

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/f0/64/e0/f064e08771da6116d5f0b35f2caeb7f7.jpg>

## Speak to power

### Week 4: The Literary Prophets and Politics

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## Hebrew Prophets were not unique

- "There seems to be **no authentic religion without its prophetic organ.** Every religion that is associated with the Supreme Being tends to have some socio-politically critical elements, even when the approaches may be different."  
(Abioje 787)



Odysseus in the Underworld with Tiresias

Image: The Characters of the Odyssey <https://msu.edu/~spykman1/wra210/mod5/characters.html>

## Prophets, Seers, and Visionaries

- Numerous societies know of prophets and seers—persons who receive or interpret divine messages and convey them to their surroundings. These messages are usually influential within the community and thus are connected with the exercise of power” (151)

### Three Relative Terms

- **Nabi** prophet (from Greek *prophetes*, spokesperson for a god)
- **Ro’eh** “seer”
- **Hozeh** visionary

Bremmer, Jan N. Prophets, Seers, and Politics in Greece, Israel, and Early Modern Europe.” *Numen*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (May, 1993), pp. 150-183. Published by: Brill URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3270202>  
Accessed: 14-12-2018 19:52 UTC

Image: <https://revphil2011.wordpress.com/2011/06/04/king-saul-king-jesus/>

## From Tribal Confederacy to Sacral kingship

### Background

- Israel had been transformed into a **monarchy**, but the kingdom of Israel was still in a sense the same Israel which had previously been organized as a **tribal league** (46)
- To be acceptable it had to be associated with the very foundation of the peoples existence: the Yahwistic faith itself. And so there developed in Israel a **sacral kingship** (47)

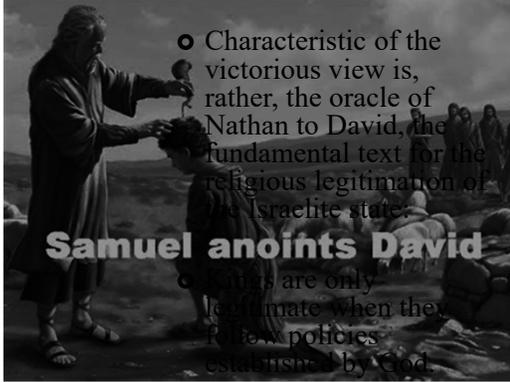


Samuel Anoints Saul

Albrektson, Bertil. “Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament.” <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

Image: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/gFK0hKwcPh0/hqdefault.jpg>

## Kingmakers



Characteristic of the victorious view is, rather, the oracle of Nathan to David, the fundamental text for the religious legitimization of the Israelite state.

### Samuel anoints David

Prophets are only legitimate when they legitimize policies established by God

"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, I took you from the pastures, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ... I will assign a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in their own land, and be disturbed no more. ... When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, sprung from your loins, and I will establish his kingdom. ... Your house [i.e., your dynasty] and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; 1 your throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. 7: 8, 10, 12, 16). (47)

Albrektsen, Bertil. "Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament." <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## Prophetic Periods

Seer  
Judge  
Kingmaker  
*Samuel*  
*Nathan*

Visionary  
Miracle  
Worker  
Seer  
*Elijah*  
*Elisha*

Consult  
Called by  
God  
Visionary  
Writers  
*Literary*  
*Prophets*

Allied with  
Priesthood  
Dream  
interpreters  
*Exile and*  
*After*

"the last prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) greatly stressed the restoration of the temple and its cults and the correct ways of sacrifice, and the priests started to consult again the Urim and Thummim. This close cooperation between priests and prophets must have led to a gradual merger" (Bremmer 166)

The rise of Literacy "caused the disappearance miracles and the emphasis on trance and possession among the prophets" (165)

Prophecy becomes institutionalized.

One of the greatest of the Maccabees, John Hyrcanus I (134-104) was secular ruler, high priest and prophet at the same time. His prophecy, though, no longer was "charismatic question of routine". The differentiation which had begun after Samuel was shortly abolished, but prophecy itself had nearly changed out of all recognition in the course of time (Bremmer 167)

## Seers and Miracle Workers

Visionary  
Miracle  
Worker  
Seer  
*Elijah*  
*Elisha*

- “[B]oth were of **aristocratic origin**, but both had also distanced themselves from their social background.
- **Neither seems to have been married**, both had **power over animals**.
- **Elijah did not wear a common garment** but one made of camel skin, which he left to Elisha.
- Their **miracles are the proofs of their power** as observed and interpreted by their followers and the local population.
- These miracles also show us the preoccupations of their time: war, food, drinkable water, incurable diseases.”

Through their marginalised status and appearance these prophets could exert more influence than those aristocrats who were liable to the normal restraints of social intercourse. In this way they were free to address rulers without becoming a threat to them.

Bremmer 165

## Speaking from the Margins

The  
Literary/Classical  
Prophets

Consults  
Called by  
God  
Visionaries  
Writers  
*Literary*  
*Prophets*

- “A similar marginalisation we find among the writing prophets, who lived in the shadows of Assur and Babylon.
- Hosea married whore (1.2),
- Isaiah went around naked for a whole year (20.2),
- Jeremiah remained unmarried (16.2).
- These prophets also exerted political influence, although they **seemed to have been consulted especially in times of great distress**, as was the case with Isaiah during the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian Sennacherib (Isaiah 37” (Bremmer 164).”
- Jeremiah’s debate with Hananiah

(Bremmer 164)

## Writing instead of Miracles

The  
Literary/Classical  
Prophets

Consults  
Called by  
God  
Visionaries  
Writers

- “Isaiah wrote on a tablet (8.1),
- Jeremiah had to write down the word of Jahweh into a book (30.2),
- Habakuk had to announce the judgment of the Chaldaeans on boards,
- Zachariah saw a scroll flying (5.1),
- and Ezekiel even was commanded by God to eat up a scroll (2.9).
- This new stress on writing fits the results of the most recent archeological research”

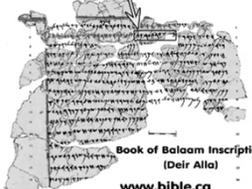
(Bremmer 165)

## The Call

The  
Literary/Classical  
Prophets

Consults  
Called by  
God  
Visionaries  
Writers  
*Literary  
Prophets*

“Balaam, the son of Beor,  
a divine seer is he”



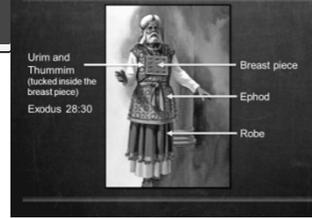
Book of Balaam Inscription  
(Deir Alla)  
[www.bible.ca](http://www.bible.ca)

- Prophets like Amos, a shepherd, emerge though they do not belong to “any brotherhood or family”
- God is said to “choose prophets from among the so-called pagans or heathens” like Balaam:
- “An inscription roughly contemporary with Isaiah written in ink on plaster, discovered at Deir ‘Alia in what was then the Ammonite Kingdom north of Moab, presents a ‘Visionary of the gods’ named Balaam who receives an ominous revelation from on high.
- Some connection with ‘the one enraptured and with eyes unveiled’ of the biblical Balaam cycle (Num. 22-24) is certain, though the homeland of the biblical Balaam is said to have been somewhere in Upper Mesopotamia (Num. 22:5; 23:7).”

P.O. Abioje  
“Critical  
prophecy and  
political  
leadership  
in biblical,  
African and  
Islamic  
worldviews.

<http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-balaam-son-of-beor-inscription-tell-deir-alla-succoth-ethor-book-of-balaam-museum-divine-seer-of-the-gods-drawing.jpg>

## Divination Urim and the Thummim



Allied with  
Priesthood  
Dream  
interpreters  
*Exile and  
Afterr*

- Hebrew: הַאוּרִים וְהַתְּמִיִּם
- meaning uncertain, possibly "Lights and Perfections"
- elements of the **hoshen**, the breastplate worn by the High Priest attached to the **ephod** [an elaborate garment worn by the high priest] .
- They are connected with divination in general, and **cleromancy** [casting of lots] in particular. Most scholars suspect that the phrase refers to a set of two objects used by the high priest to answer a question or reveal the will of God.
- first appear in Exodus 28:30, where they are named for inclusion on the breastplate to be worn by Aaron in the holy place. Other books, especially 1 Samuel, describe their use in divination.

Image <http://slideplayer.com/slide/9404548/28/images/6/Urim+and+Thummim+Breast+piece+Exodus+28:30+Ephod+Robe.jpg>

Urim and Thummim From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Urim and Thummim



Allied with  
Priesthood  
Dream  
interpreters  
*Exile and  
Afterr*

- the chronologically earliest passage mentioning them, according to textual scholars, is in the Book of Hosea,<sup>1</sup> where it is implied, by reference to the Ephod, that **the Urim and Thummim were fundamental elements in the popular form of the Israelite religion.**<sup>1</sup>
- "... rabbinical sources did question, or at least tried to justify, why Urim and Thummim would be required when a prophet was also present.<sup>[19]</sup> The classical rabbinical writers argued that the Urim and Thummim were **only permitted to be consulted by very prominent figures such as army generals, the most senior of court figures, and kings, and the only questions which could be raised were those which were asked for the benefit of the people as a whole...**

Urim and Thummim | Verse By Verse Ministry International [versebyverseministry.org](http://versebyverseministry.org)

Urim and Thummim From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Miracle, Court, and Professional Prophets

### Workers of Signs and Wonders:

- consisted of men like Elijah and Elisha (48).

### Court Prophets:

“In Israel like **everywhere else in the ancient Near East** their task was to

- pronounce blessings in the state cult and to secure success and prosperity.
- It was to these prophets that the kings turned on the eve of a campaign or other important enterprises.
- In the royal cult of the temple of Jerusalem it was probably they who repeated the divine promises of the prophecy of Nathan to new rulers of the Davidic dynasty (48).

### Cultic or Professional Prophets

- were attached to sanctuaries all around the country and to the royal court in Jerusalem, who supplied oracles for a fee and tried in various ways to ascertain the will of Yahweh.

Albrektson, Bertil. "Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament." <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## The Writing Prophets



<https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/images/ic/640x360/p0119k2j.jpg>

- **ethical and religious motives**, not political ones. (51)
- sovereign **contempt of the considerations of practical politics**
- **utopian** (52)
- endowed with a special ability to look into the future, they were **initiated into the secret plans of Yahweh**, they knew what others did not yet know. (52).
- in effect **more realistic than the politicians of those times**, who lacked this enigmatic gift of knowing the results beforehand. (53)
- However, “Not a few prophetic utterances about future political occurrences can now be controlled after the event, and it **appears that about half of these prophecies have not come true**. (53)

Albrektson, Bertil. "Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament." <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## “The Prophetic Postulate”

(from F. Weinrich 1932)

- in order to determine correctly the relations between prophecy and politics it is necessary to take the specific **historical conditions** into account and to avoid operating with general conceptions. (53-4)
- **The prophetic postulate:** the belief that political disasters are a punishment for the apostasy of kings and people, and that the fear of Yahweh is the only way of rescue from defeat and misfortune—a doctrine of retribution which is actually to some extent indicated in the prophecy of Nathan itself. (55-6)
- This attempt to read the vicissitudes of states and sovereigns as a diagram of the effects of the law of retribution was **contradicted by the brute facts time and again**— (56)



<https://uploads7.wikiart.org/images/duccio/prophets-isaiah-1311.jpg!Large.jpg>

Albrektson, Bertil. “Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament.” <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## Conscience of the State



<https://petecms.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/elijah-2.jpg>

- Perhaps the difference between politician and prophet in Israel was sometimes that the **rulers treated the time-honoured phrases of the royal ritual as venerable decorations**, while to the **prophets those ancient words were earnest and deep reality**. (54-5)
- *The great prophets do not act as representatives of certain political groups, they do not foment rebellions, they do not conspire against the kings, they do not want to subvert the social order.*
- *But they serve as the conscience of the state.* (54)

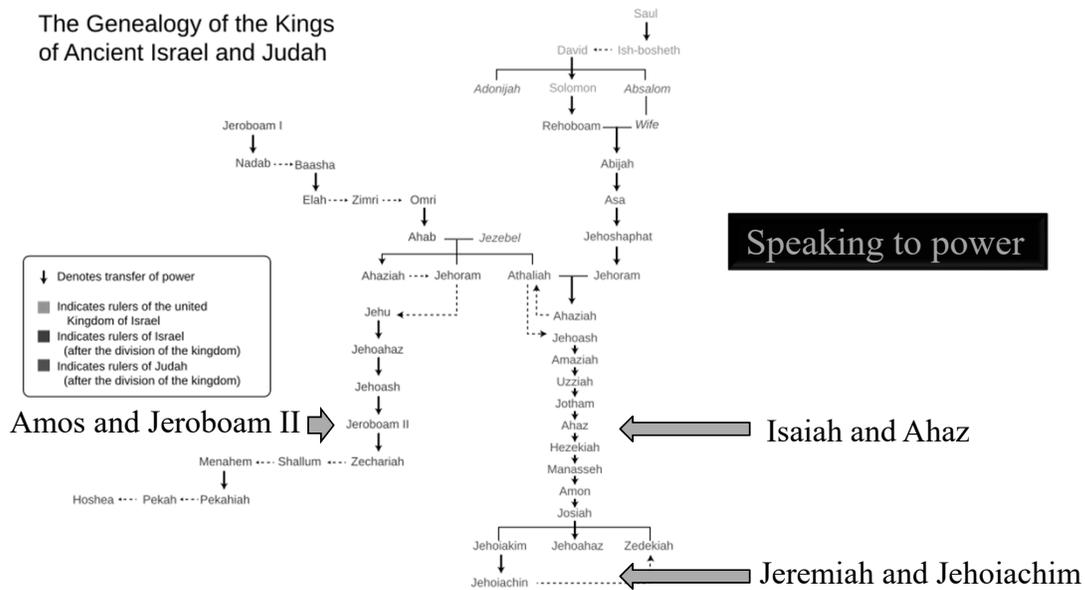
Albrektson, Bertil. “Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament.” <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## Protest injustice and the breakdown of faith

- The prophets most violently protested against the great evils of injustice, war, hatred, mercilessness and so on.
- The moral evils can cause a breakdown of faith in the God which a specific religion teaches **if the representatives of that religion make no realistic protest against sins.**
- Qtd from Häring (1979:353).
- Shields (2004:65) explains that **the ethical concern of the prophets derives from the fact that God is holy and righteous, and demands the same from his people.**

P.O. Abioje  
 "Critical prophecy and political leadership in biblical, African and Islamic worldviews."  
 Department of Religions  
 University of Ilorin  
 ILORIN  
 Nigeria

The Genealogy of the Kings of Ancient Israel and Judah



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/03/Genealogy\\_of\\_the\\_kings\\_of\\_Israel\\_and\\_Judah.svg/697px-Genealogy\\_of\\_the\\_kings\\_of\\_Israel\\_and\\_Judah.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/03/Genealogy_of_the_kings_of_Israel_and_Judah.svg/697px-Genealogy_of_the_kings_of_Israel_and_Judah.svg.png)

## Amos 7:10-14

## Speaking to power: Amos

Amos was not afraid to appear in Bethel at the very time when crowds were gathered there to worship the Golden Calf which Jeroboam the First, had set up in a special temple.

- <sup>10</sup> Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reported to Israel's King Jeroboam, "Amos has plotted against you within the house of Israel. The land isn't able to cope with everything that he is saying. <sup>11</sup> Amos has said, 'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will be forced out of its land.'"
- <sup>12</sup> Amaziah said to Amos, "You who see things, go, run away to the land of Judah, eat your bread there, and prophesy there; <sup>13</sup> but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's holy place and his royal house."
- <sup>14</sup> Amos answered Amaziah, "**I am<sup>al</sup> not a prophet, nor am I a prophet's son; but I am a shepherd, and a trimmer of sycamore trees.** <sup>15</sup> But the LORD took me from shepherding the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

Commentary: Nissan Mindel. **The Prophet Amos**  
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[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112277/jewish/The-Prophet-Amos.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112277/jewish/The-Prophet-Amos.htm)

## Isaiah 7:1-19



## Speaking to Power: Isaiah

- In the days of **Ahaz** son of Jotham son of Uzziah, **king of Judah**, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of **Israel** went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it.
- When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

Ahaz means "has held" the ending of his full name Jehoahaz ("God has held")

Background

## Ahaz, Israel, and Syria

- Immediately upon his accession, Ahaz had to meet a coalition formed by **northern Israel**, under **Pekah**, and **Damascus (Syria)**, under **Rezin**.
- These kings wished to compel him to join them in opposing the Assyrians, who were arming a force against the Northern Kingdom under Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul).

**Assyrian Empire**  
in Isaiah's Time (745-701 BC)  
under Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib

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Isaiah 7:1-19

## “Go out to meet Ahaz”

- Then the Lord said to Isaiah, **Go out to meet Ahaz**, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field, and say to him,
- **Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint** because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah. Because Aram—with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying, Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it; therefore thus says the Lord God:

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## Isaiah 7:1-19

## This shall not stand

**It shall not stand,**

**and it shall not come to pass.**

For the head of Aram is Damascus,  
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.

The head of Ephraim is Samaria,  
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

**If you do not stand firm in faith,  
you shall not stand at all.**

(Within  
sixty-five  
years  
Ephraim  
will be  
shattered,  
no longer a  
people.)

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## Isaiah 7:1-19

## Signs

- Again **the Lord spoke to Ahaz**, saying, **Ask a sign of the Lord your God**; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.
- But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.
- Then Isaiah said: **‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?’**
- **Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.**

Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. **For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.** The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.’

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## Ahaz and Assyria: The Sequel

- To protect himself Ahaz called in the aid of the Assyrians.
- Tiglath-Pileser sacked **Damascus** and **annexed Aram**.<sup>[5]</sup> According to 2 Kings 16:9, the **population of Aram was deported** and **Rezin executed**.
- Tiglath-Pileser then **attacked Israel** and "took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and **deported the people to Assyria**." *Tiglath-Pileser also records this act in one of his inscriptions.*<sup>[6]</sup>
- **This appeal to Assyria met with stern opposition from the prophet Isaiah, who counseled Ahaz to rely upon the Lord and not upon outside aid.**
- **The sequel seemed to justify the king and to condemn the prophet.**
- Ahaz, during his whole reign, was free from troubles with which the neighboring rulers were harassed, who from time to time revolted against Assyria. Thus it was that, in 722, Samaria was taken and northern Israel wholly incorporated into the Assyrian empire.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 732 he went to Damascus to swear homage to Tiglath-Pileser and his gods; and, taking a fancy to an altar which he saw there, he had one like it made in Jerusalem, which, with a corresponding **change in ritual, he made a permanent feature of the Temple worship**. Changes were also made in the arrangements and furniture of the Temple, "because of the king of Assyria" (II Kings, xvi. 18). Furthermore, Ahaz fitted up an astrological observatory with accompanying sacrifices, after the fashion of the ruling people.

Wiki Ahaz <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahaz>

## Things change

- Unearthed in Jerusalem's royal palace, **two tiny clay seals** were found in the same strata of soil just meters apart.
- They bear the inscriptions "**Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah**" and "**Belonging to Isaiah ...**" (believed to be "the prophet").



<https://www.armstrongauditorium.org/performance/exhibit-grand-opening>

## THE EXPOSITORY FILES

Hezekiah and Isaiah  
2 Kings 18:1-19; Isaiah 36-39

## Ahaz's son Hezekiah and Isaiah

- [The Assyrians were threatening to invade]
- Hezekiah sought God's help.
- Isaiah prophesied that the Assyrians would hear that Pharaoh Tirhakah was going to fight the Assyrians and return to Assyria (2 Kings 19:7-9). Assyrian records show that Sennacherib defeated Tirhakah at the battle of Eltekan in 701 B.C.
- **Sennacherib subsequently sent a letter stating that God could not stop Assyria from conquering Jerusalem. Hezekiah "spread the letter before the Lord" and prayed for deliverance (2 Kings 19:14).**
- God responded through Isaiah that the Assyrian army would be destroyed (2 Kings 19:32-34).

- It was that very night that **the angel of the Lord struck the Assyrians**, killing 185,000 (2 Kings 19:35). As prophesied, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh where he was killed by two of his sons; ... 20 years later.
- Hezekiah became mortally ill, and without God's intervention he knew he would die (Isaiah 38:1). He wept and prayed for recovery. (Isaiah 38:2,3) **God granted him an additional 15 years of life (Isaiah 38:4,5).**

## Jeremiah 36 New International Version (NIV)

## Speaking to Power: Jeremiah

- In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:
- <sup>2</sup> **“Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now.**
- <sup>3</sup> **Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.”**



<http://iconsbyfathervladimir.com/uploads/2011/12/97-Jeremiah.jpg>

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## Message to the people on a day of fasting

- <sup>4</sup> So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, **Baruch wrote them on the scroll.** <sup>5</sup> Then Jeremiah told Baruch, **“I am restricted; I am not allowed to go to the LORD’s temple.**
- <sup>6</sup> So you go to the house of the LORD on a **day of fasting** and read to the people from the scroll the words of the LORD that you wrote as I dictated.
- **Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns.** <sup>7</sup> **Perhaps they will bring their petition before the LORD and will each turn from their wicked ways, for the anger and wrath pronounced against this people by the LORD are great.”**



<http://larrythompson.blogspot.com/2012/11/jeremiah-36-jehoiakim-rejects-gods-word.html>

- <sup>8</sup> Baruch son of Neriah did everything Jeremiah the prophet told him to do; at the LORD's temple he read the words of the LORD from the scroll. <sup>9</sup>
- In the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, **a time of fasting before the LORD was proclaimed for all the people in Jerusalem and those who had come from the towns of Judah.**
- <sup>10</sup> From the room of Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper courtyard at the entrance of the New Gate of the temple, **Baruch read to all the people at the LORD's temple the words of Jeremiah from the scroll.**

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## Reaction from officials in the court

- <sup>11</sup> When **Micaiah** son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, **heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll**, <sup>12</sup> he went down to the secretary's room in the **royal palace**, where all the officials were sitting: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Akbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials.
- <sup>13</sup> After Micaiah told them everything he had heard Baruch read to the people from the scroll, <sup>14</sup> all the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to **say to Baruch, "Bring the scroll from which you have read to the people and come."** So Baruch son of Neriah went to them with the scroll in his hand. <sup>15</sup> **They said to him, "Sit down, please, and read it to us."**

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## Fearful of God's judgment

- So Baruch read it to them. <sup>16</sup> When they heard all these words, they **looked at each other in fear** and said to Baruch, **"We must report all these words to the king."** <sup>17</sup> Then they asked Baruch, "Tell us, how did you come to write all this? Did Jeremiah dictate it?"
- <sup>18</sup> "Yes," Baruch replied, **"he dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them in ink on the scroll."**
- <sup>19</sup> Then the officials said to Baruch, *"You and Jeremiah, go and hide. Don't let anyone know where you are."*

Remember, Jehoiakim is the son of **Josiah**. During Josiah's rule the basic text of the **book of Deuteronomy** was discovered, and he led a number of reforms, including destruction of the "high places" and efforts to centralize worship in Jerusalem.

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## The king sends for the scroll

- <sup>20</sup> After they put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary, they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him.
- <sup>21</sup> **The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him.**
- <sup>22</sup> It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him.

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## The king's reaction

- **<sup>23</sup> Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. <sup>24</sup> The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes.**



<sup>25</sup> Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, **he would not listen to them.** <sup>26</sup> Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel **to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet.** But the LORD had hidden them.

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## The king is condemned

- <sup>27</sup> After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>28</sup> **“Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up.**
- <sup>29</sup> Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, ‘This is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and said, “Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and wipe from it both man and beast?”’ <sup>30</sup> Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. <sup>31</sup> **I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.”**

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## Jeremiah dictates the book again

- <sup>32</sup> So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire.
- And many similar words were added to them.

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## Conclusions

- “sometimes that the **rulers treated the time-honoured phrases of the royal ritual as venerable decorations**, while to the **prophets those ancient words were earnest and deep reality**. (54-5)
- *The great prophets do not act as representatives of certain political groups, they do not foment rebellions, they do not conspire against the kings, they do not want to subvert the social order.*
- But they serve as the **conscience of the state**. (54)

Ahaz is an example of a leader who loses confidence in the face of conflict. He is given a sign because he cannot hear good advice.

Hezekiah is an example of a leader who is humble and both seeks, and listens to, wise counsel.

Jehoachim is an example of a leader who shows deep disregard for the institutions and traditions of his culture. He fails to listen to his own counselors.

Albrektson, Bertil. "Prophecy and Politics in the Old Testament." <https://journal.fi/scripta/article/view/67069/27367>

## The prophets must speak to power

- Ahaz appeared to prevail over Isaiah's predictions, and managed to survive the Assyrian takeover of the Northern Kingdom, and forced the country to adopt elements of Assyrian religion.
- Hezekiah undid a lot of what Ahaz had done, and trusted in God and in Isaiah's counsel -- and was even granted 15 years more of life.
- Jehoachim refused to listen to Jeremiah, and even had him jailed. He showed disrespect for his own people's traditions and beliefs. Appointed by Egypt as king, he later changes loyalties to Babylon, then back to Egypt. He was killed by Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem destroyed.

## The Prophets Today

Obviously, we do not live in a religious nation-state. But the principles apply. The prophets reminded their leaders of their responsibilities to:

- Act justly
- Respect, Follow and Apply the Values and Principles of the Society
- Act in Humility
- Listen to good counsel
- Lead for the good of all
- Act morally and set an example for the people

If leaders are not doing these things, **then we are compelled to speak.**

*And one does not have to be specially qualified to speak:*

*"I am no prophet, no prophet's son ..."*

*Maybe something like this...*

## What would the prophets say now?

- ... moral evils can cause a breakdown of faith in the God which a specific religion teaches **if the representatives of that religion make no realistic protest against sins.**
- Qtd from Häring (1979:353).

“As the authoritarian impulse reasserts itself globally, and global commitment to democracy seems to now be on somewhat shaky ground, I have been thinking a lot recently about the American commitment to democracy — where it comes from, and how, if the circumstances were right, it might slip away” ...

“As we in America — during this moment of political dysfunction and upheaval — contemplate the hard-won conventions and norms of democracy, we must continually remind ourselves that none of this is permanent, and that it must be fought for constantly.”

*Senator Jeff Flake in his final speech on the Senate floor*

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/12/13/senate-goodbye-jeff-flake-warns-threats-democracy-within-without/?hpid=hp\\_hp-top-table-main-democracy-jeff-flake-senate\\_20181213\\_story&utm\\_term=.27ba0f2364d0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/12/13/senate-goodbye-jeff-flake-warns-threats-democracy-within-without/?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-democracy-jeff-flake-senate_20181213_story&utm_term=.27ba0f2364d0)

P.O. Abioje. “Critical prophecy and political leadership in biblical, African and Islamic worldviews.”

## Interesting website

- Prophets today
- [http://www.micahaustralia.org/prophets\\_today](http://www.micahaustralia.org/prophets_today)