



Prophet Ministry Training Series

A training tool for understanding the Prophet's Ministry and preparation
for responding to the Prophetic call.

Prophetic Ministry Study Outline

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- The First Prophets
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- Prophet Samuel
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- Prophet to the Congregation
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Training Module Two

The Era of Prophets: Samuel, Elijah, Elisha

Overview

And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

– I Samuel 3:1

Prophecy was considered precious because there was no open vision in that season. The period after Joshua, the successor to Moses, who settled the tribes into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:2, *24:13-14), was governed by the judges. As the Hebrews settled into the land, not all the inhabitants were driven out as God commanded; small groups were allowed to remain and even pay taxes, contributing to the economy of the developing tribal nation. (Judges 1:21-36)

Their failure to remove all the naturalized occupants created an environment that commingled societal attributes, including marriage, culture, and pagan worship. The results were counterproductive to God's commandment for the Hebrews not to engage in idolatry or be influenced by the mannerisms of the inhabitants. (Deut. 4:9-15;*30:15-20;Joshua 24:15-24)

The Hebrews were found guilty of forsaking God to worship the idols of **Baal** and **Ashtaroth** (Judges 2:13-14) God did not forcibly remove the pagan inhabitants from the Hebrew population. He allowed the pagan residents to remain among them and used them as an instrument to test the veracity of the Hebrews and determine if they would choose God instead of idolatry. Five lords of the Philistines were left to reside among the Hebrew tribes and all the Canaanites, Sidonians, and Hivite nations from Mount Lebanon to Hamath. (Judges 3:1-5)

No King or permanent overseer was raised up to lead or defend the House of Israel. God raised up periodic judges to defend against the heathen enemies when necessary. The judges were also used to challenge the Hebrews to resist idolatry and worship God only; however, the call to repentance was rejected, and God's judgment was hotly turned against them. (Judges 3:7-8)

The period of judges coincided with an absence of the prophetic word for 450 years. (Acts 13:20-21) The voice of God calling a young child surrendered by his mother, Hannah, from Ramathaimzophim to live in the Temple under the guardianship of Eli the High Priest broke the years of divine silence. (I Samuel 1:28)

- 11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle.
- 12 In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.
- 13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.
- 14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.
- 15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.
- 16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here *am* I.
- 17 And he said, What *is* the thing that *the LORD* hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide *it* not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.
- 18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It *is* the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.
- 19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.
- 20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel *was* established *to be* a prophet of the LORD.

– I Samuel 3:11-20

Calling of Samuel – In his latter years, Eli the High Priest became blind, and one evening, he was unaware that the flame of the sacred lamp was extinguished, leaving the temple in darkness. Eli and Samuel were sleeping in the darkness when the young man Samuel heard a voice calling him.

He believed it was a summons from his mentor, Eli. He stood before his instructor and said, "Here am I". He was told the Priest did not summon him. After hearing the voice three consecutive times, Samuel is told if he hears the voice again to respond by saying, "*Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth*". (I Samuel 3:9)

Samuel hears God's voice again and is told that he will be used to speak to the Israelites in a way that will cause their ears to rattle with fear and shame (tingle). A long-overdue judgment would also come upon Eli's house, for the corruption and hypocrisy of his sons.

The sons of the High Priest, Hophni and Phineas, are described as not knowing the Lord. (I Samuel 2:12), and guilty of misusing their influence by corrupting the temple offerings. Both brothers sent their servants to take portions of the sacrifice on their behalf before it was presented to the Lord. (I Samuel 2:13-16)

People grew weary and resentful about bringing their temple offerings because of the abuse and threats they had to face. (I Samuel 2:17) The sons were unresponsive when Eli addressed their misconduct. A man of God appeared before Eli, warning him of pending judgment. (I Samuel 2:27)

Knowing that Samuel had an encounter with God, the high Priest asked to know the message he was given exactly as it was received. Eli was not surprised when he learned of God's judgment against himself and his sons. The priest affirmed the judgment against his house and submitted himself to whatever seemed right before God.

The name שְׁמוּאֵל *"Shmuw'el"* means *"heard by God"*, and is a fitting name for the person God chose to reset the prophetic ministry. He became known as the prophet to all Israel from the northern tribes in Dan to the southern tribes in Beersheba. As he matured prophetically, God established every word he spoke. Nothing he said representing God failed to come to pass.

- 5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where *is* the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet **a company of prophets** coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:
- 7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee.
- 10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a **company of prophets** met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.
- I Samuel 10:5,7,10

Company of Prophets – The reference in the passage identifies the first school of the prophets. The sons of Samuel are criticized in scripture for not following their father's prophetic anointing. (I Samuel 8:4) The son's failures, perhaps, explain the need for a formal training environment to perfect and preserve the prophetic ministry. The Israelites reject the leadership of Samuel's son as judges, which eventually leads to their demand for a King to judge and rule over them instead. (I Samuel 8:6)

The word company that describes the prophetic apprenticeship is the Hebrew word, "חֶבֶל" [*chet-bet-lamed*] (ha-bel), which means "measuring rope". The Hebrew word indicates the prophets' training in ministry, which was measured by the standards of their Mentor.

The man selected to replace the leadership of Joel and Abiah, Samuel's son (I Samuel 8:1), is Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite. In preparation for his ascension, Saul is instructed to locate the "company of prophets" coming down from the Hill of the Lord, Mt. Zion/Jerusalem, with instruments of worship. (I Samuel 10:5)

The prophetic anointing that resided upon the student prophets was passed on to Saul, who began to prophesy with them. Saul learned that the prophetic anointing would come upon him seasonally. The prophetic anointing would be a sign that God was with him. (I Samuel 10:7,10)

3 And the **sons of the prophets** at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace. 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5 And the **sons of the prophets** at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.
– II Kings 2:3-5

Sons of the Prophets/ Elijah – The second generation of prophets are mentored by Elijah, a legacy student of the Company of Prophets established by Samuel. The school of Elijah is formally located in Bethel, a place Jacob, the son of Isaac, identified as the “*house of God*”. (Genesis 28:18-19)

Elijah is the great prophet from Tishbite, empowered by God to speak prophetically to the elements of creation, specifically rainwater and fire. He was a prophet to the northern tribes of Israel, which placed him at odds against the idolatrous practices initiated by Jeroboam, the first king, and endorsed by all his successors, who were evil in the sight of God.

King Ahab is listed as the most corrupt in the lineage of idolatrous leaders, and his defiant wife Jezebel is his cohort. Elijah is the great adversary who stood against them. Elijah is renowned for the great showdown between himself and the prophets of Baal. The confrontation ends with fire raining down from heaven, providing evidence of the Creator's existence, and then the annihilation of all the prophets of Baal. (I Kings 18:30-40)

Prophet Elijah is the mentor to Elisha, the mentee who would assume leadership of the Sons of the Prophets and continue the legacy of prophetic training. (II Kings 2:3)

The prophetic mentor had a school in Bethel and Jericho, training young prophets who would speak into the spiritual life of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. (II Kings 2:4-5)

- 1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.
- 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said *unto him*, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.
- 3 And the **sons of the prophets that were at Bethel** came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.
- 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.
- 5 And the **sons of the prophets that were at Jericho** came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.
- 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.
- 7 And fifty men of the **sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.**
- 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.
- 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.
- 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.
- 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
- 12 And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.
- 13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;
- 14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.
- 15 And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.
- 16 And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.
- 17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.
- 18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

– II Kings 2:1-18

Sons of the Prophets / Elisha – The last generation of prophets was mentored by Elisha. His fellow mentees warned him that his teacher would be taken from him, interrupting any further training the young prophet expected to receive.

The protégé of the great Elijah was instructed to closely follow his mentor from Gilgal, just north of Samuel's original school of prophets in Ramah, to the school of prophets in Bethel and Jericho.

The trek was 178 miles, a journey of approximately 11 days on foot. He accepted the challenge and did not leave him to pursue other options or make his way. Elisha quietly accompanied (tarry) his teacher, fully aware that his time with him was limited, quickly coming to an end.

The three points in the journey have symbolic relevance. Gilgal is the cross-over point, where Joshua led the Hebrews into the land God promised them. Twelve stones were left in the Jordan River where they crossed as a monument to their commitment to put away idolatry and to serve God only. (Joshua 4:20-24) Elisha's final test began with referencing the crossover into a commitment to serve God only.

The journey continued from Gilgal to the prophetic school in Bethel, named for the "house of God". Jacob had his grand vision of the ladder between heaven and earth, which gave man access to God's presence. (Genesis 28:18-19)

The gift and ministry of the prophet are regulated by his access to God and his ability to hear Him.

The final segment of the journey brings Elisha alongside Elijah to Jericho. The city of Jericho was a symbol of an impenetrable fortress. The city walls prevented the Hebrews from continuing their journey into the Promised Land after crossing in Gilgal. God gave Joshua instructions that required unusual faith for him and the thousands of Hebrews who journeyed with him.

They were instructed to march around the city's walls one time for six days, quietly without making any sound. On the seventh day, they were told to encircle the city six times, with the Ark of the Covenant and seven priests with trumpets, without making any sound. On the seventh march around the city, the priests were to blow the trumpets, and the people were told to shout. Following the precise instructions and details they were given, the indefensible city was delivered into the hands of the Hebrews.

When Elijah and his protégé crossed over into Jericho on dry land, the prophet asked the student who precisely followed all instructions given to him what he wanted from his teacher before God would take him away.

Elisha asked for a double portion of the prophet's spirit (anointing). The great Elijah exclaimed that the request made by his student was hard, but as a final test, if Elisha could keep his eyes set on the teacher as he was taken away, the request would be granted.

The two prophets continue in conversation, and as they are talking, a chariot and horses appear in flames of fire, physically separating the mentee from the mentor. A whirlwind takes Elijah up into the heavens, and with all the interference and disruption, Elisha could maintain focus and attention on his teacher.

He watched his teacher as he was transported from the earth into the heavens, calling out to him as his father in ministry. Elisha's persistence, obedience, and focused attention were rewarded with a double portion of his mentor's anointing. Seeing Elijah, no more, Elisha tore off his clothing to assume the mantle and position vacated by his Mentor.

Elisha returns to the last place where Elijah stood. The illustration portrays how the work of ministry properly transitions and continues. Elijah and Elisha walk together, side by side, in conversation, until they are divinely separated. When physically separated, the student maintains focus on the instructor, holding fast to the viewpoints and instruction given to them. When the instructor's position is entirely relinquished, the student absorbs and assumes the place vacated by the teacher. The student becomes the teacher with an increased anointing to maintain the standards, principles, and truth passed on by the mentor.

Elisha strikes the water, proclaiming the Lord God of Elijah, and the Jordan river parts for him in the same manner it responded to the prophet he has replaced. His former classmates, the sons of the Prophet Elijah, witnessed his crossing over the Jordan.

When they approach Elisha, they bow in reverence of the anointing that rested upon him. They urge the prophet to send a survey group of fifty strong prophets to confirm that Elijah is dead and not exiled on a mountain or valley. Elisha initially rejects their request because of his eyewitness certainty of Elijah's departure, which is the reason he has a double portion of the prophet's anointing.

They pressed him on the matter, and Elisha reluctantly gave his consent. When the fifty strong men return without finding a trace of Elijah, they are reprimanded to adhere to the words spoken by God's prophet – "Did I not say...".

Study Exercise – Module Two

1. List the three names during the “*Era of Prophets*”.

2. Which prophet was mentored by a senior prophet?

3. Which prophet was directly called by God?

4. Explain the transition and continuation of ministry.

5. List the names and locations of the prophetic schools.
