

# EIGHT CHAPTERS □ CHAPTER 7:1

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

We're about to discuss what differentiated one prophet from another, and what set Moses apart from the lot of them. And we're going to do that in order to further explore the role that character plays in everyone's make-up -- even those of us on such lofty perches. But while Rambam doesn't delve into it in this work, it's important for us to see just how he explained what prophecy is, how someone came to assume that role, the place prophecy assumed in the Jewish Tradition, and more at this point.

For while Rambam did indeed discuss prophecy in the introduction to this work, and we ourselves raised a few tenuous questions about it there, we'll now need to discuss it in more detail.

As we'd pointed out, most people have heard of certain prophets aside from Moses, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah; and many are even familiar with some of their more famous statements. Many have been enthralled by the spiritual heights the prophets undoubtedly reached when they declared for example, "I saw the L-rd sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each with six wings ... and one cried to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the L-rd of hosts: the whole earth is full of His Glory" (Isaiah 6:1-3); "The L-rd of hosts will prepare for all the peoples a feast (in the end of days) ... and will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all the people, and the veil that is spread over all the nations. For He will destroy death for ever; the L-rd G-d will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:6-8); "The word of the L-rd came to Ezekiel ... and the hand of the L-rd was there upon him. And I looked (Ezekiel said), and, behold, a storm wind came out of the North, a great cloud, and a fire flaring up, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst of it ... came the likeness of four living creatures .... " (Ezekiel 1:1-5), and the like.

And who could fail to be impressed by the likes of Moses, to whom "G-d spoke ... face to face as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11)?

In fact, we're told that there were many hundreds of thousands of prophets in the course of ancient Jewish history, both male and female. So, what sort of mortal could achieve such heights? And what would he or she had to have done to come to that? Let's see.

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