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The Spirit of God in the Ministry of the Old Testament Prophets

CRAIG BOWMAN

The role of the Spirit of God, more specifically the Holy Spirit, is essentially a NT doctrine. Until recently very few articles and monographs had been written in English on God's Spirit in the OT.¹ When included in biblical theologies on the Holy Spirit, the OT material is generally treated in these ways:

- the OT references are mentioned in passing in order to reach the outpouring of the Spirit upon the church in the NT, the real experience of the Holy Spirit;
- the OT verses specific to the phrase Holy Spirit are viewed as minimal (only three while the NT boasts over 500 occurrences);
- assumptions regarding the work of the Spirit—while plentiful in each testament—are typically narrowly shaped as reverse analogy where the NT is the beginning point for a Christian understanding of the OT.²

Consequently, most expositions on the Holy Spirit rarely explore in depth OT passages where inexplicit references might suggest a more diverse description and broader activity of the Spirit of God. In this article, I examine several aspects of spiritual activity in the ministry of the OT prophets to expand and strengthen our perspectives.

WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTIVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

A common assumption for Christians is “that the Holy Spirit was present and active in OT times only in a transient, non-universal, indirect, and ultimately unsatisfying way.”³ In other words, only after Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection is the Holy Spirit fully present and active. The OT itself, however, associates the activity of God's Spirit with God's work in the world and with the people of God from the very beginning of creation. Both Genesis and Isaiah of the exile testify that Yahweh's creative power *is* His Spirit hovering over the waters of chaos and measuring, marking, and weighing the earth and its ocean and mountains as they are made (Gen 1:2; Isa 40:13). Every creature, including humans, breathe in only because Yahweh's Spirit (*rûah*) has been breathed out into them as the Spirit of life (Gen 6:3; Isa 42:5; Job 27:3; 33:4; 34:14-15; Eccl 12:7). In this sense, the most common OT designation for “spirit” is *rûah*. Although its semantic range covers breath, wind, direction, spirit, and mind, with almost 400 occurrences in the OT that are broadly distributed, *rûah* carries important theological weight.⁴

Moreover, the OT specifies particular historical contexts and consequences regarding the activity of God's Spirit with Israel. Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery at the Red Sea involved Yahweh's Holy Spirit⁵ in the midst of the nation, dividing the waters, leading them through the depths, and giving them rest (Isa 63:11-14). In the wilderness, God's “good spirit” instructs, provides, and sustains the Israelites even as they grumble against him (Neh 9:20). Only as the Spirit of Yahweh abides among them, Haggai exhorts,

will the Israelite remnant thrive in postexilic Jerusalem and the period of reconstruction (Hag 2:4-5). If they forget and rebel against Yahweh, they grieve his Holy Spirit, and he will turn against them in judgment (Isa 63:10) and remove his Spirit (Ps 51:11).

Yahweh also breathed his Spirit into particular individuals within Israel, gifting them charismatically with power to accomplish his work. This characteristically happened to the so-called judges raised up by Yahweh to deliver Israel from oppressive nations (Judg 3:9-10; 6:34), to the 70 elders appointed to serve with Moses (Num 11:16-30), and to Saul and David as Israel's first kings (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 16:13).

Regarding the Spirit of God and the OT prophets, textual support is quite varied and limited. The OT mentions the activity of Yahweh's Spirit in connection with only a few of the prophets. Exclusively Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel are enabled to do miraculous deeds or to speak divine words by explicit references to the Spirit of Yahweh.⁶ On the other hand, Isaiah and Jeremiah, regularly depicted as spiritual giants, do not describe their experience of Yahweh's numinous presence with and upon them in terms of his Spirit. This lack of consistency in the self-portrayal of the Spirit of God acting in the lives of the prophets is perhaps the most striking and perplexing feature of the prophetic literature. In light of this irregularity, what can be generalized about the role of the Spirit for the OT prophets?

THE SPIRIT IN THE ECSTATIC AND CLASSICAL PROPHETS

When Elijah abruptly speaks the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, to Ahab in the royal palace of Samaria (1 Kgs 17:1), a new era dawned for prophets under the influence of Yahweh's Spirit. In the face of crisis after crisis from the 9th century B.C. onward, prophets privy to Yahweh's will and judgment plead with the kings of Israel and Judah to reform woefully rebellious ways. Although the Spirit of God is generally understood as *the* force behind this prophetic activity and their oracles, reference to the spirit is virtually nonexistent for nearly a full century after the time of Elisha. During the time of Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, whose prophetic careers spanned the latter half of the 8th century, the spirit is rarely mentioned.⁷ Throughout the time of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians is imminent and finally happens, there is no talk of the spirit. Only Ezekiel, whose mysterious transference between Jerusalem and Babylon defies explanation other than divine, has the courage to speak overtly about his personal experience of God's Spirit upon him.⁸ This historical gap raises questions about how normative the work of Yahweh's Spirit was for the OT prophets.

Possession by the divine spirit resulting in an ecstatic state and prophetic pronouncement of divinely ordained utterances has been described thoroughly by Robert Wilson.⁹ As is found in several OT texts, prophets who enter an ecstatic state are viewed variously by others either negatively or positively depending on the prophet's previous experience of divine possession within that societal context. Established prophets, whose prophetic track record has been validated by public observance of fulfilled oracles, and whose perspectives are accepted as politically viable, tend to serve without much controversy. Others, however, whose words actualize ambiguously or who always challenge the king's status quo, may eventually function on the fringe of Israelite society. Being spiritually possessed, or asserting monarchical authority, immunity, or divine credentials didn't automatically determine a prophet's legitimacy. Authenticating true and false prophets became a critical chore from Elijah onward.¹⁰

What raised the stakes for distinguishing false from true prophets were the tension-filled times of the politically tumultuous context for 9th-7th century B.C. Israel. The primary crises to which the prophets of Israel responded were the political-economic policies of the monarchs of Israel and Judah, particularly when those policies clashed with the prophet's understanding of covenant traditions. Some prophets, like Nathan and Isaiah, were closely aligned with their respective kings. Others, like Elijah and Elisha, were peripherally aligned with village households. Nonetheless, all prophets exercised power as the monarch's loyal opposition, who repeatedly challenged the diplomatic policies of the state on behalf of Yahweh. Determining the source of prophetic power was a never-ending task for kings and the nation. Although not all prophets were

political watchdogs critically holding the royal court accountable to Yahweh, many of them defended their mission and message on the basis of a divine commission or call. Only Ezekiel, however, justifies his livelihood by claiming that Yahweh's Spirit fell upon him or possessed his mind and speech.

There seems to have developed a public bias against the excesses exhibited by the ecstatic prophets in the pre-exilic period. Lloyd Neve suggests that this negative reaction began as early as the time of Elijah

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and Elisha, for they never "prophesied."¹¹ This shift is also evident in 2 Kings 3:15 where the hand of Yahweh, rather than the spirit, comes upon Elisha.¹² The author intentionally distinguishes the truly divine power upon Elisha from the raving style of

the Baal prophets. As Neve suggests, "There is at least a hint of this in the story of Elijah on Horeb ([1 Kgs] 19:9-12), for even though it is obviously "a wind" which is not to be mistaken for the presence of Yahweh, yet the play on the word *rûah* would not be lost on that generation for whom the *rûah* which caused the 'prophesying' would seem most obviously that in which Yahweh is not present."¹³

The tension generated by descriptive terminology regarding the ecstatic and classical prophets continues intensely into the 8th and 7th centuries as indicated by the discussion within prophetic books, which refer to the "*rûah* prophets" pejoratively. Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel each face opposing prophets who strongly speak a "thus says Yahweh" word of disputation. From these texts, a clear, coherent understanding of how the Spirit of Yahweh works in and through his genuine prophets emerges and is instructive for contemporary ministry.

MICAH, JEREMIAH, AND EZEKIEL

The 8th century B.C. southern prophet Micah sarcastically challenges the crimes of a wealthy upper class greedy for more land, which they grab eagerly from the poor. To this group living under the illusion that they are exempt from Yahweh's punishment, Micah reveals the kind of prophet they need to endorse their evil ways. "If a man should go about as a wind-filled (*rûah*) deceitful liar, prophesying to you 'More wine and beer,' then he would be just the prophet for you people!" Here Micah says that such prophets use strong drink to stimulate the spirit (*rûah*) but that they are really only windy (*rûah*) drunks full of hot air.¹⁴ But a people determined to hear only what they desire in order to rationalize their God-given right to political and religious expediency dismiss this true prophet who is so unlike the "venders of petty oracles consulted by the common people."¹⁵

Further contrast comes in Micah 3:5-8, another disputation oracle, where Micah declares in verse 8 that he is a true prophet of God filled with power by the Spirit of Yahweh.¹⁶ Unlike the "prophets" (*n'ḥî'im*) who mislead Yahweh's people and proclaim peace in time of plenty but sanctify war when they are in need, Micah is spiritually gifted. His gifts are threefold: power, justice, and courageous strength that in the face of opposition he might discern and declare definitively national crimes and guilt under the judgment of Yahweh.¹⁷ The "crowd-pleasing" prophets make themselves powerless through their self-seeking. But Micah has the Spirit of Yahweh. He has power and judgment. Micah is elevated to the stature of Moses and Messiah, possessing gifts ordinarily reserved for the king.¹⁸ He is a prophet endowed with Yahweh's authority to speak the divine word.

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah lives out a similar scenario about a century later. His reference to the *rûah* prophets in 5:13 is indicative of his stance against them over his whole career. "The prophets are windbags, and the prophetic word is not in them!"¹⁹ Yahweh's judgment oracle is brief and straight to the point, clearly announced by a string of imperatives: go up, destroy, make, and strip away. Whomever it is that Yahweh sent on a search and destroy mission remains ambiguous, but it is clear that the entire vineyard will be laid waste. The whole

nation, the houses of Israel and Judah, does not stand a chance against Yahweh's crew. It has relied on the "peace prophets" too long. Their time has finally come because they have lied about Yahweh and been faithless. They have prophesied long enough that the nation would not see sword and famine.²⁰ As in 4:9-10, Jeremiah offers a shocking response to an audience comforted by a word of peace only because they have been swayed by these false prophets that the nation has a rosy future.²¹

Elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah, prophets are said to prophesy by Baal, prophesy falsely, prophesy lies in Yahweh's name, commit adultery, and walk in falsehood. They are pronounced, by him and Yahweh, profane and wicked although the people listen to them while they mock Jeremiah. Jeremiah and Yahweh, alike, lament over these charlatans (23:9-11). Frequently Yahweh and Jeremiah speak against them:

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of Yahweh. They keep saying to those who despise the word of Yahweh, "It shall be well with you;" and to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, "No calamity shall come upon you." For who has stood in the council of Yahweh so as to see and to hear His word? Who has given heed to His word so as to proclaim it? (23:16-18)

Although Jeremiah does not refer directly to the Spirit of Yahweh as the source of his inspiration, Yahweh's call (Jeremiah 1) and their running dialogue throughout the book distinctly suggest a complete contrast to those prophets identified in 23:9. Even when Jeremiah protests that he is too young to know how to speak for God, Yahweh touches his mouth and declares to him, "I have put my words in your mouth."²² Jeremiah speaks under the command of Yahweh, not from his own mind. His detractors, however, mock the very word Yahweh calls him to speak. "Behold, they say to me, 'Where is the word of Yahweh?'" (17:15). And Jeremiah repeatedly expresses self-doubt about his own authenticity, when over a lifetime of preaching imminent doom from the North, Yahweh's judgment had not materialized. How could he judge himself favorably? Historical outcome determines prophetic victory in the contest of true versus false prophets.

The decisive encounter for Jeremiah comes while he is under the symbolic yoke of Babylonian bondage, first before King Zedekiah and second in a prophetic duel against Hananiah (Jer 27-28).²³ Here, the prophet lacks no confidence in Yahweh's word of judgment upon the king of Judah or the patriotic prophet Hananiah, with appropriate Yahwistic credentials, offers a counterprophecy to Jeremiah's word of doom, "Thus, says Yahweh of Hosts ... 'within two years ... I will restore ...' the temple, the Davidic king, and My people exiled by Babylon." "Amen, may Yahweh make all your words true, just as you prophesied," Jeremiah replies. Now to spoil the celebration, Jeremiah continues with a word to the wise: only when the words of a peace prophet come to pass shall the people know that Yahweh truly sent that prophet (28:9). Sometime later, Jeremiah delivers another Word of Yahweh to Hananiah:

- Yahweh didn't send you;
- you lied to the people;
- you shall die within the year.

Thus, Hananiah died, and Jeremiah, so to speak, was vindicated.²⁴

EZEKIEL

In the case of Ezekiel, the Spirit of Yahweh is clearly his undisputed credential and inspiration. The role of *rûah yhw* is repeatedly emphasized throughout the book: in 2:2 "The spirit entered me as He spoke to me," in 3:34, "The spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and said to me," in 11:5, "The spirit of Yahweh fell upon me and said to me." A similar expression occurs in 8:1 "the hand of Yahweh fell there upon me."²⁵ Certainly one might conclude early in reading the book of Ezekiel, on the basis of his spiritually rich inaugural vision and call to be Yahweh's prophet, that his experience was unique and that his encounter with the glory of Yahweh set him apart from the rest of Israel's prophets.

This position receives further support when Ezekiel's prophetic visions of God are considered. "The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (8:3). Whatever one makes of Ezekiel's "out of body" transmission between Babylon and Jerusalem or of the nature and meaning of his symbolic actions, he is unmistakably under the power and influence of Yahweh's Spirit.²⁶

The judgment oracle Ezekiel delivers against hostile prophets in chapter 13 is the backdrop for quite a vigorous discussion of the character of *rûah* in prophetic speech. Differently than Micah and Jeremiah,

**Yahweh's prophets, filled
with his Spirit, knew Yahweh.
Only as we know God and are
intimately known by God can
we act or speak by the
power of his Spirit.**

Ezekiel seems to have an independent style with a unique literary and theological balance.²⁷ The paradoxical nature of this chapter is declared outright in the opening verse: "Mortal, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Listen to the word of Yahweh!'" Immediately the prophet of Yahweh upends his opponents by declaring their

source of truth to be their own imagination (literally heart). Ezekiel quickly and intentionally separates himself from these charlatans and liars, who say, "'Declares Yahweh,' when Yahweh has not sent them, while they wait for fulfillment."

The prophet Ezekiel must contest his rivals because apparently they are enough like him in manner and speech to stir up confusion and mistrust in his audience.²⁸ Whereas Yahweh had strangely limited Ezekiel's divinely inspired speech (3:22-27), these so-called prophets of Israel always had a "Thus says Yahweh." For whatever reason, the people favored their false words of peace and deluded visions to those of Ezekiel, although both sides, at least outwardly, appeared to deliver messages certifiably authentic as true words of God. In the midst of the confrontation, Ezekiel announces to them, "Thus says the Lord Yahweh, 'Ha to you foolish prophets following your own spirit [*rûah*] that have seen nothing'" (13:3).²⁹

Yahweh seeks to expose these morally and spiritually thickheaded fools, who are scandalous villains of the people, deserving only his wrath that they might finally and truly know Yahweh.³⁰ These prophets, in contrast to Ezekiel, had secure professional positions during the national crisis, soothing societal fear with divine oracles of peace, which lacked Yahweh's power to actualize *šālôm*. Yahweh, therefore, strips them of all pretenses and will bring their collapse just as surely as the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. "So I will tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am Yahweh" (13:14).

CONCLUSION

The OT prophets, the Yahwistic true ones according to all standards, were empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh to receive revelation, inspiration, wisdom, justice, and power in order to speak genuinely for Yahweh in the midst of theologically charged political and national crises.

In the 8th century, Micah was a spiritually gifted prophet battling phony prognosticators blowing nothing but peaceful smoke. The Spirit of Yahweh for Micah was his only authoritative credential, but it was enough sustenance to distinguish him from those whose message was their own, fabricated out of an intoxicated greediness. They, like the people who listened to them and who sought to silence Micah, had so twisted societal justice that they hated good and loved evil. Who among that audience could, or really cared, to discern Yahweh's true prophet from the false, when their desires and behaviors had already forced Yahweh to turn away from them? Filled with the power of the Spirit of Yahweh, Micah dreams about a future hope composed of Yahweh's favorite people, a remnant kingdom. This people included the lame, homeless,

afflicted, punished, and exiled who would be ruled by Yahweh from Zion for the rest of time. In the present, however, only by that same Spirit of Yahweh can Micah declare that the road to peace will only be through devastating judgment.

Likewise, Jeremiah and Ezekiel each encountered rival prophets thought within their own contexts to be more legitimate by the people than they were. Only by Yahweh's Spirit do they have a voice. For Jeremiah that voice was one of judgment and lament alongside Yahweh but also against Yahweh. The *pathos* of Yahweh's words overwhelmed his ability to function as a true prophet in the traditional sense. Although he could frequently lament over the people of Jerusalem as often and as intensely as Yahweh, the fire in his bones forced him to complain vehemently that Yahweh had violated his person and failed to fulfill the divine personal promise to protect him. His turning against Yahweh, the very one who supplied his prophetic speech did not disqualify him as a prophet called by the Spirit of Yahweh. What remains clear throughout Jeremiah's career is his dependency on Yahweh for anything to say, no matter what the consequences. He endures the burden of Yahweh's Spirit in order to speak the prophetic word.

The same insight is gained from Ezekiel's encounter with the Spirit of Yahweh. Divine dependence for Ezekiel is similar to Jeremiah's for receiving the divine word and waiting for divine prompting to speak it. Ezekiel speaks for Yahweh only when Yahweh speaks to him and allows him to utter his words aloud. The *rûah* prophets always seemed to have a word from the Lord, something right to say at all times. The pressure to always have a divine right word for every occasion without real knowledge of Yahweh would build to the point where finally Yahweh would call their bluff and put them out of business. Because Ezekiel knew Yahweh as the one who came to him, who commanded him to ingest the scroll, who opened his mouth, and who appointed him a watchman over the house of Israel, he could wait for Yahweh to open his mouth to speak his word. And he was confident that what he spoke was his and only his.

The implications for Christian ministry are significant and obvious. Yahweh's prophets, filled with his Spirit, knew Yahweh. *Only as we know God and are intimately known by God can we act or speak by the power of his Spirit.*

From a Christian perspective, it may strike us odd that there should have been false prophets in Israel and that Israel should have struggled repeatedly to discern between those who were false and true. Moreover, the OT witness to the phenomenon of prophecy seems so unique and distinct. From our distant, *Christian perspective, the ecstatic and classical prophets were clearly inspired servants of Yahweh's rûah.* Thus, for us it is hard to imagine anyone in ancient Israel attempting to replicate divine revelation without that source of power. But, the message through the prophetic conflicts of Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel emphatically states that the Spirit is the only sustaining power we have for ministry even if we find ourselves in conflict, complaint, or chaos. We must know before whom we stand, understand when we are called to speak, and be willing to expose ourselves in turning to him or even against him.

Although this is true particularly for those who preach and teach, it is also true for all believers who are called as witnesses to the power of God in Christ Jesus. It is by the power of the Spirit of God that we are able to speak for God (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18). Exegesis matters. Rhetorical style is important. But spiritual integrity is central. What finally distinguished Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel from the false prophets who insisted that they spoke a true word from Yahweh was their having been filled with the *rûah yhw*. The painful purity of their lives matched the strength of the divine words they spoke. The spell of their rivals was finally broken because their lives were powerless, their proclamations false, and their spiritual dependence on Yahweh nil.

Blessed are those whose strength is in You. (Ps 84:5)

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Chronologically listed, the more significant scholarly works are Schoemaker, W.R. "The Use of RUAH in the Old Testament, and of Pneuma in the New Testament," *JBL* 23 (1904): 13-67; Mowinckel, S. "The spirit' and the 'word' in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets," *JBL* 53 (1934): 199-227; Neve, Lloyd, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo, Japan: Seibunsha, 1972); Wood, Leon, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Horton, Stanley, "Old Testament Foundations of the Pentecostal Faith," *Pneuma* 1(1979): 21-30; Parker, Simon, "Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel," *VT* 28 (1978): 271-85; Skiba, Richard, "'Until the Spirit from on High is Poured Out upon Us' (Isa 32:15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile," *CBQ* 46 (1984): 1-17; Block, Daniel, "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of RWH in the Book of Ezekiel," *JETS* 32 (1989): 27-49; Hildebrandt, Wilf, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995); Goldingay, John, "Was the Holy Spirit Active in Old Testament Times? What Was New about the Christian Experience of God?" *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 14-28; Shipp, Mark, "The Spirit of God in the Old Testament," *Christian Studies* 16 (1996): 5-16.
- 2 In particular, consider the Pauline perspective that the age of the Spirit, infused by the power of the risen Christ, supersedes the age of the law. For Paul, the law means enslavement to the flesh and death, whereas the Spirit brings freedom and life. Moreover, Paul's strict polarization nearly precludes manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit prior to the arrival of the Messiah (Gal 3:1-5). The anchor of Paul's pneumatology for the church, however, is the recognition of Christ-likeness, and this, as we will see, is hardly different than the spirituality of the OT prophets, which necessarily was to match the spiritual qualities of Yahweh if they were to be distinguished from rival prophets.
- 3 Goldingay, 14.
- 4 See "rûah spirit," *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vol.; ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann; trans. M. Biddle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), III:1202-20; for distribution and lexical analysis.
- 5 The actual phrase "holy spirit" appears only in two OT passages, in Isaiah 63 and Psalm 51. Goldingay, 17; suggests that "this is a misleading observation, because arguably in OT thinking either the adjective or the noun is redundant in the expression. 'Spirit' in itself defines the being of God, in dynamic power (cf. Isa 31:3). 'Holy' in itself also defines the being of God, in supernatural awesomeness (cf. Hos 11:9b). It is therefore hardly surprising that the two words are so rarely combined; they risk tautology. Any reference to the spirit of God must be a reference to the holy spirit of God."
- 6 Micah does also (3:8) but the phrase 'et-rûah yhw' has often been regarded as a prosaic and redundant gloss. See D. Hillers, *Micah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 45; for explanatory notes to the contrary. As Hillers and Neve, 40-41; point out, Mic 3:8 is the only time God's power is associated with his rûah. Because rûah frequently means divine power, this restatement is surprising and sometimes dismissed.
- 7 Isa 11:2; Mic 2:7, 3:8.
- 8 Consider also the references to the Spirit of Yahweh in Isaiah of the exile (Isa 40:13, 42:1, 44:3, 48:16, 59:21, 61:1, and 63:10, 11, 14). Discussion of Yahweh's spirit-filled, anointed, servant leader is beyond the scope of this article. See J.J.M. Roberts, "Isaiah in Old Testament Theology," *Int* 36 (1982): 130-43; and Hildebrandt's fine treatment, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 127-37.
- 9 Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 33-41.
- 10 The most important OT passages on false prophets are 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Mic 2-4; Jer 23:13-40; and Ezekiel 13. For a concise treatment of false prophecy in Israel, see James Crenshaw, "Prophecy, False," *IDBSup*, 701-02.
- 11 Neve, 36; who argues that the Hitpaal of nb' used frequently in the earlier sections of Samuel is not used to describe the activity of Elijah or Elisha. Moreover, the causative form of the verb denotes ecstatic frenzy associated with Saul and the prophets with him in 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 18:10; 19:23. In contrast to this prior usage, when Elijah engages the "prophets" of Baal in the contest at Mt. Carmel, the Hitpaal of nb' is used disparagingly to sharpen the contrast between the true prophet of Yahweh and the other. In 1 Kgs 22:12, the Hitpaal participle describes the activity of the false prophets opposite Micaiah ben-Imlah, those whom Yahweh explains have a "lying spirit." See the extended discussion on the causative use of nb' by H.P. Müller, *TDOT*, Vol. IX, 143-44.
- 12 Consider, however, the clarifying and cautious work of J.J.M. Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh," *VT* 21 (1971): 244-51; who concludes that the expression "hand of Yahweh" upon the prophet refers to "some kind of ecstatic experience" (251).
- 13 Neve, 37.
- 14 Compare the assessment of human-made idols that are characterized as works of wind (Isa 41:29) or windless works (Ps 135:16).
- 15 Hillers, *Micah*, 45. See also Mic 3:9-12.
- 16 This phrase is unique in the pre-exilic prophets who shy away from mentioning Yahweh's Spirit. See note 5.
- 17 G.L. Mays, *Micah* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 84-86; treats the Spirit as the fourth of Micah's gifts from Yahweh, though added as a gloss, "perhaps prompted by the presence of 'might' in both lists of endowments, has added the phrase 'spirit of YHWH' to state clearly that the endowments are charismatic. . . . Micah himself might have avoided the term in his situation, because of the association between spirit-possession and the prophetic guilds. But the intention of the expansion is a true interpretation of his dependence on the endowment of YHWH" (86).
- 18 Note the attributes listed in Isaiah 11 associated with the Spirit of Yahweh upon the Messiah: wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of Yahweh, justice and righteousness, equity and faithfulness. Moreover, the prayer for God's blessing on the king in Psalm 72 asks for gifts exclusive to the king: divine justice, righteousness, prosperity, deliverance, and perpetual peace. Compare also 1 Kgs 3:9.

- 19 On the translation of this verse and the syntax of the passage Jer 5:10-19, see Peter Craigie, *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC; completed by Page Kelley and Joel Drikard, Jr.; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1991), 89-93. On the message and audience of this text, see Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 391-92.
- 20 Sword and famine are the judgment promised by Yahweh in response to idolatry in Deut 32:24-25. Jeremiah coins a triad, "sword, famine, and pestilence," found 13 times the book. See William Holladay, "Prototypes and Copies: A New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem in the Book of Jeremiah," *JBL* 79 (1960): 361-62. Jer 14:11-16 connects this refrain to the fate of the false prophets, who along with the people whom they have deceived will be consumed by the sword, famine, and pestilence.
- 21 Consider Craigie's comment: "The situation with preachers has changed little since Jeremiah's day. Calvin noted how many were the preachers in his time given to flattering the people. Today successful preachers trade on making people feel good and telling them that God has something good in store, when the truth is God has planned for them just the opposite" (340-41).
- 22 The series of confessions or complaints of Jeremiah, where he asserts his innocent frustration against Yahweh's neglect of his original promise to be with him to deliver him (1:8), offer a larger context for understanding the prophet's spiritual solidarity with Yahweh. The intensification of these laments over the course of the book seems to indicate a steady increase of trouble as Jeremiah proclaims Yahweh's judgment. The prophet did not live in a "spiritualized" vacuum protected as God's mouthpiece from the pain of the real world. His suffering is real, as are his accusations about Yahweh's abuse and abandonment. Nevertheless, even within this larger context of painful embrace of Yahweh's purpose, the prophet realizes the source of his grief, the Word and the Name of Yahweh (20:8-9).
- 23 On this section, see William Holladay, *Jeremiah: Spokesman Out of Time* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1974), 77-80; who asks the question, "Indeed, what are we to make of this confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah, between prophet and prophet—for we notice that the narrative constantly identifies both men by the same title (verses 5, 10, 12, 15)? Many of us, I suppose, fall into the assumption that it must have been easier back in those days to learn the will of God; one had only to listen to a prophet. We assume that it is far harder nowadays, when God does not speak out so forthrightly. But is this not a misunderstanding of the situation? It has always been hard to learn the will of God, for there have always been men around to speak for God, some saying 'light,' others saying 'dark.' Whom do we listen to? And it is only in the sorting-out process of later years that one can identify who has been speaking for God and who has not" (79-80).
- 24 Crenshaw, "Prophets, False," *IDBSup*, 702; discusses the continuing scholarly debate over what really vindicates a true prophet over against the false. He says, "Ultimately [criteria, i.e. standing in Yahweh's counsel, or being called, etc.] failed to distinguish authentic prophecy from its opposite."
- 25 Also, Ezek 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:3; 33:22; 37:1. Although this links him with the preclassical prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, the classical prophets generally avoid this type of expression. Ezekiel may have consciously and intentionally employed archaic prophetic features of Yahweh's authority and inspiration that somehow were designed to strengthen his relationship with an otherwise apathetic audience. See Lawrence Boadt, "Ezekiel, Book of," *ABD*, Vol. II:717; and Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh."
- 26 See the excellent discussion by Daniel Block, "The Use of RWH in the Book of Ezekiel," 28-29; of the title given by commentators to Ezekiel, "the prophet of the Spirit." He says, "With his emphasis on the spirit Ezekiel is obviously going his own way" (28).
- 27 On these aspects of the text see Mosha Greenberg, *Ezekiel I* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1983).
- 28 In addition to this explicit attack on the false prophets (male and female, note vs. 17f), Ezekiel distinguishes himself by recounting his extended call narrative, placing explicit dates on his oracles, and only speaking when Yahweh spoke to him and opened his mouth—becoming a dumb-founded watchman. See Robert Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," *Int* 38 (1984): 117-30.
- 29 On the vocative syntax of 'ôy-oracles, see Delbert Hillers, "Hôy and Hôy-Oracles: A Neglected Syntactic Aspect," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman* (ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 185-88.
- 30 Ezekiel's characteristic refrain, "you shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh," is found four times in this chapter (13:9, 14, 21, 23) and over 60 times in the whole book.

