

Understanding the Ministry of the Prophet

In Its Hebraic Context

Transmitting the Oracles of YHVH Elohim Accurately

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The Prophetic Ministry Within the Congregational Setting

THE OPERATION OF THE GENUINE GIFT OF PROPHECY is to be encouraged in the congregational setting for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the individual members of the body of Messiah (1 Cor 12–14). But YHVH is not the author of confusion. It is the duty of wise and discerning spiritual leadership to protect the local congregation of saints against confusion and manifestations of the flesh and the devil. When the genuine Spirit-led prophetic gifts are allowed to function within the congregation, the body of Yeshua is built up, comforted and exhorted (1 Cor 14:3), and even sometimes corrected. When counterfeit prophetic words come forth masquerading themselves as the genuine thing, the opposite occurs. Into the body of believers is injected confusion, strife, division, contention and conflict. These are the fruits of the flesh or demonic activity and are not from the Spirit of Elohim.

In order that spiritual life and not confusion occur, the building up of the body of Yeshua and not its tearing down, and the genuine Spirit-led gifts occur and not manifestations of the flesh or demonic counterfeit gifts, it is imperative that we understand what Scripture says about the office of a prophet and the gift of prophecy. The purpose of this teaching, therefore, is to bring clarity to these issues and to do so in light of the Hebrew roots of our faith. We also hope to offer some guidelines that will allow the genuine prophetic gifts to be able to function unhindered within the body. At the same time, we will offer some guidelines that will help leaders to discern those manifestations that are not from the Spirit of Elohim.

A Scriptural Overview on Prophets and the Gift of Prophecy

A Prophet Knows the Heart of YHVH

A prophet is one who hears the word, heart and will—or oracles—of YHVH and accurately transmits what he has heard *only* to those to whom YHVH has told him to go, and only when and where he has been told to go. If that prophet does not follow YHVH's specific instructions in this regard, then YHVH will hold him accountable. If he repents for his disobedience (like Nathan the prophet did when he told David to build the Temple, 2 Sam 7:3–17) then he will still remain a prophet before YHVH. If he does not repent, then YHVH considers him to be a false prophet and YHVH's judgment will come against that false prophet (e.g. Jer 23:9–40).

The reason that the prophet is able to accurately transmit the word of YHVH is because he intimately and intuitively knows the heart, will and mind of YHVH. If he does not know *how* YHVH thinks and *what* YHVH requires of his people, then how can he presume to be a spokesman for YHVH? Therefore, a prophet today must be a copious student of Scripture (the Word of YHVH) and must have spent long hours, and years learning about YHVH from his Word. It is highly doubtful that a casual student of Scripture or a spiritual novice could be a genuine prophet.

Some prophets receive words from YHVH through dreams and visions. This is how YHVH chooses to speak to some people (Num 12:6). The Scriptures are replete with many such examples. Even then, the prophet must have a thorough understanding of YHVH's written Word so that he will be able to compare what he thinks he heard against the immutable template of YHVH's written Word. This will help him to determine the accuracy of

what he has received and be able confirm that it is actually from YHVH.

All the biblical prophets ultimately based their words on the previous revelation of YHVH's Word as recorded in Scripture. For example, the Torah, YHVH's revelation to Moses, formed the basis for the Writings and Prophets portions of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), while the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) are based on and in agreement with the Hebrew Scriptures. Any current or new prophetic revelation must be in total agreement and harmony with past revelations as recorded in Scripture. If it does not agree, then it is not of YHVH's Spirit, but is from another source making the individual giving the word a liar and deceiver. This is the biblical definition of a false prophet.

Over time, some self-proclaimed prophets have come on the scene claiming to have a word from Elohim that supersedes Scripture. The words of these "prophets" have not been in harmony or agreement with the Bible. These individuals are therefore false prophets, by biblical definition. Such prophets would include Mohammed and Joseph Smith. The Koran, for example, contains many teachings that are totally at odds with the truth of Scripture. It therefore derives from the mind of man, or from the devil, or both, but it is *not* from the Spirit of Elohim. The Koran in many places acknowledges the truths of the biblical prophets, yet presents a religious system that is contrary to what the biblical prophets taught.

A Prophet Knows How to Discern the Voice of YHVH

The Apostle James in his epistle says that wisdom, knowledge or intelligence comes to man from four different sources: from YHVH Elohim, the world, the flesh and the devil (Jas 3:13-15). The writer of Hebrews likens the Word of Elohim (which is wisdom or knowledge from Elohim) to a sharp two-edged sword that divides between the soul and the spirit of man and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians speaks of two types of wisdom or knowledge: that which is the world and that which is of Elohim (1 Cor 2:6-7). The prophet Ezekiel declares that the true priests of YHVH are to know the difference between that which is holy (*kadosh* or set-apart) and that which is profane (polluted or defiled by the world, the flesh and the devil). Peter states that redeemed believers are "a holy priesthood and a holy nation" (1 Pet 2:9), and John states that the saints will rule and reign with Yeshua in his millennial kingdom as kings and priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

With these truths in mind, it becomes clear that a prophet must know how to separate between thoughts, ideas and wisdom that originates from his soul man (his mind, will and emotions), from the influences of the world system around him, and from thoughts that Satan may attempt to shoot like arrows into his mind (see Eph 6:16). He must learn to evaluate every thought that is contrary to the knowledge of YHVH and bring it into obedience to the mind of Yeshua as revealed in the Word of Elohim (2 Cor 10:4-5).

If a prophet does not learn to separate between the wisdom that is from above and that which is from the world, the flesh and the devil then the words he prophesies may well be a mixture of good and evil and not the pure and undiluted or unpolluted word of YHVH. Yeshua says in John 10:1-5 that his sheep hear his voice and that they don't listen to anyone else. If this is true of the average saint, how much more should this be true of prophets who are claiming to speak for YHVH? Elsewhere in Scripture, YHVH warns against the false prophets who prophesy lies out of the imaginations of their own hearts causing profaneness (pollution) to go forth across the land (Jer 23:9-32). Elsewhere, Scripture reveals that some prophets even prophesy under the influence of a lying or demonic spirit (1 Kgs 22:21-23; 2 Chr 18:19-22). True prophets speak only the pure truth of YHVH, and if by chance they fail to take a thought captive that is not from Elohim and they mix it with the prophetic word from Elohim, then like Nathan the prophet, they must admit their error and repent (2 Sam 7:3-13).

A Prophet Knows and Obeys Torah

A true prophet has an intimate knowledge of the Torah. More than three-fourths of all the prophecies in the Scriptures relate to YHVH's prophets urging, pleading, or ordering YHVH's people to return to the ancient paths of Torah. If the people refused to obey and insisted in following their sinful, anti-Torah path, then the prophets would prophesy judgment upon them. If the people would repent, then the prophet prophesied blessings upon the people of Israel.

All the prophets of YHVH in Scripture (both Tanakh or Old Testament and the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament) were Torah faithful and observant. ***There were no prophets anywhere in scripture who did not live and obey the Torah!*** Those who did not obey Torah were called false prophets!!! That is the Scriptural model we have as our example and which must be followed today.

To the degree that one has a walking-it-out knowledge of YHVH's Word including walking in obedience to the letter and the spirit of Torah, that is to the degree that one's prophetic words will be accurate. Or stated conversely, to the degree that one is NOT walking in Torah—both the letter and the spirit—that is the degree to which their words will not be accurate. Some reading this will disagree with this premise, for it goes against the teachings of many. But it is the biblical standard whether we like it or not. It is possible, however, that YHVH may be leading an individual who has a prophetic call on their life and who is a born-again Christian away from the pagan traditions and anti-Torah theologies of Christianity. That person may be being weaned away from a Christo-pagan religious paradigm toward the Torah-based roots of the Christian faith. That person may be a sort of “prophet in training.” But a true prophet will be Torah-observant or else will be moving quickly in that direction.

We find the instructions on the office of a prophet and what constitutes a true versus false prophet primarily in the Tanakh (OT) and not in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT).

High Versus Low Ranking Prophets

Scripture describes two broad categories of prophets: high versus low ranking prophets. High-ranking prophets not only prophesied to individuals, but to kings, priests and over whole nations. Low-ranking prophets ministered in the local congregation of believers.

We see many examples of high-ranking prophets in the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures. Additionally, John the Baptist, Yeshua and the Apostles were all high-ranking prophets.

The ministry of the low-ranking or congregational prophet is not to be diminished; this type of prophet simply exercised his gifting at a very localized level.

Paul calls those who have the gift of prophecy *prophets* (1 Cor 12:28; 14:29), which is the Greek word *prophetes* (*Strong's G4396*) and is the generic Greek word used for *prophet* in the Apostolic Scriptures.

When using the Greek word *prophetes*, the apostolic writers do not make a distinction between lesser and greater rank prophets. Wherever we find the English word “prophet” in the New Testament behind it is the Greek word *prophetes*.

Just because one has the gift of prophecy does not make one a high-ranking prophet, although Paul calls all those with prophetic gifts prophets (see 1 Cor 14:29 and 32). The gift of prophecy given to the lower rank or congregational prophet is for the express purpose of edifying, exhorting and comforting the members of the congregation (1 Cor 14:3), and *not* for rebuking or correcting others—especially the leaders of the congregation without the leader's consent.

The office of the prophet is mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, and Paul clearly states that this office is a gift from Yeshua (Eph 4:7–10). Yeshua who is the authoritative head of the body of redeemed believers or saints has the authority to raise up to leadership anyone he chooses. He chooses to whom he will give the gift or office of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher (Eph 4:8). Men cannot usurp this authority by taking to himself one of these office gifts presumptuously. To do so is to be in direct violation of Yeshua's sovereign authority over his spiritual body. The purpose for the office of the prophet (along with the other ministry offices) is “for the perfecting of their saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Messiah” (Eph 4:12).

Paul is not describing a high-ranking prophet in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. The prophetic gifts that Paul describes here are from the Set-Apart Spirit (1 Cor 12:3–4), and not specifically from Yeshua. The purpose of the Spirit of Elohim in the congregation is not to usurp authority over Yeshua, the Head, but to come along side of believers and to comfort them, to point them to Yeshua, and to guide them into spiritual truth (John 14:24; 15:26; 16:13). Therefore, the gifts of the Spirit (including the ministry of the congregational prophet) are for edifying, comforting and exhorting the body of believers (1 Cor 14:3). It is not, therefore, their role or prerogative to correct those Yeshua has placed in leadership positions over his spiritual body (i.e., apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers). Scripture gives protocols for laity to bring concerns or grievances to leadership. A study of how the righteous daughters of Zelophehad brought their grievances to Moses gives us some guidelines in this regard (Num 27:1–11).

The Hebrew Scriptures (OT) more clearly lay out the criteria for what constitutes a prophet of YHVH than do the Apostolic Scriptures (NT). We must therefore look to the Hebrew Scriptures to guide us as to the delineations and definitions of the ministry of the prophet.

The Apostolic Scriptures reveal to us the need for lesser rank or congregational prophets. In the Hebrew Scriptures, prophets gave the word of YHVH to kings, priests, and to people alike. Their prophecies were long and

short range in nature and were nationalistic and sometimes international in scope. Seldom were they directed to common individuals, but usually to individuals of authority and influence. Since Yeshua's resurrection, the Spirit of Elohim has been poured out upon all redeemed believers. With the Spirit comes the gifts, which are for the building up, admonishing, arousing, stimulating, consoling or comforting of the spiritual body of believers.

Some Christian teachers say that the high-ranking or Old Testament-type prophets no longer exist in the "New Testament covenantal dispensation of grace." As we are about to see, the scriptural evidence disproves this assertion.

High-Ranking (OT-Type) Prophets in the Apostolic Era

The point is often overlooked that most of the apostolic writers were not only apostles (*sent ones* who were commissioned by YHVH to be forerunners in advancing his kingdom on earth), but that they were also prophets. They did not advertise this fact, for they were humble, but their writings contained both long and short-range prophetic pronouncements, prophetic warnings, rebukes, admonitions, and corrections. The lesser rank or congregational prophets, whose main duty was to edify, comfort and exhort the body of believers (1 Cor 14:3), did not prophesy in an apostolic sense. They did not warn, rebuke, correct and make predictions concerning entire congregations, the whole body of Yeshua, and world events as did many of the apostles.

It would seem therefore, that the ministry offices of apostle and prophet worked together and that many of the apostles were also prophets according to the Old Testament definition of a prophet. Scripture records that some of the apostles worked miracles, had divine encounters, angelic visitations, visions and out of body experiences as did the prophets of old who also received special heavenly revelations.

It should also be noted that the higher-rank prophets probably had a more direct or uncorrupted (by human flesh) channel to heaven than the lesser-rank prophets. Note for example the prophetic word of the low-ranking prophet Agabus who predicted that Paul would be bound (in chains) by the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11). In reality, it was the Romans who bound him (Acts 21:33). In essence, Agabus' prophecy was correct, though in some minor details his word was off.

Today, some people in the Christian church use Agabus as an example of why modern day "prophets" *do not* have to be one hundred percent accurate to be considered a true prophet of YHVH. While this may be true, this does not take into account the fact that the Old Testament prophets were one hundred percent accurate in all of their prophecies. The notable exception was Nathan the prophet who, on one occasion, told David that YHVH had granted him permission to build the Temple, when in fact he hadn't. Nathan heard the word of YHVH correctly, but interpreted it incorrectly. In reality, YHVH had wanted Nathan to tell David that he was using David *not* to build YHVH a house to live in, but that he would use David to raise up a spiritual house or kingdom forever. Additionally, we see later that YHVH allowed David to have a hand in building the Temple by assembling the building materials for its construction so that David's son, Solomon, could do the construction. Nathan quickly discerned his error and corrected his word (2 Sam 7:1-17). Unlike many modern-day "prophets" in today's church system, few admit when they are wrong, or when they have misinterpreted the word of YHVH. Most continue plying their trade for profit and prestige as if nothing had happened. This was not the biblical model of how a true prophet should conduct himself!

John the Baptist: Another Type of Prophetic Gifting—A Forerunner Prophet

Yeshua referred to John the Baptist as a prophet—even the greatest of prophets (Luke 7:28), yet there is no record of his having had a dream or a visitation from the Divine, having done any miracles, or having done any other supernatural works or miracles commonly associated with the Old Testament prophet. His role as a prophet was to prepare the people of Israel for their coming Messiah by urging them to repent of sin (or lawlessness or Torahlessness), to turn their hearts to YHVH, to become spiritually pure, and to look to the Messiah.

Eleven Levels of Prophetic Revelation

The biblical record shows us that there are eleven levels of prophetic revelation by which YHVH makes known his will to his people.¹

This list is given to help those who believe they are prophetic, or who may even think that they are actual prophets, to put the concept of a prophetic ministry in its proper biblical context. Most "prophetic" people should

¹ Adopted from *The Guide to the Perplexed*, by Moses Maimonides' (Rambam), pp. 241-245

be humbled after reading this list. Most probably will find themselves at a lower level on the list than they would have imagined.

At point three below we are introduced to the first and lowest level of an actual prophet. Those whom YHVH has given the mantle of a prophet will likely experience some of these manifestations from time to time. It must be noted, however, that Yeshua called John the Baptist the greatest of all prophets (Luke 7:28), yet there is no record of John experiencing any of the phenomena listed below. The eleven levels of the prophetic are as follows:

1. Divine assistance is given to a person to induce or encourage him to do something good and grand (e.g. Jdg 2:18; 1 Sam 11:6; 1 Chr 12:18; Exod 2:17; 1 Sam 16:17). Scripture often records this occurrence when it states, “And the Spirit of YHVH came upon *so and so...*”
2. The person feels as if something came upon him, and as if he had received a new power that encourages him to speak. Such a person is said to speak by the Set-Apart Spirit. The books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Daniel, Job, Chronicles and the rest of the Ketuvim (Writings) were written under the inspiration of the Set-Apart Spirit. (See also 2 Sam 23:2; Num 11:25; 2 Chr 20:14-15; Num 23:5; etc.) According to the scriptural record, the prophetic pronouncements of one operating at this level are often prefaced by the phrase, “The Spirit of YHVH spoke to me...” or “*So and so prophesied...*”
3. This is the lowest class of a prophet. Those who introduce their speech by the phrase, “And the word of YHVH came unto me...” or a similar phrase are at the lowest level. Sometimes such a prophet will see a prophetic allegory in a dream. Such was the case with Zechariah.
4. At this level, the prophet hears in a prophetic dream something clearly and distinctly, but does not see the speaker as was the case with the call of young Samuel (e.g. 1 Sam 3).
5. At this level, a person addresses the prophet in a dream, as was the case in some of the prophecies of Ezekiel (e.g. 40:4).
6. At the next level, an angel speaks to the prophet in a dream. This applies to most of the prophets in Scripture (e.g. Gen 31:11).
7. Next, in a prophetic dream it appears to the prophet as if YHVH spoke to him (e.g. Isa 6:1, 8; 1 Kgs 22:19).
8. Something presents itself to a prophet in a prophetic day vision; he sees allegorical figures, such as were seen by Abraham in the vision “between the pieces” (Gen 15:9-10).
9. The prophet hears words in a prophetic vision (a more vivid and life-like version of a dream), but does not see the person speaking to him; as is said in reference to Abraham, “And behold, the word came to him, saying, “This shall not be thine heir.”” (Gen 15:1,4). This occurred to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3ff)
10. Next, the prophet sees an angel that speaks to him in a prophetic vision as happened with Peter in his vision of the sheet from heaven (Acts 10:3; also Rev 19:10; 22:9)
11. At the highest level of prophetic revelation, the prophet sees an Angel (or Messenger) of YHVH (literally, the preincarnate YHVH Yeshua) who speaks to him in a vision, as was the case when Abraham was addressed by an angel at the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:15) and many other places where the Messenger of YHVH speaks to his servants directly (e.g. Gen 12:7; 16:7-13; 17:1, 22; 18:1; 22:11, 15; 32:24-32; 35:1; Exod 3:2; 13:21; 14:20; 33:9-11; 34:5; Num 11:25; 22:35-38; Deut 31:15-16; Josh 5:13-15; Jdg 6:11-23; 13:3; Isa 6:1ff; John in the Book of Revelation).

Cautions Regarding the Prophetic Ministry

Today there are many individuals in the church who claim to have prophetic gifts, and some even believe they are prophets, but they have become lifted up in pride and at the same time are ignorant of and ambivalent toward the Torah. This is a disastrous situation within the Christian church and is having ruinous effects upon many believers' lives. These individuals are claiming to speak for YHVH, yet are often speaking out of the imaginations of their own souls (or worse, some may even be listening to demonic spirits) and may be leading many people astray spiritually. This is the biblical definition of a lying or false prophet (e.g., see Jer 23:9-40).

Not everyone is called by YHVH to the office of a high-ranking prophet. One cannot just presume to be such a prophet. One who presumes may well be a false prophet. However, nearly anyone can operate in the gift of prophecy if they seek the gift and YHVH chooses to give it to them (Num 11:29; 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1,5,12,31).

All the gifts of the Spirit of Elohim, including the gift of prophecy happen *as YHVH wills(!)*, not as men will them to happen (1 Cor 12:11). One can't turn the gifts of the Spirit off and on at will like a faucet. One can only be an open pipeline to receive prophetic words as YHVH himself chooses.

At the same time, when YHVH chooses to give out his gift to an individual at a particular time for a specific reason, it is an error to think that the Spirit of YHVH will somehow overpower the person against his will causing the person to manifest YHVH's gifts involuntarily. This happens in false religions where people open themselves up to demonic spirits that take control over a person causing strange and bizarre manifestation. The Spirit of Elohim does not act this way! Scripture clearly states that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet (1 Cor 14:32). This is another way of saying that whenever YHVH gives the gift of prophecy to a person, that person remains in complete control of his mental and emotional faculties.

The gift of prophecy involves speaking out the will, heart and mind of YHVH about a particular situation or person. It is a *forthtelling* or *inspired utterance*, and not necessarily a *foretelling* of future events. The purpose of this gift is to edify, comfort and exhort the members of the body of Messiah (1 Cor 14:3). This gift is meant to be a blessing.

The gift of prophecy existed in the Tanakh. For example, Eldad, Medad and Saul prophesied, although Scripture does not call them prophets.

"Personal Prophecy"

A phenomenon in Charismatic Christian circles is what has become known as "personal prophecy." It is customary for some Christians to seek out those who seem to be "prophetic" for a personal word from YHVH.

There is nothing wrong with one going to a spiritually mature individual and asking their counsel or advice on a particular matter, or even asking them to pray about a matter to see if YHVH will speak to the situation through that individual. But some people go to "prophetic" individuals for words on a regular basis much as do heathens who consult fortune tellers or horoscopes for direction in life. Some of these "prophetic" individuals have made ministries out of giving personal prophecies. Some travel from church to church peddling their "prophetic" insights for profit. Some even hold training sessions or start "schools of the prophetic" to teach people how to be prophetic and to give "personal prophecies." There is no scriptural precedence or mandate for this kind of activity.

Books have been written by Christian "gurus" of this ministry instructing one how to operate in the ministry of "personal prophecy" without one scriptural example being given to validate their teachings! If Scripture does not validate a spiritual activity, then that activity is suspect. A case in point is a book entitled, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* by Dr. Bill Hamon founder of Christian International School of Theology and one of the acknowledged fathers of the "prophetic" and "personal prophecy" movement in Charismatic Christian circles. In this book of 20 chapters, the author states that seven chapters are instructions on the subject of "personal prophecy" and he states which ones they are. Though Hamon gives much sound biblical-based teaching in his book on the general subject of prophets and prophecy, he can produce not a single Bible verse to substantiate his views on the ministry of "personal prophecy" in the chapters dedicated to the subject!

In Scripture, when there was a prophetic word to be delivered, the prophet *came to you* with a word from YHVH; you didn't go to him. There are only a couple of infamous examples in Scripture of one going to a prophet for a word. One of those examples was Saul (before he was king) going to Samuel seeking a word from the prophet about his lost asses. Saul never shook this tendency to seek a "personal prophecy," for when, later in his life, he got into another tight spot, he consulted an occultic medium for another "personal word" from YHVH.

The Prophetic Ministry Within the Congregational Setting

Prophetic Utterances in the Congregational Setting

What criteria does Scripture give for allowing one to prophesy in the congregation and who is allowed to prophesy? We have already shown that any spirit-filled believer can prophesy by the gift of prophecy. However, should just anyone be able to walk into a congregation and start prophesying? Some congregations have rules that stipulate that no one is allowed to prophesy unless they are a member of that congregation, or unless they have taken certain classes taught by the leaders of the congregation. After graduating from the class one is now part of an elite group who is "certified" or permitted to give words within that congregation. This is a fine way to help keep potential false prophets or false prophetic gifts from operating within the congregation to its detriment. After all,

Scripture does command us to know those who labor among us (1Thess 5:12).

But there is one small problem with this approach. What if YHVH needs to get a word to that congregation and no one on the inside is listening to him (especially if it's a rebuking or corrective-type word)? How is YHVH to communicate to them if they won't listen to anyone from the outside? The restrictive measure of allowing only "approved" insiders to prophesy in the congregation would have effectively kept out such individuals as John the Baptist, Amos, Jeremiah, Elijah, Ezekiel and many others including Yeshua from prophesying. Indeed Scripture records that they gave the Word of YHVH regardless of the approval of the spiritual leaders.

In answer to this problem, some congregational leaders have shut down the gift of prophecy from operating in their midst since it is too difficult to differentiate from the true words and false words without stepping on toes. That is a solution, but it quenches one of the blessed and valid gifts YHVH ordained by his Set-Apart Spirit and given for the benefit of believers—something Paul admonishes us not to do (1Thess 5:19–20).

Do we therefore just let anyone prophesy who walks through the doors of the congregation?

We believe that the answer to this question lies somewhere in the middle—neither to the left nor to the right. A congregation must be open to prophetic words, but also discerning. Another one of the gifts of the Spirit of Elohim is the discerning of spirits (1Cor 12:10) and one of its purposes is to discern which words are from YHVH, which are from the soul of man and which are demonic in origin. When Paul instructed believers to "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings" (1Thess 5:19–20), he said in the next two verses to prove all things; hold fast to that which is good, and to abstain from all appearances of evil" (1Thess 5:21–22). What he is saying is to allow the gift of prophecy to go forth in the congregation, but to be careful and be discerning.

Furthermore, when the gift of prophecy is in action within a congregational setting, the word spoken needs to be judged as to whether it is from YHVH's Spirit or not. Those who are prophetically gifted need to exercise discernment in this regard. This is a scriptural mandate (1Cor 14:29).

Finally, Peter states that the younger ones in the faith (including those who are new in the ministry) need to submit to the spiritually mature or those who are spiritual elders. And all the saints are to be submitted to one another in humility (1Pet 5:5).

Discerning Prophetic Words

Does every prophetic word spoken need to be discerned? Yes! Does it need to be judged? Yes! Do all prophetic words need to be judged publicly? Not necessarily.

Common logic says that if someone has a reputation for being accurate in the words that they have spoken previously, is a reputable person within the congregation, is spiritually mature and is living a consecrated and Torah-obedient life-style, then public judging of the word may not be necessary unless they give a particularly controversial word.

However, if someone comes into the assembly who is a stranger or who is not well known, a public judging of the word would be advisable.

If the word is given publicly, then it should be judged publicly. If it is given privately on a one-to-one basis, then public judging may not be necessary—especially if it is of a private and sensitive nature. Common sense must rule here.

The bottom line is this: just because someone you know or you don't know gives you a word they claim or infer to be from YHVH doesn't mean you have to receive it. Scripture says to prove all things (1Thess 5:21), and those who are spiritual have the responsibility to judge in even the smallest matters pertaining to the body of Yeshua (1Cor 2:15; 6:2–3). Yeshua himself told us to judge the fruits of a prophet to determine whether he is real or false (Matt 7:15–20), and to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). Those who are prophetic and yet chafe at the idea of the spiritual body of Yeshua following the scriptural mandate to judge their words are likely walking in pride and self delusion. Such a person is not a fit vessel to be a conveyer of YHVH's word to the congregation, for they are walking according to the dictates or deceits of their carnal hearts and not in the Spirit of YHVH (Jer 23:16,26).

Delivering a Prophetic Word to Someone

If someone has a personal prophetic word for someone what should they do? In most instances, it should be given to the person privately, and not publicly. Public demonstrations serve, usually, only to embarrass the recipient of the word and draw attention to the one giving it (making the sin of pride difficult to avoid).

Judging Prophetic Words

How do we judge prophetic words to ascertain whether they be of YHVH or not? Here are some basic guidelines to follow.

- Is the prophetic word scriptural? Whatever you hear that does not line up with Scripture *reject it instantly!* It is not from YHVH!
- Is it right? Does it bear witness with your moral conscience, or do you have a check in your spirit or a deep knowing that something about the word is not right?
- If someone gives you a word, does it ring true with what you know YHVH is doing in your life? Does it cause a leap of joy in your heart? Does your “spirit man” say “yes!” Do you sense the peace of YHVH or does it leave you unsettled and feeling out of sync with YHVH? If it is a hard or corrective word, then you may need to fast and pray about it to hear from the Spirit of YHVH as to whether to accept or reject the word.
- Is the prophetic word reasonable? You may receive a word that will stretch your faith and even produce some spiritual “stage fright” as you ask yourself, “how could YHVH ever do that with me, or bring this to pass in my life?” This is okay. But if it is a word that is totally ridiculous, unreasonable and illogical and in no way rings credible, then reject it.
- A key scriptural principle is to confirm every word in the mouth of two or more witnesses. If someone gives you a word that is new to you, sit on it and wait. If it is of YHVH, then ask him to confirm the word. If in a reasonable amount of time YHVH brings one or two other totally independent sources to you who confirm this word, then it could be from him especially if all the other criteria listed above are in order. If confirmation doesn’t come, then disregard the word. Remember this: if a prophetic word is from YHVH, he will get the message through to you one way or the other. He has many ways by which to get our attention. The biggest obstacle to us hearing him is our own obstinacy, reluctance, fear, laziness, complacency, indifference, apathy, idolatry and sin in our lives. These things will keep us stuck in spiritual neutral for years never growing and venturing out to do his will, but rather burying our spiritual talent in the ground like the unprofitable servant in Yeshua’s parable.
- Remember that YHVH leads his sheep; he does not drive them. If you get a word that seems to “drive” you from behind and compel or force you to do something, and not lead you, then question it. YHVH doesn’t require us to act impulsively. He’s usually not in a hurry, but gives us time to confirm his word.
- YHVH can use circumstances to direct our steps. But in and of themselves circumstances may or may not be orchestrated by YHVH. They can be merely coincidental or even demonically incited to lead us astray.

Guidelines to Help Facilitate the Genuine Function of Prophetic Gifts in the Congregation

The basic guidelines that follow are suggested to help to promote the operation of the gift of prophecy within the body of believers. These guidelines are designed to raise up those who have genuine prophetic gifts by providing a healthy and scripturally-based atmosphere in which they can grow in their gifts so that Yeshua is glorified, the kingdom of Elohim is advanced, and the body of Yeshua is built up.

- **Novices With Prophetic Gifts:** Be wary of allowing novices in the Hebrew roots Torah-observant faith to give public prophetic words. If you are new to the Hebrew roots faith and have what you think is a word from YHVH for the congregation, it is advised that you first present it to the congregational leaders who will determine whether it is to be given publicly, and if so, how and when. If you have a private prophetic word for someone that you are certain is from the Set-Apart Spirit of Elohim (and not from your soul), then give it to the individual privately (not publicly). Whether or not they receive the word as from YHVH and take it to heart is up to them.
- **Know Those Who Labor Among Us:** Generally, only those who are regular attendees of the local body of believers and who have a relationship there should be permitted to give prophetic words. If one is new to the congregation and one has a word that they have confirmed is from the Spirit of Elohim, before giving the word they should submit the word to the spiritual overseers of the congregation. The leaders will then determine what is to be done with the word (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Pet 5:5). The purpose of this is to protect the

flock from false prophets who are like spiritual wolves in sheep's clothing wanting to destroy the congregation (Mat 7:15).

- **Accountability:** When a word is given publicly, it should be judged by the leadership or elders after it is given. One who has given prophetic words before in other congregations may not be accustomed to this approach, but it is scripturally mandated. (1 Cor 14:29)
- **Preparation and Discipleship Training:** Those who have a prophetic gift and are new to the Hebrew roots faith are strongly urged to hold their gift in abeyance for some time until they become grounded in the Torah and in the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith. Your understanding about the nature of prophetic ministry could change as you gain a fuller understanding of the whole counsel of YHVH's Word, including the Torah and the Prophets. Please be humble about this and stay open before YHVH. Many believers have had to change their perspectives on biblical things as they have come to an understanding of the Torah.

Even though you may have been recognized as having a prophetic gift in other religious contexts that you were formerly a part of, we ask you to exercise maximum grace. First, some of the things you have learned in Christian Charismatic circles will have to be unlearned as you learn about Torah and the Scriptures in their Hebraic context. Other things you have learned you will be able to keep. Please let the Spirit of Elohim work with you in this matter. The leadership of the local congregation must in no way hinder, stifle, suppress or grieve the genuine manifestations of the gifts, callings and ministries of YHVH, but rather to give place to true prophetic gifts and to reject anything that is false.

Abusing the Phrase "The Lord told me..."

Using the phrase, "The Lord [YHVH] told me..." is a very popular expression in Charismatic Christian circles. Is this a biblically-based practice? Should we be using this phrase, or ones similar to it? As always, we must let the truth of the Bible determine what we say and do.

Let's first look at all the occurrences of some common phrases as found in the King James Bible that relate to our question. Let's allow the facts to speak for themselves.

- **"The LORD/YHVH said unto me..."** This phrase occurs only three times in Scripture. (Isa 21:6,16; Acts 22:10 in reference to Paul's conversion in Acts 9:6,15)
- **"Thus saith the LORD/YHVH..."** This phrase occurs 163 times in Scripture and is used exclusively by the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Obediah.
- **"The word of the LORD/YHVH came..."** This phrase is used three times in Scripture and is used in conjunction with the phrase "Thus saith YHVH Elohim (used only in Ezekiel).
- **"the LORD/YHVH said..."** This phrase is found only 20 times in the entire Bible.
- **"...saith the LORD/YHVH..."** This phrase is used 239 times in the Scriptures. It is found mostly in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and several times in Amos and Obediah. It is used only 14 times in the New Testament with 13 of those times being quotes from Old Testament (Tanakh) passages. Once it is found in Revelation as a direct quotation from YHVH.
- **"I feel the LORD/YHVH telling me..."** This phrase is not found once in Scripture.
- **"I believe the LORD/YHVH is telling me..."** This phrase is not found once in Scripture.

YHVH gives a number of stern warnings, however, in Scripture against those who speak presumptuously in his name or who claim prophetic abilities by speaking in his name.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deut 18:19)

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. (Deut 18:20)

Then YHVH said unto me, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart." (Jer 14:14)

Therefore thus says YHVH concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, "Sword and famine shall not be in this land." By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. (Jer 14:15)

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed." (Jer 23:25)

"Behold, I am against the prophets," says YHVH, that use their tongues and say, 'He says.'" (Jer 23:31)

"For I have not sent them," says YHVH, "yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that you might perish, you, and the prophets that prophesy unto you." (Jer 27:15)

"For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them," says YHVH. (Jer 29:9)

Thus says YHVH of hosts, the Elohim of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name, "Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes." (Jer 29:21)

"Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness," says YHVH. (Jer 29:23)

In light of the scriptural evidence above, anyone who prefaces a prophetic word by the phrase, "The Lord told me..." or something similar is walking on dangerous spiritual ground before YHVH. That person is likely either very arrogant, or very immature in their spiritual walk and ignorant of the Scriptures.

Remember the words of wisdom of Solomon:

Keep your foot when you go to the house of Elohim, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter any thing before Elohim, for Elohim is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore, let your words be few. For a dream comes through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. (Eccl 5:1-3)

