

Did Prophecy Continue after the Prophets of the Bible? Is There Prophecy Today?

1. Not Really, and Maybe That's Good!

Talmud Yerushalmi, Berakhot 1:7/3b (= Avodah Zarah 2:7/41c)

<p>Rabbi Hananya, son of Rav Adda, in the name of Rabbi Tanhum, son of Rabbi Hiyya:</p> <p>The statements of Elders are weightier than the statements of Prophets, as is written, “Don’t preach! they preach; ‘Don’t preach like that; shame does not come near’”, (Mikha 2:6), and it’s written, “I’ll preach to you in favor of wine and liquor!” (<i>ibid.</i>, 11).</p> <p>A prophet and an elder: to what may they be compared? To a king who sends his two negotiators into the city. About one of them, he writes, “If he does not show you my seal and my signet, do not believe him”, and about one of them he writes, “Even if he does not show you my seal, believe him, without seal and without signet.” As such, about the prophet, it is written, “Should there arise in your midst a prophet or dreamer of dreams, he should give you a sign or a portent” (Devarim 13:2), but here, “According to the Torah that they teach you” (<i>ibid.</i>, 17:11).</p>	<p>רבי חנניה בריה דרב אדא בשם רבי תנחום ברבי חייה: חמורין דברי זקנים מדברי נביאים דכתיב, "אַל תִּטְפוּ יִטִּפוּן לֹא יִטְפוּ לְאֵלֶּה לֹא יִסַּג כְּלָמוֹת" (מיכה ב:ו), וכתבי, "אַטְף לְךָ לַיִן וְלִשְׁכָר" (שם, יא). נביא וזקן למה הן דומין? למלך ששילח שני פלמטרין שלו למדינה. על אחד מהן כתב, "אם אינו מראה לכם חותם שלי וסימנטירין שלי אל תאמינו לו", ועל אחד מהן כתב, "אף על פי שאינו מראה לכם חותם שלי, האמינוהו בלא חותם ובלא סימנטירין." כך בנביא כתיב, "[כִּי יִקֹּוּם בְּקִרְבְּךָ נְבִיא או חֵלֶם חֲלוֹם] וְנָתַן אֵלֶיךָ אוֹת או מוֹפֵת" (דברים יג:ב), ברם הכא, "עַל פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹרֶךְ" [שם, יז:יא].</p>
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Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995, Kovno, Lithuania; Paris, France)

"Loving the Torah More than God", in *Difficult Freedom* (1963 in French; 1990 in Sean Hand's English Translation)

The God Who hides His face and is recognized as being present and intimate...is this really possible?....Here I believe we see the specific face of Judaism: the link between God and man is not an emotional communion that takes place within the love of a God incarnate, but a spiritual or intellectual [*esprits*] relationship which takes place through an education in the Torah. It is precisely a word, not incarnate, from God that ensures a living God among us.....

Spirituality is offered up not through a tangible substance, but through absence. God is real and concrete not through incarnation but through Law, and His greatness is not inspired by His sacred mystery. His greatness does not provoke fear and trembling, but fills us with high thoughts. To hide one's face so as to demand the superhuman of man, to create a man who can approach God and speak to Him without always being in His debt—that is a truly divine mark of greatness!

2. Yes, Definitely!

I. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 12b

א"ר יוחנן מיום שחרב בית המקדש ניטלה נבואה מן הנביאים וניתנה לשוטים ולתינוקות

Rabbi Yochanan said: "After the destruction of the Holy Temple the power of prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the mentally ill and to children."

II. Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 9b

אמר רבי אבא בת קול כדתניא משמתו נביאים האחרונים חגי זכריה ומלאכי נסתלקה רוח הקדש מישראל ועדיין היו משתמשין בבת קול

Rabbi Abba said: Just as little remains from a cedar tree infested by this worm, similarly, all that remained from the Divine Presence during the Second Temple period was a **Divine Voice, as it was taught: After the last prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) departed from Israel and still they use the Bat Kol.**

III. Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 5b

ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא אמר רבא אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אף על פי שהסתרתי פני מהם בחלום אדבר בו

With regard to the verse: "And I will hide my face in that day" (Deuteronomy 31:18), Rava said that the Holy One, Blessed be, said: Even though I hid my face from them and My Divine Presence is not revealed, nevertheless: "I speak with them in a dream" (Numbers 12:6).

IV. Rav Hai Gaon (939-1030, b. Babylonia; died in Pumbedita, Iraq) as quoted by R. Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel in Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets

Among the earlier sages, it was assumed that the Holy One, blessed Be, could work wonders through the saints, as God had through the prophets. God granted them awesome visions just as God had granted visions to the prophets.

V. Zohar 2:130b (as quoted by Dr. Melilla Hellner-Eshed in A River Flows From Eden)

Through six degrees of prophecy (did God) speak to the prophets: *mahazeh, hazon, hezyon, hazut, davar and massa*. The five are all like one who sees a light shining behind a wall, and some of them are like one who sees the light of the sun through a lantern. But *massa*, burden, is when that light reaches him with great difficulty, and the word is difficult for him and is barely revealed...and here *Massah Dumah (the pronouncement/burden of silence); he calls to me from Seir* (Isaiah 21:11).

Massah Dumah-- a great burden that cannot be revealed; and this is a prophecy in a whisper and abides in a whisper.

VI. Grace Paley (1922-2007)

It is the responsibility of society to let the poet be a poet

It is the responsibility of the poet to be a woman
It is the responsibility of the poet to stand on street corners
giving out poems and beautifully written leaflets
also leaflets you can hardly bear to look at
because of the screaming rhetoric
It is the responsibility of the poet to be lazy
to hang out and prophesy
It is the responsibility of the poet not to pay war taxes
It is the responsibility of the poet to go in and out of ivory
towers and two-room apartments on Avenue C
and buckwheat fields and army camps
It is the responsibility of the male poet to be a woman
It is the responsibility of the female poet to be a woman
It is the poet's responsibility to speak truth to power as the
Quakers say
It is the poet's responsibility to learn the truth from the
powerless
It is the responsibility of the poet to say many times: there is no
freedom without justice and this means economic
justice and love justice
It is the responsibility of the poet to sing this in all the original
and traditional tunes of singing and telling poems
It is the responsibility of the poet to listen to gossip and pass it on in the way storytellers
decant the story of life
There is no freedom without fear and bravery there is no
freedom unless
earth and air and water continue and children
also continue
It is the responsibility of the poet to be a woman to keep an eye on
this world and cry out like Cassandra, but be
listened to this time.