

Sparks

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Rosh Yeshiva, Orayta

The Prophet Powered Life

“I (G-d) will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto you (Moses); and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. 18: 18)

Through using methods such as meditation and music, the prophets of ancient Israel were able to induce altered states of consciousness in which they experienced a direct revelation from G-d. Sometimes they received a message for the entire world.

When such messages had eternal significance, they were recorded and later incorporated into the Hebrew Bible. Only fifteen prophets' revelations are included, with another dozen or so prophets mentioned by name in the various Biblical books. The Talmud, however, tells us that there were as many prophets in ancient Israel as Israelites who came out of Egypt during the Exodus, in other words, approximately three million.

The Talmud also tells us that after the Temple was destroyed, the period of prophecy ended. Today we are able to experience Divine inspiration, but not actual prophecy.

Divine inspiration is only a general message of guidance unlike prophecy which was a specific message of clear direction.

Prophetic revelation is the exact opposite of what we do when we seek an experience of G-d -- which characterizes so much of the spiritual quest in our time. When we seek the vision of G-d, G-d is the object. In revelation, G-d is the subject; which means that G-d can tell a prophet something he does not want to hear.

The prime example of this is the Book of Jonah. G-d told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and Jonah headed as fast as he could in the opposite direction, because he had major objections to preaching to the sinners of Nineveh. (That's why he ended up in the belly of that big fish.)

In contrast to a prophet, today's seekers of G-d perceive themselves as the subject, and their search will never take them beyond their own will or preferences.

Revelation, however, is given knowledge. It is knowledge that guides us in our world based on G-d's perspective. Revelation begins where human experience ends. Experience can take me only to the outer limits of my own perspective. Revelation is information bestowed from a higher perspective.

The Torah claims that G-d revealed Himself to the entire Israelite people at Mt. Sinai. The commandments, or guiding instructions of the Torah, can never make complete sense from a human perspective, because the very definition of revelation is knowledge bestowed from a Divine perspective.

To give a simple metaphor, revelation is like the traffic station on the radio. You are driving down route 83, and you wonder which is the quickest route to your destination. Is there a traffic jam ahead? Should you get off at the next exit and take an alternative route? Or take your chances with the traffic lights on the main thoroughfare? There is really no way for you to know; you cannot possibly see the next two miles of roadway. But the traffic helicopter hovering overhead sees everything. From its perspective, all the highways and traffic patterns are perfectly visible. So you tune into the traffic station, and you hear the clear message: "Traffic jam on route 83 between Kilmer and Havington. If you're traveling north, exit at route 144." Even the most deluxe, state-of-the-art automobile can never know what the helicopter knows, unless the helicopter communicates to it. That is revelation.

Although revelation is information given to human beings from a higher perspective, the content of the revelation is still expressed in human terminology. Thus, when the Israelites experienced G-d directly at the splitting of the Red Sea, they saw Him as a warrior. At the revelation at Sinai, they experienced G-d as a wise sage. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of G-d and saw the celestial chariot and throne. What is all this about? Had they made the mistake of seeing G-d as an object?

Not at all. Prophetic revelation comes in the form of transcendental messages, which the human mind translates into images. Have you ever listened to a symphony lying down on the couch with your eyes closed? Sometimes as you listen to the music, your mind's eye sees visual images. A certain airy section of flute or violin may conjure up in your mind the image of a butterfly. Turbulent sounds may invoke the image of a storm. Although your mind is translating the sounds into pictures, you know that neither the butterfly nor the storm is an actual picture of the sounds you are hearing. So, too, in revelation, the prophetic experience is translated into a picture, but the picture is no more a picture of G-d than the butterfly is a picture of those musical sounds.

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