

EIGHT CHAPTERS □ CHAPTER 7:2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

First off, it's vitally important to know that belief in the fact of prophecy is fundamental to the Jewish Faith. After all, if we don't believe that humans are capable of communing with G-d and deciphering His intentions as the prophets did, then we obviously can't accept the veracity of the Torah which is rooted in prophecy and is the bedrock of Judaism.

And so we believe that the prophets were able to ascend upward and to then dwell in G-d's Presence (in ways we'll discuss later on), which would then enable them to descend back downward and impart G-d's intentions to us. While they could very well have done as much for their own spiritual edification or for the sake of other peoples' growth and betterment, which they did do often enough, nonetheless that wasn't their primary role. The prophets were to prophesy to the Jewish people of their times and of the ages.

It's also important to realize that prophets served as vital links in the transmission of the Oral Tradition, as they were scholars as well. In fact, the belief in the prophets' scholarliness was one of the things that set our understanding of prophecy apart from others'. For while other faiths believed in the reality of prophecy, among other things they held that anyone essentially good could be granted it out of the blue. We contend though that a person needed to be far more than just essentially good.

Aside from being wise and learned, prophets needed to be even-tempered, healthy, idealistic, full of faith, and abstinent. They had to be of sound mind and imaginative, to have meditated on the secrets of the universe and of G-d, and they were to have been unaffected by thoughts of power, influence, honor, and esteem. So it's clear that they were exemplary people; but they weren't perfect, as we'll see.

Now, it's also important to know that there were degrees of prophecy, and that there was a prophetic process and protocol to follow.

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