

3. Prophets and Prophecy - Nevi'im

(Source: <http://www.jewfaq.org/prophet.htm>)

Who are the Prophets of the Jewish Scriptures?

The following list of prophets is based on the Talmud and Rashi.

Male Prophets

Abraham	Gen 11:26 - 25:10
Isaac	Gen 21:1 - 35:29
Jacob	Gen 25:21 - 49:33
Moses	Ex. 2:1 - Deut. 34:5
Aaron	Ex. 4:14 - Num. 33:39
Joshua	Ex. 17:9 - 14, 24:13, 32:17 - 18, 33:11; Num. 11:28 - 29, 13:4 - 14:38; 27:18 - 27:23, Deut. 1:38, 3:28, 31:3, 31:7 - Joshua 24:29
Pinchas	Ex. 6:25; Num. 25:7-25:11; Num. 31:6; Josh. 22:13 - Josh. 24:33; Judges 20:28
Elkanah	I Samuel 1:1 - 2:20
Eli	I Samuel 1:9 - 4:18
Samuel	I Samuel 1:1 - I Samuel 25:1
Gad	I Sam 22:5; II Sam 24:11-19; I Chron 21:9-21:19, 29:29
Nathan	II Sam 7:2 - 17; 12:1 - 25.
David	I Sam 16:1 - I Kings 2:11
Solomon	II Sam 12:24; 1 Kings 1:10 - 11:43
Iddo	II Chron 9:29, 12:15, 13:22
Michaiah son of Imlah	I Kings 22:8-28; II Chron 18:7-27
Obadiah	I Kings 18; Obadiah
Ahiyah the Shilonite	I Kings 11:29-30; 12:15; 14:2-18; 15:29
Jehu son of Hanani	I Kings 16:1 - 7; II Chron 19:2; 20:34
Azariah son of Oded	II Chron 15
Jahaziel the Levite	II Chron 20:14
Eliezer son of Dodavahu	II Chron 20:37
Hosea	Hosea

Amos	Amos
Micah the Morashtite	Micah
Amoz	(the father of Isaiah)
Elijah	I Kings 17:1 - 21:29; II Kings 1:10-2:15, 9:36-37, 10:10, 10:17
Elisha	I Kings 19:16-19; II Kings 2:1-13:21
Jonah ben Amittai	Jonah
Isaiah	Isaiah
Joel	Joel
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah
Uriah	Jeremiah 26:20-23
Jeremiah	Jeremiah
Ezekiel	Ezekiel
Shemaiah	I Kings 12:22-24; II Chron 11:2-4, 12:5-15
Barukh	Jeremiah 32, 36, 43, 45
Neriah	(father of Barukh)
Seraiah	Jeremiah 51:61-64
Mehseiah	(father of Neriah)
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi
Mordecai Bilshan	Esther
Oded	(father of Azariah)
Hanani	(father of Jehu)

Female Prophets

Sarah	Gen 11:29 - 23:20
Miriam	Ex. 15:20-21; Num. 12:1-12:15, 20:1

Deborah	Judges 4:1 - 5:31
Hannah	I Sam 1:1 - 2:21
Abigail	I Sam 25:1 - 25:42
Huldah	II Kings 22:14-20
Esther	Esther

What is a Prophet?

Many people today think of a prophet as any person who sees the future. While the gift of prophecy certainly includes the ability to see the future, a prophet is far more than just a person with that ability.

A prophet is basically a spokesman for G-d, a person chosen by G-d to speak to people on G-d's behalf and convey a message or teaching. Prophets were role models of holiness, scholarship and closeness to G-d. They set the standards for the entire community.

The Hebrew word for a prophet, navi (Nun-Beit-Yod-Alef) comes from the term niv sefatayim meaning "fruit of the lips," which emphasizes the prophet's role as a speaker.

The Talmud teaches that there were hundreds of thousands of prophets: twice as many as the number of people who left Egypt, which was 600,000. But most of the prophets conveyed messages that were intended solely for their own generation and were not reported in scripture. Scripture identifies only 55 prophets of Israel.

A prophet is not necessarily a man. Scripture records the stories of seven female prophets, listed below, and the Talmud reports that Sarah's prophetic ability was superior to Abraham's.

A prophet is not necessarily a Jew. The Talmud reports that there were prophets among the gentiles (most notably Balaam, whose story is told in Numbers 22), although they were not as elevated as the prophets of Israel (as the story of Balaam demonstrates). And some of the prophets, such as Jonah, were sent on missions to speak to the gentiles.

According to some views, prophecy is not a gift that is arbitrarily conferred upon people; rather, it is the culmination of a person's spiritual and ethical development. When a person reaches a sufficient level of spiritual and ethical achievement, the Shechinah (Divine Spirit) comes to rest upon him or her. Likewise, the gift of prophecy leaves the person if that person lapses from his or her spiritual and ethical perfection.

The greatest of the prophets was Moses. It is said that Moses saw all that all of the other prophets combined saw, and more. Moses saw the whole of the Torah, including the Prophets and the Writings that were written hundreds of years later. All subsequent prophecy was merely an expression of what Moses had already seen. Thus, it is taught that nothing in the Prophets or the Writings can be in conflict with Moses' writings, because Moses saw it all in advance.

The Talmud states that the writings of the prophets will not be necessary in the World to Come, because in that day, all people will be mentally, spiritually and ethically perfect, and all will have the gift of prophecy.

Why is Daniel Not a Prophet?

I am often asked why the Book of Daniel is included in the Writings section of the Tanakh instead of the Prophets section. Wasn't Daniel a prophet? Weren't his visions of the future true?

According to Judaism, Daniel is not one of the 55 prophets. His writings include visions of the future, which we believe to be true; however, his mission was not that of a prophet. His visions of the future were never intended to be proclaimed to the people; they were designed to be written down for future generations. Thus, they are Writings, not Prophecies, and are classified accordingly.