

# The Prophetic Word

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Reflecting back to when I was a new believer (just shy of 40 years ago) a single verse of Scripture stands out as having been particularly influential in my spiritual growth; was is Genesis 5:24:

“Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away”. (NIV)

I was impacted by that Scripture in a profound way, and thought to myself: “Yes, that is what I want my relationship with God to be – to walk with Him as Enoch did. Yeshua gave us the way for our sins to be forgiven and for us to have eternal life, but the larger picture of what He did for us, is that He brought us into a New Covenant – a new way of relating to God, in which the average man and woman can walk with God as Enoch did, and be closer to Him than any of us has been able since Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:8a we read:

“They heard the voice of *ADONAI*, God, walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze ..” (CJB)

That is how it was supposed to be for Adam’s and Eves’ children as well, but we know what happened. Adam sinned against God, was ejected from the Garden and, until recently, we who are descended from Adam have been kept at a distance. Through God’s grace we did not lose our relationship with Him entirely but, for many years, we lost our ability to be close and familiar with Him, as a child is supposed to be with his father. God continued to hear us, but we lost our ability to hear Him without the help of intermediaries whom God chose from time to time. So, God spoke through men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and others whom we call “prophets,” and in order to hear from God, we had to go through them.

That was our state of affairs up to and all during the Mosaic Covenant but, during that Covenant, God spoke something startling through Jeremiah; He said:

“‘Here, the days are coming,’ says *ADONAI*, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra’el and with the house of Y’hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them,” says *ADONAI*.

"For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says *ADONAI*: "I will put my *Torah* within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, [saying] 'Know *ADONAI*'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more."  
(Jeremiah 31:30(31-33(34) CJB)

For those who lived in Jeremiah's time and heard those words spoken, how and when the prophesied new covenant would come to pass must have been a great mystery. But we are blessed to be living centuries later when we know how it was given. It was through God's son Yeshua – the incarnation of God Himself – our Messiah who sacrificed Himself for the forgiveness of our sins so that we could once again draw close to God, and not only speak to Him, but also hear Him speak to us. And, from [John 16:5-14](#), we know that God accomplished it through the Holy Spirit whom He sent to earth to reside among us. Yeshua explained what was to happen to His disciples this way; He said:

“But now I am going to the One who sent me. 'Not one of you is asking me, 'Where are you going?' Instead, because I have said these things to you, you are overcome with grief. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I don't go away, the comforting Counselor will not come to you. However, if I do go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will show that the world is wrong about sin, about righteousness and about judgment- about sin, in that people don't put their trust in me; about righteousness, in that I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; about judgment, in that the ruler of this world has been judged. I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative but will say only what he hears. He will also announce to you the events of the future.

He will glorify me, because he will receive from what is mine and announce it to you.” ([John 16:5-14 CJB](#))

Yeshua's words came to pass that *Shavu'ot* when the Holy Spirit fell on those who were assembled in Jerusalem ([Acts 2](#)) and, from that day to this, He has been ministering to us and living among us and, through His New Covenant presence, we are once again able to hear God directly. And let us not forget Yeshua's part in it, for [Hebrews 8:6](#) says:

“But now the work Yeshua has been given to do is far superior to theirs, just as the covenant he mediates is better. For this covenant has been given as *Torah* on the basis of better promises.” (CJB)

Truly, the New Covenant is a better covenant because, through it, we can draw close to God, and walk with Him in ways of which our ancestors could only dream. Yeshua identified His blood (which was about to be shed) with the New Covenant, when, at His last Passover meal, He took the wine cup, gave it to His disciples, and said to them:

"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.” (NKJ)

So, does this renewed ability to hear God make us all prophets? In a sense “yes,” and in a sense “no.” I will try to explain, but the explanation requires that I first share a bit more of the biblical prophetic background.

Since the fall of Adam, God has always given certain persons the ability to hear His voice so that He could speak to others through them. We call those persons “prophets” even when the Bible does not name them as such, but beginning with Abraham, God began to use the term, and made

the office of “prophet” an official part of the Covenant that He made through Moses. So, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were all prophets who could speak with God and then repeat to others what God said. Then, when the office of “prophet” became institutionalized as part of the Mosaic Covenant, men who did not have the Holy Spirit upon them knew that they could routinely consult prophets who did, and, through that indirect means, could know God’s will for their lives. It is noteworthy that Scripture gives Abraham and Moses special attention among the prophets, for in Isaiah 41:8 (and repeated in James 2:23) God referred to Abraham his friend, and later in Numbers 12:6-8, He said of Moses:

"Listen to what I say: when there is a prophet among you, I, *ADONAI*, make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. But it isn't that way with my servant Moshe. He is the only one who is faithful in my entire household. With him I speak face to face and clearly, not in riddles; he sees the image of *ADONAI*." (CJB)

During the Mosaic Covenant, there were an untold number of prophets available to the Israelites, and we know the names of some of them – especially those for whom books of the Bible are named. The prophets of the Mosaic Covenant were held to a very strict standard of accuracy and faithfulness, for we read in Deuteronomy 13:2-6:

"If a prophet or someone who gets messages while dreaming arises among you and he gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder comes about as he predicted when he said, 'Let's follow other gods, which you have not known; and let us serve them,' you are not to listen to what that prophet or dreamer says. For *ADONAI* your God is testing you, in order to find out whether you really do love *ADONAI* your God with all your heart and being. You are to follow *ADONAI* your God, fear him, obey his *mitzvot*, listen to what he says, serve him and cling to him; and that prophet or dreamer is to be put to death; because he urged rebellion against *ADONAI* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from a life of slavery in order to seduce you away from the path *ADONAI* your God ordered you to follow. This is how you are to rid your community of this wickedness." (CJB)

And we also read in Deuteronomy 18:22:

“When a prophet speaks in the name of *ADONAI*, and the prediction does not come true- that is, the word is not fulfilled- then *ADONAI* did not speak that word. The prophet who said it spoke presumptuously; you have nothing to fear from him.” (CJB)

Now these Scriptures were given under the Mosaic Covenant, and what I really want to talk about is what prophets and prophesying are like today. After quoting Jeremiah that God would make a New Covenant with Israel and Judah, Hebrews 8:13 says this:

“By using the term, "new," he has made the first covenant "old"; and something being made old, something in the process of aging, is on its way to vanishing altogether.” (CJB)

The Book of Hebrews was written before the Second Temple was destroyed, at the time of maximum overlap of the New and Old Covenants. Consequently, what was on its way to vanishing then, is now even further along toward vanishing or it has already vanished. Either

way, we should expect there to be significant differences in both prophecy and prophets in the New and Old Covenants – and so there are. Consider first, Ephesians 4:11-13:

“Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers. Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection.” (CJB)

From that, we can see that prophets have a very different function today than they had previously, and it is no doubt because today, all of God's people can hear the voice of God and can prophesy to varying degrees through the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Whereas previously, prophets were needed as intermediaries in conveying God's instructions to the common Israelite, today's prophets are mainly for the purpose of equipping God's people. God continues to speak to us through others, but He does so but far less often than before, because we can now hear God's voice for ourselves.

Although our ability to hear God for personal direction is now available to all of us, the ability to prophesy (i.e. speak God's Words for the benefit of others) is a gift of the Holy Spirit that is given to some, and not to others. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11:

“Moreover, to each person is given the particular manifestation of the Spirit that will be for the common good. To one, through the Spirit, is given a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healing, by the one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the ability to judge between spirits; to another, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues; and to yet another, the ability to interpret tongues. One and the same Spirit is at work in all these things, distributing to each person as he chooses.” (CJB)

And in Romans 12:6 we read:

“But we have gifts that differ and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, use it to the extent of your trust;” (CJB)

I hesitate to say that one spiritual gift is superior to another but, if I were to judge by the writings of Paul, prophecy would win hands down; in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 we read:

“Pursue love! However, keep on eagerly seeking the things of the Spirit; and especially seek to be able to prophesy. For someone speaking in a tongue is not speaking to people but to God, because no one can understand, since he is uttering mysteries in the power of the Spirit. But someone prophesying is speaking to people, edifying, encouraging and comforting them. A person speaking in a tongue does edify himself, but a person prophesying edifies the congregation. I wish you would all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you would all prophesy. The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues, unless someone gives an interpretation, so that the congregation can be edified.” (CJB)

Prophecy has never been without its problems. During the Mosaic Covenant, prophets that erred in their message were defrocked, and false prophets were stoned. We don't stone false prophets anymore, but Peter warns us that they are still among us, active and dangerous. We read in 2 Peter 2:1-3a:

“But among the people there were also false prophets, just as there will be false teachers among you. Under false pretenses they will introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and thus bring on themselves swift destruction. Many will follow their debaucheries; and because of them, the true Way will be maligned. In their greed they will exploit you with fabricated stories.” (CJB)

And Matthew 7:15-16a:

“Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep's clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves! You will recognize them by their fruit.” (CJB)

And also Matthew, chapter 14, verses 23-24:

“At that time, if someone says to you, 'Look! Here's the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' don't believe him. For there will appear false Messiahs and false prophets performing great miracles- amazing things!- so as to fool even the chosen, if possible.” (CJB)

For that reason, we are instructed by 1 John 4:1-6 to beware and not be taken-in and, in all cases where prophecy is given, to test the spirits to determine whether they are from God or from the adversary:

“Dear friends, don't trust every spirit. On the contrary, test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Here is how you recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Yeshua the Messiah came as a human being is from God, and every spirit which does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God- in fact, this is the spirit of the Anti-Messiah. You have heard that he is coming. Well, he's here now, in the world already! You, children, are from God and have overcome the false prophets, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore, they speak from the world's viewpoint; and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God doesn't listen to us. This is how we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error.” (CJB)

Finally and very important is that we remember that, in the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit is able to indwell each and every one of us, and each and every one of us can therefore receive from God and prophesy on some level. For most of us, the level of prophetic anointing will be modest, but for some of us it will be great, and the Words we speak in God's name will be accurate and carry great weight. Those of us who exhibit an exceptionally great anointing may actually be recognized as New Covenant prophets, though most of us will not.

Here at Ohev Yisrael, we encourage our members to develop their prophetic abilities, first within their small group *chavurot*, and then by sharing Words, they believe are from God, during our various services. We don't expect one hundred percent accuracy, but we do hope for continuous growth in our prophetic abilities. Yes, we take risks in allowing unscreened prophetic Words to be given by members and, for that reason, the elders assume responsibility for testing each and every Word that is spoken. We mostly do not encounter problems, but occasionally we do. When an elder believes that a Word has been spoken in error, the elders meet, confer with the giver of the Word, pray, and then render a judgment. If we judge the Word to be wrong, or partially wrong, and it is of sufficient significance, we come before the members and correct the Word publicly. On rare occasions (only two in my memory at Ohev), a Word was given that needed immediate correction. In those cases, the elders caucused at the front of the sanctuary, and delivered the correction on the spot.

I hope that this brief exposition of prophecy in the New Covenant has been helpful, and that our members will continue to develop in their prophetic anointing. I also hope and trust that knowing that your publically-spoken prophetic Words are judged by the elders will give you a sense of security, and will not inhibit you from taking the risk of coming forward with what you believe you have heard from God. And in that regard, you might take comfort from knowing that, to date, the elders' score of dealing with super-bad prophetic Words are public rebukes: "two" – "stonings: "zero!"