

CHAPTER 4: THE PROPHETIC EXPERIENCE □ PARAGRAPH 7-8

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Other things could have gone awry, too. A prophet might have misinterpreted a nuance or two of what had been revealed to him, or he might have understood something that could be taken two ways, the *wrong* way.

Another way things could have been misinterpreted was based on the fact that revelations involved two things: the point being made, and the words (or acts) used to express it.

Now, some revelations were straightforward and could thus be said outright without regard to terminology. But some others were more symbolic, replete with meaning, and were meant to speak to the generations. So the terms used to express them counted very, very much. The prophecies of the better-known prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others of that caliber fit into that category.

Still-and-all, though, each prophet was an individual with his own style, tone, thrust and the like, so each expressed the ideas behind his revelations his own way. Hence, they were sometimes misunderstood.

Othertimes certain arcane acts were to be carried out by the prophet in conjunction with his message. Jeremiah, for example, was instructed to wear a linen belt at one point when he addressed the people (see Jeremiah 13), and to place a yoke about his neck another time (see Jeremiah 27); Ezekiel was told to trace a map of Jerusalem on a brick at a particular moment (see Ezekiel 4), etc.

Rather than only make some sort of intellectual, emotional, and visual impression upon their onlookers (which they did nonetheless) -- these acts were also meant to effect specific far-reaching change in the transcendent forces. Hence they weren't mere "symbols" of this or that, as is commonly thought. They were in fact complex mechanisms of changes in heaven and in earth. But they, too, could be misunderstood.

This series is dedicated to the memory of Yitzchak Hehrsh ben Daniel, and Sarah Rivka bas Yaakov Dovid.

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