

**SESSION #42 (11 January 2011); Deut 18:9-22; Israel's Prophets---
Absolutely Unique in Human History**

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) <u>sovereign destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1 - 26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1 - 11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
12:1 - 26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1 - 13:18	Theological unity of Israel's tribes and its Enforcement (esp 1 st , 2 nd , and by implication the corresponding 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (a witness consistent with Yahweh's name, see 3rd commandment)
14:22 -16:17	A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Faith in God's Economic Order (with emphasis upon the 4 th and by implication the corresponding 8 th commandment)
16:18 - 18:22	A Distinct Culture of Human Authority Under God's Justice (emphasis upon human authority starting in the home—the 5 th commandment and by implication the 7 th commandment)
16:18-17:13	Authority & Function of Israel's Judges
17:14-20	Authority & Nature of Israel's King
18:1-8	Authority & Nature of Israel's Priests
18:9-22	Authority & Nature of Israel's Prophets

This section of Deuteronomy has influenced Western history by limiting key office positions' authority—placing them under “law” in some form.

Principles:

- Judges are to proceed carefully with rules of evidence, protections against “lobbying”, and apply the pre-existing law.
- A strong central government—a monarchy—is NOT necessary for a successful culture if there is a [a common acceptance of biblical law] and in any case needs to be limited by a legal standard above it.
- After Pentecost there is [no need for a special priesthood]; that function has been transferred to the ascended Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, so there is freedom for every human being to approach God directly through Christ.

Problem for Israel: Who will bring back a Word from God concerning the status of the nation under the terms of the Mosaic Contract?

Need for a channel of revelation after Moses (Yahweh stopped speaking directly at Mt. Sinai—note 18:16b)

The other offices & the Law:

- Judges relied on priests to help them with the Law
- King relied on priestly copy of the Law and their advice and the advice of wise men who were trained in the application of legal wisdom to the details of life (Proverbs).

- Priests relied on the Law and in limited fashion on the High Priest's Urim and Thummim.

II. AUTHORITY & NATURE OF ISRAEL'S PROPHETS (Deut 18:9-22)

Final office: the prophet brought into existence to deal with the problem of detailed revelation of God's response to Israel's obedience or disobedience to the Mosaic contract.

A. Pagan Attempts to Gain Divine Guidance (Deut 18:9-14)

All these techniques are attempts to counterfeit authentic revelation. Why?

- (1) Knowledge of the future is virtually priceless.
- (2) In paganism there is no [Creator/creature] distinction so any "god" might be able to be manipulated (early form of lobbying).

22:10-11 son or daughter pass through fire

Could be "pass through" type or actual child sacrifice = "I offer up my treasure to god X to procure knowledge of the future"

Cf **Lev 20:1-5** (Molech is a mocking name; made of consonants m-l-k for "king" and vowels o-e from bosech from "abomination")

Eventually corrupt Jews yielded to this practice (**2 Kings 21:1-9; 2 Chron 28:1-4**)

practicing witchcraft (or divination)

Use of arrows in a quiver (**Ezk 21:21f**) or something like that (today Ouija board, pendulum swinging, etc.);

All various techniques of manipulation and magic trying to control the future.

Spiritist: one who calls up the dead

1 Sam 28:1-19!! (cf Isa 29:4)

Very real demonic activity. Remember Karl Jung!! Bishop Pike

18:12 drives them out

Canaanites were deeply involved in demon worship

18:14 has not appointed such for you

B. God's Provision of Prophets (Deut 18:15-22)

18:15 a prophet

Heb: *nabi* used during the monarchy period, but earlier these people were called "seers" (**1 Sam 9:9**).

Doctrine of Revelation

1. Verbal, not mystical feeling (Temple quote vs. **Deut 30:11-14**)
2. Personal, not a code or abstract principles (typical pagan law codes vs. relation with a personal king **Ps 95:6-11**)
3. Historical, continuity and memory from generation to generation, not usually immediate encounter experiences (**Exod 12:24-27; 1 Cor 11:23-26**)
4. Comprehensive, God speaks with implications spanning all of life, not limited to a "religious sub-compartment" (**Deut 12-26**)
5. Prophetic, involving a line of prophets with a horizon to the end of history, not limited to one figure's speculations (**Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:10-12**)

Hebrew Canon: Law, Prophets, Writings

Law	Genesis
	Exodus
	Leviticus
	Numbers
	Deuteronomy
Prophets	Joshua
	Judges
	1 & 2 Samuel
	1 & 2 Kings
	Isaiah
	Jeremiah
	Ezekiel
	Hosea
	Joel
	Amos
	Obadiah
	Jonah
	Micah
	Nahum
	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah
	Haggai
	Zechariah
Malachi	
Writings	Psalms
	Job
	Proverbs
	Ruth
	Song of Songs
	Ecclesiastes
	Lamentations
	Esther
	Daniel
	Ezra-Nehemiah
	1 & 2 Chronicles

Observations:

What is the rationale for this tri-partite division of the Old Testament canon?

- Moses, the prophetic line, and wisdom

The prophets became channels for [additional revelation] and preserved some of it in [written books] (see **1 Chron 29:29**; **2 Chron 9:29**).

Prophets also conducted Yahweh's "indictments" against Israel, the so-called "riv" proceedings which we'll cover in detail when we get into **Deut. 32**.

"What makes the history of Israelite prophecy sui generis is the succession of apostles of God that come to the people through the ages. Such a line of apostle-prophets is unknown to paganism. Not even those great souls that rose among the nations to found religions and teach the good way [e.g., Buddha, Zoroaster] are of a type with the prophets of Israel. . . .paganism does not know of a continuous, generations-long succession of prophets."

Yehekel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p 212f

Principle: In dealing with religious cults like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Christian Science—which all claim "continuity" with the Bible, you need to use the argument of *prophetic lineage*: there must be demonstrated theological continuity using the actual text of Scripture.

18:15 God will raise up

Prophets were not strictly speaking an “office”: they were to be raised up spontaneously from any part of society at God’s command

like me

Moses is the starting point for the line of prophets—note **Deut 34:10; John 1:21; Acts 3:22-25**

18:16 according to all you desire of Yahweh. . .in Horeb

Cf. **5:23-27** wanted a prophetic intermediary almost like the mediatorship of a priest

18:17 What they have spoken is good

Here is the historical source of the prophetic line and ultimately of the Bible!

“The existence of such an order in Israel, forming a permanent channel of revelation was, of course, a signal mark of distinction between Israel and the other nations of antiquity.”

International Critical Commentary, Deuteronomy, p229.

18:18 put My words in His mouth. . .

Language biblically has a sufficient “bandwidth” capability to carry information from God’s mind to man’s mind, and it uses words, grammar, syntax of the receiver language to convey truth.

Moderns who have imbibed 20th century speculative language theory seem to have a problem with this process so they often retreat to vague “impressions” as the best that God can do; some results of this kind of thinking:

- (1) “*If Jesus would just come to me in a vision, things would be so much clearer*” [no, His words would convey the same truths that His Spirit placed in Scripture]
- (2) “*We need prophets today to tell us what to do*” [no, Jesus is the final prophet along with His apostles—**Eph 2:20**]

18:19 will not hear. . .I will require it of him

The prophet has supreme authority in the nation—over judge, king, and priest. He is acting as God’s surrogate so one’s response toward the prophet is one’s response toward God. See this with Jesus in the New Testament (**John 12:48-50; 14:19-24**).

18:20 shall die

Because prophets were to be held in the highest authority, deceiving the nation became a __[capital offense]. Violation of the 9th commandment.

18:21 How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken?

Rules of evidence for the criminal trial.

18:22 not come to pass. . .

Must have 100% verification.

Empirical Test: Specific historical claim open to verification. Cf. **Isa. 41:21-24**

Unique feature of Old Testament Israel!

Also there was a Rational Test: **Deut 13:1-5**

Israel was well aware when there was a prophetic Word from Yahweh and when there wasn’t: **1 Sam 3:1; Ps. 74:9; Amos 8:11;**

1 Macc 4:42-46 “He [Judas Maccabeus after the conquest of the Temple Mount] chose blameless priests devoted to the Law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offerings which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down lest it bring reproach upon them for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell them what to do with them.”

1 Macc 9:27 “After the death of Judas, the lawless emerged in all parts of Israel. . . .They sought and searched for the friends of Judas, and brought them to Bacchides, and he took vengeance on them. . . .Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time the prophets ceased to appear among them.”

1 Macc 14:41 “And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise, and that he should be governor over them.”

III. CONCLUSION

The line of prophets was the spiritual “life” of the nation.

- It was unique among the nations of human history.
- It presupposed the Doctrine of Revelation.
- It both explained and met the empirical and rational truth tests.

The Bible alone has a basis for the two truth tests that people everywhere have to use!

- Metaphysical question: _[what is the meaning or purpose of life?]
- Epistemological question: _[how can I recognize truth?]

These questions have to be answered for moral judgments to be _[objectively] based.