok the priest

inquires of Yahweh in the matter” (Hays 2003:158). Abiathar the priest is banished and Nathan disappears. “The prophetic office effectively disappeared from the Judean court, to revive only in the eighth century BC” (Cross 1973:237). Bypassing the usual prophetic channel, the word of the Lord comes directly to Solomon (1 Ki 4:5-14; 6:11; 9:1-9). At the dedication of the temple, all are summoned but no prophets are mentioned and Solomon both officiates and prays. Solomon has incredible wisdom, and perhaps because of this, he exhibits no need of prophetic support or interference. During his reign he breaks from normal cultic, political, and military affairs and makes alliances with other states that prophets typically oppose. Yet no one steps forward to confront the king! The only indicator that prophets were around during his reign is noted by the Chronicler where the events of Solomon were apparently recorded by Nathan the prophet, Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo (1 Chr 9:29). Other information was kept in the book of the annals of Solomon (1 Ki 11:41). Probably these sources are used to carefully indicate Solomon’s breaches of covenant. Even though Solomon is judged for his covenantal breach by marrying foreign women and for idolatrous practices, no prophet confronts him as in the case of Saul, David, and Jeroboam (1 Sm 15; 2 Sm 12; 1 Ki 13). The judgment is presented directly by the Lord (1 Ki 11:11). For the forty years of Solomon’s reign, prophetic influence is virtually silent. “Solomon sought to transform Israel into a full-fledged Oriental monarchy and was prepared to ignore or flout older institutions in his determination to centralize powers and to consolidate his realm” (Cross 1973:241). Even when Rehoboam takes the throne, he listens to the words of the youth and rejects the advice of the elders—prophets are apparently absent even during this major transition period!

The silence of the prophetic word is also evident during the reign of Manasseh. Whereas Isaiah has considerable influence on Hezekiah, the narratives regarding Manasseh simply indicate his wickedness without prophetic censure. Manasseh continued his subservience as a vassal of Assyria but in addition he rebuilt high places which Hezekiah had destroyed. He raised up altars

for Baal and Asherah (2 Ki 23:7), restored local shrines, and observed pagan rituals (2 Ki 21:2-7). Foreign cultic specialists were provided (Zph 1:4-8) which earned him the role as the paradigmatic evil king in Judah (Zevit 2001:476). “Hezekiah’s reform was canceled completely and the voice of prophecy silenced; those who protested—and apparently there were those who did—were dealt with severely” (2 Ki 21:16; Bright 1972:312). Zevit also makes the important observation that between the group of prophets comprised of Isaiah, Micah and Deutero-Zechariah at the end of the eighth century, and Zephaniah and Jeremiah in the last quarter of the seventh century, there is a strange prophetic silence.

No oracles addressing non-Yahwistic, Israelite cults are available from approximately 700 to 635 BC, during which Hezekiah paid tribute to Assyria, Manasseh ruled peacefully for more than forty years, 687-642 BC, in complete subservience to Assyria, Amnon reigned and was assassinated, and Josiah came to the throne. These were the decades during which, according to the Deuteronomistic historiographer, non-Yahwistic cultic activity was particularly prominent in Judah.

(Zevit 2001:514)

Therefore, this type of intimidation by the monarchy often leads to silence during the era of kingship and gives credence to the apocryphal story of Isaiah being sawed asunder by Manasseh (The Assumption of Isaiah; cf. Heb 11:37).

It is evident from the monarchic era, that prophets seem to have limited functions and roles due to the tensions between kings and prophets. While some prophets seem to function as court prophets like Nathan and Gad, other prophets are endangered by the institutionalized monarchy and function outside of the establishment (Zevit 2001:497). Prophets are often threatened by the very agents they are called to serve and speak to since the aims of kingship were often opposed to the goals of Yahweh. To a degree, we would agree that prophets like Elijah and

Elisha are “Archetypes of all the biblical prophets as rival figures to the kings, offering a different model of leadership with which the people can identify” (Collins 1993:130). This may not characterize Elisha so much, since he appears to be more supportive of kings. But the reality is that the prophets had a specific duty to keep the kings in line with the covenant. Their role was to protect the people from kings who would oppress them and lead them astray. During the silent times, the implication is that the kings managed to keep the prophets subservient to the interests of the monarchy. Rather than expressing their views publicly, they were limited to recording them in their “prophetic writings” consisting of court records, annals, and visions.

Kings often rewarded prophets who endorsed their imperialistic expansion and war efforts (1 Ki 20:13, 22, 28). For various reasons, the prophets came under strong pressure from the monarchy and priesthood (Eichrodt 1961:335, 338). The tension and confrontation between prophets and kings which was evident with Moses and Pharaoh, Samuel and Saul, David and Nathan, is typical of prophecy in the Northern Kingdom but also on a lesser scale in Judah. It arises regarding personal and moral matters (David), religious and cultic issues (Saul, Jeroboam, Ahab and Jezebel), as well as in social arenas (Ahab and Nadab). The prophets appear to be in a superior position to the king and are able to broker political power sufficient to overthrow kings and dynasties. Additionally, the kings often resort to violent confrontation and intimidation in order to silence prophecy (1 Sm 16:2; 1 Ki 13:4; 17:1-18:2; 19:1-8; 22:26-27). For the most part, the kings apparently were successful in this endeavor.

2.2.3 WHEN YAHWEH DOES NOT INSPIRE PROPHETS

In the Old Testament and in Judaism, prophecy is considered a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of prophecy inspires prophetic speech (Nm 11; 1 Sm 10:6; 16:13; 19:23; 2 Sm 23:2; Is

61:1; Ezk 11:5, 24; 37:1; Mc 3:8). Alternatively, prophecy is silenced when the Holy Spirit does not inspire prophets nor provide visions and revelation (Am 8:11-12; Mc 3:5-6; Lm 2:9). Later in Judaism this was explained by the loss of the Holy Spirit during the Babylonian exile (Greenspahn 1989). It was believed that with the deaths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit no longer inspired prophets and in fact had departed from Israel (Tosephta. Sotah 13:2). However, before the last prophets presented their oracles, other indicators show that some prophets were inspired by other means.

Although Saul was not a prophet, his experience with the Spirit of God is illustrative of what can happen. Saul's occasional prophetic behavior gives rise to the question, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" When Saul comes in contact with the sons of the prophets and the Spirit of God, he too exhibits characteristic ecstatic behavior and in one instance, Saul strips naked and prophesies for a day and a night (1 Sm 19:20-24). When he meets a procession of "prophesying" prophets playing musical instruments at Gibeah, the Spirit of God comes upon him in power, and Saul joins with them in their prophetic activity. While a number of passages refer to the Spirit of God as overcoming Saul in a positive sense, others indicate the negative influence of an evil spirit on him which replaces the Spirit of God. The loss of the Spirit causes Saul to behave erratically and foolishly. Although he would still prophesy, he was influenced by "an evil spirit of God" (1 Sm 18:10). In another instance, Saul tries to kill David when he is overcome by the evil spirit sent by God (1 Sm 19:9-10). When Saul goes to Naioth he is also overcome by the Spirit of God, causing him to walk along "prophesying." The interesting phenomenon is that although Saul is influenced by the evil spirit, he still has the ability to prophesy! Yet, his behavior clearly indicates that he is no longer capable of leading Israel effectively and there is no indication that his prophesying has any important message to convey.

This example indicates that prophecy can be inspired by an evil spirit, as is illustrated in

the example involving Micaiah and the prophets of Ahab (1 Ki 22:21-23; cf. Daffni 2000:373). Additionally, prophets may be inspired by Baal (Jr 2:8), by dreams (Jr 23:25, 32), and by self-induced inspiration or imagination (Jr 23:26; Ezk 13:1-23). Rather than speaking those words that are inspired by Yahweh, some prophets choose to speak in his name regardless of where their thoughts came from. Therefore, although there is an external form and presentation of prophecy, it is clearly not inspired by Yahweh. In essence, it is not a prophetic message from God. These examples illustrate the potential consequences for prophets who would lose the presence of the Spirit of God who inspires the prophets with messages--they would be left to seek to receive a message by any means. In Ezekiel, a similar situation is indicated where people will desire to receive a prophetic message. "Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumour upon rumour. They will try to get a vision from the prophet; the teaching of the priest will be lost, as will the counsel of the elders" (Ezk 7:26). The prophecy comes in a context which describes serious judgment in light of persistent obstinance and sin (cf. Is 29:10). No message or inspiration will be forthcoming. Additionally, the false prophets manufacture things that are not received from Yahweh but are from their own heart. They even proclaim these things as from Yahweh but they follow their own spirit's as the "master who leads them" (Zimmerli 1979:292).

Perhaps another example of this theme can be considered in the case of Elijah, although it is different. When Elijah goes to Horeb, he apparently desires to hear from Yahweh. However, the message he receives is not what he wants. The Lord was not in the wind, not in the earthquake, and not in the fire (1 Ki 19:11-13). Although Yahweh speaks to him on specific issues, the message that Elijah apparently desires is not forthcoming (Dumbrell 1986:15). Yahweh is the one who initiates and inspires his word according to his plan and the prophets cannot manipulate messages according to their need and will.

2.2.4 THE PEOPLE'S OPPOSITION TO THE PROPHETIC WORD

Several texts in the Old Testament lament the issue of the people not heeding the inspired word of God (Am 2:12). Indeed, this is partly due to the condition of the human heart as Isaiah summarizes. “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed” (Is 6:9-10). These terms of “hearing,” “seeing,” “knowing,” and “understanding,” indicate the spiritual perception problem of the people and are frequently used in Isaiah (Is 1:2-20; 5:8-24; 6:1-13; 22:8b-14; 29:9-12; 30:8-26). The terms present “Israel’s lack of knowledge as the consequence of their perverse failure to hear (Is 1:2-20; 30:8-17) and to see (Is 5:8-24; 22:8b-14), a failure manifested in the people’s moral, social and religious life (Is 1:2-20; 5:8-24) as well as in their political life during the period of the Assyrian crisis” (Is 22:8b-14; 30:8-17; Aitken 1993:40). Apparently, the consequences to a persistent rejection of the prophetic word will lead to its eventual silence.

In addition to the people’s lack of perception, some prophets are also unable to perceive Yahweh’s word. In Isaiah 29 the prophet presents an oracle against Jerusalem with a variety of judgments indicated. One judgment will be the lack of an inspired word from the prophets. “The Lord has brought over you a deep sleep; He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers)” (Is 29:10). Even with a vision recorded on a scroll, the interpretation is not known because “it is sealed” (Is 29:11) and no one knows how to read it. However, contrasting the people’s inability to hear and see and perceive, is Isaiah the prophet who not only understands the divine word but has access to the council of Yahweh (Is 6:1-6). In his personal response he illustrates the appropriate reaction the people should have to Yahweh. Zephaniah also refers to the decline of prophetic influence and calls the prophets arrogant and treacherous men (Zph 3:2). In this context, Jerusalem and her people are depicted as those who do not trust in the Lord nor do they draw near to God--in other words, they do not heed the prophetic word (Zph

3:1-5).

In the light of this persistent opposition to his word, Yahweh prepares prophets like Jeremiah for their task. “Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land--against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord” (Jr 1:18-19). Clearly, the work of the prophet will not always be readily accepted and heeded. Zechariah summarizes the attitude and response of many generations.

Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’ But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the Lord. ‘Where are your forefathers now? And the prophets, do they live for ever?’ But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your forefathers?

(Zechariah 1:4-6)

“They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets” (Zch 6:12). Although they did not heed the prophetic word, it came to pass. As the Israelites persists in their obstinance and rejection, the prophetic word of judgment is eventually fulfilled and brings about a situation of prophetic silence.

2.2.5 PROPHECY WILL BE WITHDRAWN AS PUNISHMENT ON ISRAEL

Although the patience of Yahweh is evident in the Old Testament record, he inevitably fulfils the promise of prophetic judgement. The ultimate covenant curse is only imposed after hundreds of years of apostasy and rejection of the prophetic word (Dt 28:63-68). Part of this

judgment includes the withdrawal of the prophetic word. “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” (Am 8:11-12). Amos describes a coming day of judgment when God will mete out the punishment promised. Although the covenant curses promised environmental famine, here the reference is to the spiritual famine of the word of Yahweh. Those who seek Yahweh’s word, answers and direction will not find it. “The failure of prophetic vision and word would mean that Yahweh had turned away from them and abandoned them to their troubles” (Ps 74:9; Lm 2:9; Jr 37:17; Ezk 7:26; Mays 1969:149). The implication is that there will be no one found in Israel that will have a revelation for them from Yahweh. He will be silent.

During the eighth century, Hosea also indicates a time when leadership and prophetic insight gleaned by the “ephod” will be lacking. “For the Israelites will live for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol” (Hs 3:4). Likewise, Micah develops the same theme but indicates that it is some of the prophets who are guilty of presenting false hopes and oracles to the people.

This is what the Lord says: ‘As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim ‘peace’; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him. 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.

(Micah 3:5-7)

Although the implication of this appears to be a universal silence on prophets, it mainly refers to

the false prophets who seek to lead people astray. Another scathing attack on prophets is announced by Zechariah. “I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. And mother, to whom he was born, will say to him, ‘You must die, because you have told lies in the Lord’s name.’ When he prophesies, his own parents will stab him” (Zch 13:3). This text indicates the serious deterioration of prophecy and aligns them with “unclean spirits” which could indicate their source of inspiration (cf. Rhea 1995:288-289). Therefore, prophets will be ashamed of their role and will deny their prophetic status (Am 7:14). The absence of prophecy is the inevitable result of persistent sinfulness in Israel. The many oracles promising judgment had to be implemented.

The fact that the promised prophetic judgment had been realized is also addressed by some prophets. They refer to past prophecies as those presented in “former days” when prophets were more active. “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them” (Ezk 38:17). On the one hand it does seem surprising that Ezekiel uses this type of language in reference to prophecy since he still considers himself as still standing “directly in the prophetic experience of the word” (Zimmerli 1983:313). In fact, this reference strengthens his authority since he indicates that just as past prophecy was realized, so will his prophetic declarations come to pass. On the other hand, the text implies that all prophecy will once be relegated to that of the “former days.” Zechariah makes similar comments regarding the earlier prophets (Zch 1:4-6) whose judgements came upon Israel. “Are these not the words the Lord proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?” (Zch 7:7). The words of judgment and all they indicated had come to pass.

2.3 THE WRITINGS

The third section of the Hebrew canon referred to as the “writings” includes some prophetic material (Lamentations; Daniel) but it is mainly composed of poetry and wisdom literature. However, within the writings there are reflections on the situation of God’s people at certain times which record statements that imply a prophetic silence. These are usually summary statements concerning the reason for judgment and exile and have implications on the theme of prophetic silence. The texts indicate the attitude of God’s people to his word and the inevitable judgment that came upon them. While the statements are not frequent, they still have important claims that must be considered.

2.3.1 THE PEOPLE’S OPPOSITION TO THE PROPHETIC WORD: THE WITNESS OF DANIEL

The location of Daniel among the Writings in the Hebrew canon rather than among the Prophets has implications on our discussion of prophetic cessation.¹⁰ The location of the book in a canon does have significant theological ramifications on the reading and understanding of a book. In the Septuagint, Daniel is placed near the end of the Former and Latter Prophets, after the major prophets. It signifies one of the last of the prophetic books by the compilers. For Josephus the historian, Daniel was one of the greatest prophets. In the Qumran community, Daniel was also considered a prophet. Some scholars believe that the prophetic part of the canon was already closed by the time that Daniel was written or considered for inclusion in the canon, and therefore added to the Writings (Rendtorff 1985 273; Lasor 1982:669). This is based on the belief that Daniel was written or completed very late, or in the 2nd century BC. Sweeney (2001:124) claims that “modern historical critical scholars are nearly unanimous in arguing that the present form of Daniel was composed between the years 167 and 164 BCE to support the Judean revolt against the Seleucid Syrian monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175 to 164 BCE).” Furthermore,

Eissfeldt (1965:521) concludes, “The fact that the book was not included in the canon of the prophets shows already that it can only have been composed very late.” More importantly, the probable reasons for the difference in placement of Daniel arises from its assessment by different communities of faith. The rabbinic relocation of Daniel from among the prophets to the writings indicates a shift from their eschatological perspective to that of pedagogics (Koch 1987:246), or emphasis on torah rather than prophecy. The belief that prophetic predictions were not specifically fulfilled, could have caused the change. Yet the rabbis still valued Daniel as Scripture by its inclusion in the canon but emphasized the teaching of obedience to torah over eschatology. Christians, however, valued the eschatological teaching on the kingdom of God and anticipated the fulfilment of Daniel’s detailed predictions. Rather than dismiss the prophetic aspects as unfulfilled and wrong, Christians saw in Daniel much hope for the future and anticipated the realization of the kingdom of God.

Traditionally, the authorship of the book was considered to be written by Daniel near the end of sixth century. Traditional scholarship saw in Daniel’s ancient prophecy the prophetically inspired historical details that would be fulfilled in some future epoch. This perspective was based not only on God’s perceived ability to reveal future events to the prophets, but on the belief that God’s judgments were revealed in the Deuteronomic record and would be interpreted by the prophets. Sanders (1997:44) claims that, “those prophets made their points about God’s using foreign powers to execute judgment against his own people well before it happened. One cannot escape into theories about *vaticinia post eventum* to explain how the prophets could speak in advance of God’s use of Assyria and Babylonia.” While this comment indicates the ability of prophets to prophesy future events at a more general level, it still remains a tenet of the Old Testament that Yahweh can reveal facts to his servants before they are fulfilled.

This assumption has been challenged since the eighteenth century based on language,

style, history, and theology. More importantly, scholars have rejected the prophetic foretelling ability of Daniel because the specific details in the book relate so clearly to Maccabean times. Many scholars, therefore, assume that Daniel is a “pseudepigraphical tractate from the Maccabean age” and that the prophetic details are *vaticinia ex eventu* so as to provide authority for the message (Childs 1979:611-613; Meade 1986:86-87). However, “the question often arose whether such a pseudepigraphical book could really be called prophetic, and whether the Rabbinic doctrinal tradition that the spirit of prophecy ceased with the early postexilic century was perhaps the correct one after all” (Koch 1987:238). In fact, in Koch’s careful survey of various sources he concludes that “there is not one witness for the exclusion of Daniel from the prophetic corpus in the first half of the first millennium A.D. In all the sources of the first century A.D.--Matthew, Josephus, Qumran--Daniel is reckoned among the prophets” (Koch 1987:242). The inclusion of Daniel into the Writings apparently comes much later in history.¹¹ For several reasons, there is not much evidence to reject a late sixth or early fifth century BC date for the writing of Daniel (Baldwin 1978:35-46), at least not for the first six chapters of Daniel (Meade 1986:87). The symbolic use of mixed animals, as well as the form of prophecies in Daniel 8:23-25 and 9 is best explained if it comes from Babylonian Jews in the dispersion (Lucas 2000:75). Daniel’s basic material is from the exilic period (Eissfeldt 1965:519), but most scholars assume a second century BC provenance because of the “change in ethos in the book” as a result of the “catalytic effect of the Antiochene persecution in transforming the group’s world-view” (Lucas 2000:79).

Daniel has numerous roles but among them he is referred to as “the man greatly loved by God” (Dn 9:23; 10:11, 19). To a degree, this title may be considered higher than that of a prophet when connected to passages where “the spirit of the holy gods” is perceived to be in Daniel (Dn 4:8, 18; 5:11-14). On five occasions the ability of Daniel to interpret dreams is attributed to the *ruah* within him--the same Spirit who inspires prophecy gives Daniel prophetic abilities and insight (Dn 2:47; 4:8-9, 18; 5:11, 14). “The possession of that spirit elevates Daniel above the

abilities of all other wise men and makes him an outstanding seer announcing the mysteries of the end of days (2:2-3) or the time of the end (11:35-40; 12:4-13; Koch 1987:244).” Daniel credits his ability to the God of heaven (Dn 2:28) and makes clear that the ability of interpretation is granted by God to his chosen agent. Daniel’s abilities for the variety of leadership roles he exercises are credited to the Spirit of God that is present with him in his administrative capacities, including that of seer and messenger of future events.¹²

Therefore, 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 evident, and the community of God considers prophecy to be dormant. The blend of prophecy and apocalyptic literature in Daniel is the precursor to those writings in the inter-testamental period which take the various apocalyptic literary features and motifs employed in Daniel 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). In this way, Daniel is more than a prophet--he is “the man greatly beloved by God” (Dn 10:11,19). He is given the Spirit of God through whom he has the ability to interpret dreams (Dn 4:5-6, 14; 5:11, 14; 6:4), and announce end-time events (Dn 2:2-3; 11:35-40; 12:4-13).

For Daniel, the events to come are due to the same problem that brought judgment upon Israel in the past--the people did not listen to God and rejected his ways. They rebelled against God, his will, and his commands (Dn 9:5-6, 10-12). Daniel summarizes Israel’s attitude in a

prayer of supplication and confession. “We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” (Dn 9:10). To address this attitudinal problem of the people, Daniel offers his historical experiences in exile in addition to his revelation of future events, to encourage perseverance and faith. The stress on the end time events is unique to Daniel and anticipates the end to similar revelatory prophetic insight. With Daniel’s apocalyptic vision emphasizing the times of the end (Dn 12:4-9), new prophetic revelation is no longer required since God’s people are now to look and wait for the coming kingdom of God. “But, you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end” (Dn 12:4a; cf. 12: 9, 13). Although Daniel was given insight and understanding for dreams and visions in his time, the details of other visions would only be made known in the future--the prophecy is to be preserved until the end. Fulfillment of the prophetic vision is now to be anticipated by the people of God at the appropriate future time when the foretold events will come to pass.

The Chronicler also summarizes the negative attitude of Israel to prophecy near the end of the Writings. “But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy” (2 Chr 26:15-16). The Chronicler provides the reason for the judgment that has come upon the people of God. On these grounds, the prophetic word became silent, judgment was realized, and the scrolls were closed until some future time.

2.3.2 PROPHECY WILL BE WITHDRAWN AS PUNISHMENT ON ISRAEL

The corollary to the negative response of the people indicates the resulting judgment which came upon the people of God. Similar to Daniel 9, Nehemiah prays a prayer of instruction and petition complete with a historical recital of Israel’s history (Neh 9). The historical review of

Yahweh's dealings with the nation highlights the preservation and guidance of Yahweh (Neh 9:19-21). Unfortunately, the appeals and warnings of the prophets to return to the laws, commands, and ordinances of Yahweh were stubbornly rejected and they refused to listen (Neh 9:29). Nehemiah claims that, "For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples" (Neh 9:30). The nature of instruction included the sending of prophets to warn them of consequences through the Spirit of God who inspired and commissioned them. The recital makes clear that although the nation continually rejected God's rule through the emissaries sent to them, Yahweh patiently instructed Israel. The prophets endowed by the Spirit were inspired and authorized to call the people back into a covenantal relationship, but "they did not listen" (Neh 9:8b; cf. 1 Ki 18:4, 13; 19:10, 14). The resulting punishment is illustrated by the Chronicler when he records that, "Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and asked, 'This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the Lord's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you'" (2 Chr 24:20).

2.3.3 THE SILENCE OF YAHWEH AND DEARTH OF PROPHETIC INSPIRATION

In the Psalter we find a variety of expressions which lament the situation of exile and judgment in which the people of God find themselves. At times these are individual reflections on their experience but at other times, the community reflects on circumstances that have come to pass. Indications of the silence of God are evident when the Psalmist feels his prayers are not answered. Often the term *hara* which indicates the silence of God, refers to a deliberate silence usually regarding unanswered prayer. The psalmist looks for a word, direction, or intervention but Yahweh is silent. "To you I call, O Lord my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I shall be like those who have gone down to the pit" (Ps 28:1; cf. 35:22; 50:3, 21; 109:1;

Hab 1:13). In one of the psalms of Asaph, the silence of God is perceived as judgment and rejection. “Why have you rejected us for ever, O God? Why does your anger smoulder against the sheep of your pasture?” (Ps 74:1). The writer goes on to lament the consequences which includes the absence of prophets. “We are given no miraculous signs; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be” (Ps 74:9). In another Psalm of Asaph, the writer appeals to God for an answer in light of his silence “O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still” (Ps 83:1). Although the psalmist does not mention prophets in this passage, the context is that of war. The people need direction concerning the enemies threats, similar to the former appeals for guidance in war prophecy. At least the absence of prophets at certain times in Israel’s history is lamented.

A related example is indicated in Lamentations after the destruction of Jerusalem. Based on the events presented in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52, the lamentations illustrate the judgment which came upon Israel for rebellion and persistent sin (Lm 1:5, 18; 2:14; 3:40-42). God’s wrath was finally brought to realization even in the sanctuary of Jerusalem (Lm 2:1-9, 20-22; 3:1-18). Included in the lament is the reflection concerning the failure of prophetic vision. “Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the Lord” (Lam 2:9b). Perhaps the lament exaggerates the situation but the perception that judgment will bring silence and the loss of prophetic vision is clear.

3 CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY

In this chapter we have surveyed texts which indicate two differing perspectives on the future of prophecy in Israel according to some Old Testament passages. On the one hand, prophecy appears to be a permanent feature of Yahweh’s relationship with his people. On the

other hand, prophecy is threatened by falsity, lack of inspiration, periods of prophetic silence, rejection, opposition, and ultimately the withdrawal of mediation by God.

Changes in the administration of prophecy are reflected early in the Old Testament record. Prophecy will be transformed in that it will not just be for the experience of selected, called, and commissioned individuals but it will be democratized and made available for all of God's people. Numbers 11 provides the programmatic example of God's intention for his people, that all would be potential recipients of the Spirit of God who would be inspired to prophesy and experience prophetic benefits. During the period of the conquest and judges, there are few experiences that indicate prophetic activity but the nature and content of the Former Prophets indicate much prophetic theological understanding. These periods anticipate the greater role that prophecy will play when there are kings in Israel. This is evident from Samuel on, where there is a succession of prophets who carry on the tradition of speaking for Yahweh during the monarchy, exile and post-exilic periods. Prophets are presented as key leaders in each transitional period who monitor Israel's covenant relationship and provide the specific divine message necessary to lead the nation through key events.

Prophetic succession from Samuel can be traced through the Former Prophets which include the prophetic words and actions of numerous prophets. With the death of Solomon, prophets are active in the Northern Kingdom, and are involved in the events surrounding the monarchy as well as in more personal social aspects (Elijah and Elisha). When the kingdom is split, the prophet Ahijah appears to Jeroboam in order to communicate his selection by Yahweh (1 Ki 11:29-39). However, Jeroboam is soon confronted by another prophet for the religious reforms he initiates (1 Ki 13), and then condemned by Ahijah (1 Ki 14:1-16). The man of God from Judah who pronounces the powerful word of judgment upon Jeroboam, signifies a new emphasis for the monarchic era--kings will indeed be subject to the prophetic word as the

narratives regarding Elijah indicate. Prophets are intimately involved in the history of Israel. The canonical prophets set the contexts of their prophecies within the reigns of the kings, indicating succession and representation during the extensive period of the monarchy. During the generations of the monarchic era, prophets speak directly to certain kings regarding their reigns and “the Lord warned them through all his servants the prophets” (2 Ki 17:23). Assessment of the reigns of kings is according to the Deuteronomic stipulations.

The tenor of the texts from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel anticipate the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon his people so that all might prophesy. Based on Numbers 11, the Latter Prophets bring more clarity to the expectation. The giving of the Spirit democratizes 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. With a new heart and a new spirit and with the Spirit of God, his people would be motivated to follow the divine decrees and laws. The reaffirmation that Yahweh will restore his people is emphasized in that, “I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.” Furthermore, it is apparent that the Chronicler carefully selected his prophetic material from a variety of sources in order to emphasize that restoration for Judah is possible if they heed the inspired message of the prophets (2 Chr 20:5-21). Prophecy in the Chronicler is featured to stress the importance of the prophetic word and that the Holy Spirit continues to speak to the community of God’s people. The theme of the Levitical priests as inspired singers provides a strong connection to the continuation of prophecy and indicates that the sacred anointing is also bestowed on priests. The Spirit of Yahweh, will no longer be just the prerogative of the priests but of the whole community—all of God’s people can anticipate a collective out pouring of the Spirit (Is 44:4; 59:21; Ezk 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Hg 2:5; Jl 3:1-2).

Other Old Testament passages have a more negative perspective of prophecy than those

which anticipate a future recurrence. In addition to the problem of false prophecy, there are those individuals who use the prophetic word to instigate the worship of other gods—for such individuals, the Old Testament law advocates a death sentence as is illustrated in the case of Balaam. Another problem arises when prophetic activity seems to be silent during various periods in Israel's history. It is anticipated that God will raise up prophets to communicate his word (Dt 18:18), but there are several extensive periods when God does not inspire a prophetic message. This may be due to the people's attitude of opposition to prophecy or their blatant rejection of the word. During the monarchy, certain kings even go even further to ensure that the prophetic word is silent. Some hire prophets who will support the monarchic program, while others sideline prophets to limited functions and roles. While some prophets seem to function as court prophets like Nathan and Gad, other prophets are endangered by the institutionalized monarchy and function outside of the establishment (Zevit 2001:497). Prophets are often threatened by the very agents they are called to serve and speak to, thus hindering the word of prophecy. With this development in Israel where kings and the populace in general tend to reject and oppose the prophetic word, the prophets and other witnesses indicate that prophecy will be withdrawn. Yahweh will be silent, and the word of prophecy will no longer convey his plans and message for Israel.

To balance these two very different perspectives, it appears that changes to prophecy as it was intended and experienced in Israel will change. On one hand, several passages indicate that the judgment of God will be implemented and this will include the withdrawal of the prophetic word. On the other hand, many texts foresee a future period of restoration and salvation for the people of God that will in fact include prophecy. The prophetic word will be available to all the people of God and not just restricted to selected individual. Therefore, it appears that the Old Testament is indicating a transformation in the function of prophecy where it will become available for the people of God when the Spirit is poured out upon them. There may be a period

of dormancy and prophetic silence, but prophecy is definitely to be anticipated and expected in the future at some point.

CHAPTER FIVE ENDNOTES

1. The opinion that Moses was not a historical prophet is often set forth, but according to the theological views of the Old Testament, Moses was the prominent leader and example of a prophet. For example, Auld (1983:25) asserts that, "I have attempted to show that the nabi, the 'prophet' who Moses is or with whom he is compared is no historical "prophet"—but the reconstructed, post-exilic "prophet" of the Prophetic Canon."

2. Another example of prophetic activity in the Pentateuch arises in connection with the enigmatic Balaam. The fact that he utters a prophetic oracle when the Spirit of God comes upon him, indicates that God could even use this character to utter an oracle with far-reaching blessings for the people of God. When the Spirit of God comes upon an individual, inspiration and prophecy is possible and the Balaam narratives clearly show the connection between the Spirit of God and inspired prophecy. "When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him and he uttered his oracle" (Nm 24:2).

3. Interestingly, the fable of Jotham is similar to a prophetic message or parable (2 Sm 12:1-4; 2 Ki 14:9-10) which includes a prophecy of Abimelech's end (Jdg 9:7-24). This is typical of the Deuteronomistic view of prophecy and fulfillment which is so prevalent in the Former Prophets. It also indicates a negative view of kingship which is probably reflecting on a Canaanite form of kingship in the city-state. Kingship is presented as a human alternative to the great stories concerning Yahweh's divine intervention on behalf of his people (Dumbrell 1997:78).

4. The general structural pattern of the Book of Judges, with minor variations, is (1) Israel does what is evil in Yahweh's sight; (2) Yahweh gives or sells his people into the hand of oppressors; (3) Israel cries out to Yahweh; (4) Yahweh raises up a savior or deliverer; (5) the deliverer defeats the oppressor; and finally (6) the land has rest for an extensive period of time (Gunn 1987:104-105).

5. Zevit prefers calling these narratives or stories "legends" which he explains are "an unverifiable story about historical personages accepted as accurate" (2001:489). Although he feels that the various deeds which Elijah and Elisha are recorded to have done, have "neither national or theological significance," it is quite evident that the Deuteronomistic editor wanted to emphasize Yahweh's opposition to the Baal cult.

6. Kissling (1996:107-108) observes that the 400 Asherah prophets do not figure in the narrative since the contest is between the two male gods, Baal and Yahweh. Jezebel is also notably absent from the contest. Although Elijah claims that it is the people Israel who kill the prophets, the implication is that Jezebel is responsible and that Elijah fears her wrath (1 Ki 18:4, 13; 19:10,14).

7. Fishbane (1985:374) goes on to say, “By this typological link, the old prophetic motif is both nationalized and normalized: beginning with the new age, all Israel will speak as prophets ‘forever’. This hope is echoed in Joel 3:1-2, and may derive from Num. 11:29.”

8. In reference to the last 2 verses of Malachi, Childs emphasizes the canonical effect of the “first appendix” which testifies that “the law and the prophets are not to be heard as rivals but as an essential unity within the one divine purpose. The effect of the second appendix (Mal 4:5-6) is to balance the memory of the past with the anticipation of the future” (Childs 1995:519). The prophet seeks to focus the reader on the commandments of the Torah (Fishbane 1985:524, 541).

9. Grottanelli (1999:100) notes some important role changes during this period. Whereas Saul is presented as a prophet, a sacrificer, and a military leader, David diversifies the leadership roles and has Abiathar the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Joab the army leader serving the monarchy.

10. Indeed, Meade (1986:82) questions “how the apocalyptists could affirm the doctrine of the cessation of prophecy while continuing to record the fruits of revelatory experiences?” He goes on to state that, “The answer lies in the different perception of prophetic and apocalyptic inspiration.” Specifically, Meade quotes I. Willi-Plein (“Das Geheimnis der Apokalyptik,” 1977:62-81) who gives the following crucial difference between prophetic and apocalyptic inspiration and the reinterpretation of traditional material. “Herein lies the difference, that interpretation within the bounds of OT prophecy appears itself as prophecy, while within apocalyptic it appears differently. Prophetic interpretation is interpretation in the prophetic spirit; apocalyptic interpretation is interpretation in the spirit of interpretation.” His view is that the spirit of prophecy has ceased, and not the spirit as such (Meade 1986:82).

11. Koch (1987:243) conjectures that, “The confidence in the fulfillment of such prophecy connected to a reckoning of an apocalyptic timetable had led Israel into decline. Such disappointed confidence may have been the reason why the influential rabbis displaced the dangerous book, separating it from classical prophecy and placing it among the narratives of the time of the exile like Esther and Ezra.”

12. The form of the Joseph, Esther, and Daniel narratives shows how leaders are elevated to positions of power. They often include a pattern where: (1) a king cannot understand a dream; (2) his wise men are unable to interpret; (3) God’s servant has the ability to understand; and (4) the servant is exalted to a high position (Collins 1975:220-227).