

The Mosaic Prophet: The Divinely Commissioned Agent of Righteousness in Israel

Deuteronomy 18:9-22
Veritas Class; January 19, 2014

Fundamental Assumptions of Abominable Magical Practices

1. There is a link between the natural and supernatural world that makes cooperation between these spheres possible.
2. There is a world of supernatural forces that constantly threatens human beings or that may be harnessed for personal benefit.
3. The wills and operations of supernatural forces may be deciphered in natural phenomena through unsolicited omens (e.g., solar eclipses, birth anomalies) and solicited omens (examining entrails, dropping arrows).
4. By invoking the gods or manipulating other supernatural forces, a person may affect the outcome of events.
5. Since magic is a science, these skills can be taught and learned.

The Structure of 18:9-22

1. The Foil for the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses (vv. 9-14)
2. The Nature of the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses (vv. 15-20)
3. The Challenge to the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses (vv. 21-22)

The Nature of the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses (vv. 15-20)

A. Lessons on true prophecy from v. 15

1. The medium of divine revelation is called a *nābîʾ*.
2. YHWH provides Israel with their prophets—he raises them up (*hēqîm*).
3. The prophet will be an Israelite: “from your midst, from your brothers”
4. The prophet will be like Moses.

B. What kind of prophet was Moses?

1. Like Abraham, he interceded with God on behalf of the people (Deut 9:18-20; 25-29; cf. Gen 20:7)
2. Like Aaron, he will speak for God (Exod 7:1)
3. He was empowered by the Spirit. (Num 11:16-29)
4. He knew YHWH face to face (Deut 34:10)
5. YHWH spoke to him directly, clearly, and unambiguously—not in riddles (Num 12:6-8)
6. He was a “servant of YHWH.” (Num 12:6-8; Josh 1:1)

C. What kind of prophet did Moses think he was? (vv. 16-20)

1. The critical moment: “the day of the assembly” (the expression also occurs in 9:10; 10:4; cf. 4:10).

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2. The critical event: the sound and sight of YHWH's presence (a summary of 5:22-27)
3. The critical response: acknowledgment of the intolerable nature of a direct encounter with God).
4. The critical divine reaction
 - a. He approved the people's reaction (v. 17; cf. 5:28).
 - b. He promised prophetic succession for Moses (vv. 18-20)

D. What kind of prophets will these be?

1. The prophets will receive messages from YHWH.
2. The prophets will pass on the divine messages to the intended audience. (Note 1st person)

E. How serious was Moses? The Gravitas of Future Prophetic Activity (vv. 19-20)

1. YHWH's warning to the people not to reject the message of his authorized spokesperson (v. 19).
 - a. Whoever rejects the message of the prophet will have to deal, not with the messenger, but with YHWH himself.
 - b. The form of YHWH's response is left wide open: "I will require it of him."
2. YHWH's warning to those who hold the office of "prophet" not to abuse it (v. 20).

Two types of false prophecy:

- a. One who presumptuously (*hēzîd*) claims to speak in YHWH's name when YHWH has not charged him to do so.
Jeremiah 23:16-18; Ezekiel 23:1-7
- b. One who speaks in the name of another god.

The Challenge to the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses (vv. 21-22)

The Issue: "How shall we recognize a prophetic message that does not come from YHWH?"

Why is the question important?

1. It helps the people know which prophecies to accept and which to reject.
2. It helps the people know which prophets were to be executed.

Observations

1. True prophets never lead people away from YHWH (13:1-5)
2. True prophets speak only in the name of YHWH.
3. Just because a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH does not mean he is a true prophet.
4. Here prophecy is viewed as an alternative to the taboo activities mentioned in vv. 9-14: These are all concerned with knowing and controlling the future.
5. True prophecies come true.
6. Just because a prophet predicts the future "with authority" does not mean he is a true prophet.
7. People should not be intimidated by false prophets; they deserve no respect or fear (*gûr*); on the contrary, they deserve to die. (cf. Gal 1:8)

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How was Moses’ prediction of “a prophet like me” fulfilled?

1. The Natural Interpretation: God promised hereby to keep contact with his people through the institution of prophecy.

- a. The institution is represented by a continuous series of divinely appointed spokespersons that lasted from Moses until Malachi.

Prophets in the Historiographic Books

Anonymous	Judges 2:1-3 (<i>mal’ak YHWH</i>); Judges 6:7-10
Samuel	1 Samuel 3:19-20; 7:3-4; 12:1-25
Nathan	2 Samuel 7; 12:1-7
Anonymous	1 Kings 13:13:1-10
Micaiah	1 Kings 22
Elijah	1 Kings 17:1-7
Isaiah	2 Kings 19:1-7; 14-19; 20-37
Huldah	2 Kings 22:14-20

Writing Prophets

Jeremiah 23; 28; Ezekiel 13; Amos 7:10-17; Malachi

Josephus (*Contra Apion 1.8*)

From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets who succeeded Moses wrote the history of the events of their own time in thirteen books. . . . From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been considered on par with the earlier records, because of the absence of an exact succession of prophets.

- b. The succession resumes with John the Baptist.

Luke 1:66-80; 7:24-28; Mark 11:27-33; John 1:19-23