

The Northern Prophets

1- Some background info: [North and South mentality](#).

The political wound caused by the civil war after the death of Saul injected the North-South mentality in Israel. When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam became King, the people sent Jeroboam to the new king asking to be relieved from the burden of heavy taxation and force labour.

People felt insulted by the king when he indicated that he will be more demanding than his father.

The north and south ideology took its full effect: [The northern tribes crown Jeroboam as king of Israel \(North\) then Rehoboam controlled Judah and Benjamin South](#)). 1Kg 11

Samaria became the capital of North and Jerusalem remained the capital of Judah.

[There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam](#). 1 Kg 14:30

The political divide has impacted the religious life of the north and the south. [The northern king could hardly allow his subjects to go to the annual festivals at Jerusalem, and that led to the creation of their own worship shrines in Dan and Bethel](#).

The North fell in Syncretism by mixing the Yahweh worship with Canaanite idol worship.

The North kept decaying after Jeroboam and the high of their religious prostitution was under Ahab who married a remarkably evil foreign wife name Jezebel.

The description of Ahab in the Bible was is extreme:

There was never a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife 1 Kg. 21:25

Application: choose your relationships carefully.

Against this this evil couple and the sin in the North, God sent some powerful prophets. Some prophecies were written (Amos, Hosea), some were spoken oracles (Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Ahijah, unnamed prophet)

2- Uniqueness of Israel's prophets:

Medium of direct communication between God and humans Ex. 7:1

Prophecy was not to be accepted uncritically! Dt. 13:1-5

Biblical prophecies are not simply prognosticating the future or visionary ecstasies. The predictive elements in prophecies were to call people to repentance rather than describing some precisely dated events or incidents. Their warnings of coming disaster were motivated by the pursuit of ethics, not curiosity.

The tests of legitimate prophecy were: alignment with the Torah, not signs and wonders (Dt. 13:1-11)

Accuracy of prediction (Dt. 18:20-22; 1 Kg. 22:28)

3- Non-written prophets to the North:

Elijah confronted Ahab and Jezebel in various occasions:

He imposed 3 years of drought 1Kg17: 1 ff

He challenged Ahab and the prophets of Baal at mount Carmel that resulted in the killing of the false prophets. 1 Kg 18: 1 ff

The ministry of Elijah of calling to restore the balance of moral power within the nation became the standard of what it is to be a prophet.

Application: what is prophetic voice in our communities today? Pray for today's prophets

During Elijah period, another prophet named Micaiah was also confronting Ahab and even predicting his death in a battle 1 Kg. 22: 13 ff.

Elisha who was a disciple of Elijah continued the prophetic ministry after Elijah was miraculously taken up from earth .1Kg 19: 19-21.

Elisha was also a powerful prophet like Elijah. Some of his miracles were:

The unending supply of oil for a certain widow 2 Kg 4: 1-7

The raising of the Shunamite's son from death.2 Kg 4: 32-37

The healing of Naaman 2Kg 5:1ff.

It is under Elisha that Jehu was anointed king and Jehu wiped out the family of Ahab as predicted by Elijah. 2Kg 9

Beside these prophets, there is a mention of an unnamed prophet in 1 Kg 13:11 ff and Ahijah 1 Kg 14: 1 ff

4- The Written Prophets

In the 8th century BC the prophetic ministry became written oracles or sermons. Their compositions were often poetic, addressing social, political, and religious issues and their warnings of disaster were motivated by ethics, not curiosity.

The primary concern of the written prophecies was the moral consequences of covenant breaking. Their oracles often begin with the formula, "Thus says Yahweh...," indicating that their authority was from him.

Amos and Hosea

- A) Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. He preached against the sins of Israel's neighbours as well as condemning the social injustice of Israel. Amos 1-2

The ruling class was living in luxury while the poor were abused (Am. 4:1-3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6)

Amos used the imagery of the **plumb line** to show how the nation drifted away from God laws (Am. 7:7-9).

He described Israel as a **basket of ripe fruit**, ripe for judgment Am. 8:1-3. Though Israel will not escape exile for breaking the covenant, he ended his prophecy with a promise of restoration in the future. Am. 9

B) Hosea was another written prophet to the northern nation. He had a long ministry under several kings Ho. 1:1. **His own life was a living message of his prophecy.**

Yahweh commanded him to marry a prostitute, who was unfaithful to him and had illegitimate children who had special names because the names had prophetic meanings: Jezreel, No Mercy, No my people. Ho.1:3-11.

This marriage was to show that Israel was like a prostitute in her relationship to God, **she prostitutes herself with the gods and goddesses of the Canaanites.** Ho.2.

As Hosea's wife broke marriage covenant, Israel broke covenant with Yahweh.

The people of God were unfaithful to the covenantal love of God. Ho. 4:1ff.

Hosea also condemned dishonesty, religious perversion and crimes that filled the land.

As Hosea graciously bought his prostitute wife back from slavery **Yahweh will restore Israel back to the covenant relationship after the judgement.** (Ho. 3)

Application: God wants our life to be a living example of his message to the world. Are you willing to let him?