

# **Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3, Prophetic Awareness and History of the Prophets**

## **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3, Prophetic Awareness, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Robert Vannoy's lecture explores the distinction between a prophet's own thoughts and the divinely inspired word they deliver. It uses biblical examples, such as Nathan, Samuel, Jonah, Jeremiah, and others to illustrate this crucial difference. **The lecture emphasizes that while God uses a prophet's individual characteristics, the message remains God's own.** The discussion extends to the history of prophets in Israel, including prophetesses and prophetic companies. **Vannoy examines the meaning and activities associated with these groups,** questioning whether the term "sons of the prophets" implied an instructional relationship or simply membership in a group with shared functions like praise, worship, and delivering messages. **The ultimate goal is to clarify how true prophecy functions within a historical and scriptural context.**

### **2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Foundations).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3, Prophetic Awareness

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's "Foundations of Prophecy, Lecture 2," focusing on the distinction between a prophet's own words and the Word of God, and the history and nature of prophets and prophetic companies.

#### Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Prophecy, Lecture 2

##### I. Main Theme: Distinguishing Between a Prophet's Words and the Word of God

- **Core Idea:** Vannoy emphasizes a crucial distinction: prophets are human instruments through whom God speaks, but their own thoughts, opinions, and actions are not automatically the Word of God. A prophet is aware of the difference.
- **Quote:** "There is a distinction between a prophet's own word and the word of God which they spoke... It's not valid to say that the prophets conveyed their own ideas and that those ideas then served as the word of God."
- **Explanation:** God uses the prophet's personality and background, but the message itself remains divine.
- **Examples: 2 Samuel 7 (David and Nathan):** Nathan initially approves David's plan to build a temple, stating "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you." However, God later tells Nathan that David is *not* to build the temple; Solomon will. This highlights Nathan's initial opinion versus God's direct command. Nathan then has to correct his own words. The article cited says, "The mistake made here was that he spoke as a man and not as a prophet, while his opinion as a prophet had been specifically asked for."
- **1 Samuel 16 (Samuel and Anointing David):** Samuel assumes Eliab is God's choice based on appearance ("Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord"), but God corrects him, stating He looks at the heart.
- **Jonah:** Jonah's personal reluctance to preach to Nineveh contrasts with the divine command he ultimately delivers.
- **Jeremiah 27-28 (Jeremiah vs. Hananiah):** Jeremiah prophesies submission to Babylon. Hananiah contradicts him, predicting Babylon's defeat. Jeremiah initially offers a mild response, stating, "Amen! May the LORD do so!" but then receives a

direct word from God condemning Hananiah as a false prophet. This demonstrates how Jeremiah had his own initial response, but then received the direct word of the Lord.

- **1 Kings 13 (Old Prophet and Man of God):** A man of God from Judah is given specific instructions by the Lord. An old prophet lies and convinces the man of God to disobey these instructions, resulting in divine punishment. This showcases the importance of obedience to God's direct word and highlights how the old prophet's *own* words were a lie, contrasting with the true word of the Lord.
- **Conclusion:** Vannoy stresses that prophets were conscious of when they were delivering a divine message versus expressing their own views. He also highlights the problem the people had in distinguishing between true and false prophets who both claimed to be speaking on behalf of God.

## II. The History of Prophets and Prophetesses

- **Coextensive History:** The prophetic tradition is as old as Israel itself, from Moses back to figures like Noah and Abraham. "From the time your forefathers left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants."
- **Prophetesses:** Women also served as prophets, including:
- **Miriam:** Called a prophetess in Exodus 15:20, leading worship and praise.
- **Deborah:** A judge and prophetess in Judges 4:4.
- **Huldah:** Consulted during Josiah's reign after the discovery of the Law Book (2 Kings 22:14), delivering a word from the Lord.
- **Isaiah's Wife:** Referred to as "the prophetess" (Isaiah 8:3), though her prophetic function is unclear.

## III. Companies of Prophets

- **Existence:** References exist to groups or "companies" of prophets, particularly during the times of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha.
- **Examples: 1 Samuel 10:5-6 (Saul):** Saul encounters a "procession" or "band" of prophets, prophesying with musical instruments. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, and he joins in their prophesying.
- **2 Kings 2-4 (Elisha):** Companies of prophets are mentioned at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal.

- **1 Samuel 19:20 (Saul):** Saul's messengers and Saul himself are overcome by the Spirit of God when they encounter a group of prophets led by Samuel, and they begin to prophesy, preventing them from capturing David. Saul even "stripped off his robe and prophesied in Samuel's presence. He laid that way all day and all that night."
- **Meaning of "Prophesying":** The Hebrew word *naba* used to describe their activities can refer to both proclaiming God's word and ecstatic states. Some interpret the prophesying as devout praising of God with music. E.J. Young: "you should be very careful to note, however, there's not a hint in this text to suggest that the prophesying was brought on by the music as though the music were a stimulant... the prophesying engaged was not a meaningless raving, but rather a devout praising of God through the accompaniment of music."
- **Function:** The exact function of these companies is unclear, but possibilities include:
  - Assistants/Disciples: Assisting figures like Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha.
  - Promoting True Religion: Promoting true religion within communities.
  - Public Praise/Worship: Leading public praise and worship.
  - Messengers: Acting as messengers in important matters.
- **"Sons of the Prophets":** Members of these companies were sometimes called *bene hanebiim* ("sons of the prophets"), which likely means "member of a group" rather than literal sons.
- **Limited Evidence of Revelation:** Only one passage (1 Kings 20:35-43) explicitly shows a member of a company of prophets delivering a specific word of divine revelation.

## 4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3, Prophetic Awareness

### Prophetic Awareness and History of Prophets: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Vannoy, what is the crucial distinction a prophet must be aware of when delivering a message?
2. In the example of David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, what was Nathan's initial response to David's desire to build a temple, and why did he later change his message?
3. How does the story of Samuel anointing David illustrate the difference between a prophet's own thoughts and the word of God?
4. In the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah, what were the opposing prophecies, and what was Jeremiah's initial response to Hananiah's prophecy?
5. What was the specific command given to the man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13, and how did the old prophet deceive him?
6. What is meant when the sources say, "History of Israel and History of the prophets are coextensive"?
7. Give an example of one of the prophetesses mentioned in the lecture and what was her role?
8. What was Saul doing when he encountered a procession of prophets?
9. What are the three references to companies of prophets in 2 Kings 2-4?
10. In 1 Kings 20:35-43, what did the prophet say to Ahab?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. A prophet must be aware of the distinction between their own thoughts, ideas, and insights and the direct word of God. They are not to proclaim their own thoughts, but to deliver the message given to them by God.
2. Nathan initially told David to "go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you," because building a temple seemed like a noble idea. He later changed his

message after receiving a direct word from the Lord, instructing David not to build the temple.

3. Samuel initially thought that Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, was the one to be anointed based on his outward appearance, but God corrected him. God told Samuel that He looks at the heart, not the outward appearance, demonstrating that Samuel's initial judgment was not in line with God's will.
4. Jeremiah prophesied that Judah should serve Nebuchadnezzar and the king of Babylon, while Hananiah prophesied that God would break the yoke of Babylon and bring back the temple articles and exiles within two years. Jeremiah's initial response was to hope that Hananiah was correct, but he remained skeptical.
5. The man of God was commanded not to eat bread, drink water, or return by the same way he came. The old prophet lied, claiming an angel told him to bring the man of God back to eat and drink at his house.
6. The history of the prophets is as old as the history of Israel itself, indicating that prophetic activity has been a constant presence throughout Israel's existence, from the time of Moses to Jeremiah, and even before that, with figures like Noah and Abraham.
7. Deborah was a prophetess and judge during the time of the Judges. It says she was leading Israel at that time.
8. Saul was out looking for his father's cattle and went to Samuel to seek information and the Lord told Samuel, "The man who comes to you is the man I have chosen king, anoint him.
9. The three references to companies of prophets in 2 Kings 2-4 are at Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), Jericho (2 Kings 2:5), and Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38).
10. The prophet condemned Ahab for setting free Ben-hadad, a Syrian ruler, whom the Lord had determined should die. The prophet said, "Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people."

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the implications of distinguishing between a prophet's own words and the word of God, using examples from the lecture to support your argument. How might this distinction affect our interpretation of prophetic texts?
2. Analyze the role and function of "companies of prophets" in ancient Israel, as presented in the lecture. What evidence supports the various proposed functions (instruction, worship, messengers), and what questions remain unanswered?
3. Compare and contrast the roles of male and female prophets (prophetesses) in the Old Testament. What conclusions can be drawn from the specific examples of women holding prophetic roles in the Hebrew Bible?
4. Examine the conflict between true and false prophets, using the example of Jeremiah and Hananiah as a case study. What criteria can be used to distinguish between genuine and deceptive prophetic claims?
5. Explore the concept of ecstatic prophecy and its relationship to the Spirit of God, drawing on the examples of Saul and the companies of prophets. How should we understand the role of music and other external factors in the prophetic experience?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Prophet:** A person who speaks on behalf of God, conveying divine messages to individuals or communities.
- **Prophecy:** The act of conveying a divine message; also, the content of the message itself.
- **Nabi:** The Hebrew word for "prophet."
- **Ecstasy:** A state of intense emotion or altered consciousness, sometimes associated with prophetic activity.
- **Anointing:** The act of consecrating someone for a special purpose, often by applying oil.
- **False Prophet:** An individual who falsely claims to speak for God, delivering messages that are not divinely inspired or are intentionally deceptive.
- **Word of the Lord:** The direct communication or message from God, as delivered by a prophet.
- **Companies of Prophets:** Groups or bands of individuals associated with prophets, possibly serving as assistants, disciples, or participants in prophetic activities.
- **Prophetess:** A female prophet.
- ***Bene hanebiim:*** Hebrew term translated as "sons of the prophets."



## 5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 2, Session 3, Prophetic Awareness, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided lecture excerpts:

### 1. What is the crucial distinction that prophets were aware of, according to the lecture?

The crucial distinction is between a prophet's own thoughts, ideas, or opinions and the actual word of God that they spoke. Prophets were not simply conveying their personal insights; they were delivering a message directly from God, and they were conscious of the difference. God uses the prophet's personality, background, and temperament in the delivery of His Word, but it remains God's Word.

### 2. Can you provide examples from the lecture where a prophet's initial thoughts differed from God's message?

- **Nathan and David (2 Samuel 7):** Nathan initially approved David's plan to build a temple, saying, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you." However, God later told Nathan to inform David that he was not the one to build the temple; his son Solomon would.
- **Samuel anointing David (1 Samuel 16):** Samuel initially thought Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, was God's chosen one based on his appearance. God corrected him, stating that He looks at the heart, not outward appearance, and ultimately chose David.
- **Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jeremiah 27-28):** Jeremiah initially hoped Hananiah was right, but later received a specific word from the Lord that Hananiah was a false prophet.

### 3. How does the story of Jonah illustrate the difference between a prophet's own ideas and the word of God?

Jonah initially disagreed with God's message to Nineveh and tried to avoid delivering it. Had he proclaimed his own message, it would have differed significantly from the divine word he was ultimately called to deliver. His resistance highlights the distinction between personal inclination and divine command.

**4. How did Jeremiah respond to the false prophet Hananiah, and what does this illustrate about prophetic discernment?**

Initially, Jeremiah responded to Hananiah's opposing prophecy with a degree of open-mindedness, hoping Hananiah's message of peace might be true. However, after receiving a direct word from the Lord, Jeremiah condemned Hananiah as a false prophet. This illustrates that true prophetic discernment involves recognizing when one is speaking from personal hope versus when one is conveying a direct, authoritative word from God.

**5. Explain the story of the Old Prophet and the Man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13 and its significance.**

A man of God from Judah was given specific instructions by the Lord not to eat or drink in Bethel. An old prophet lied to him, claiming an angel instructed him to bring the man of God back to his house for food and water. The man of God disobeyed God's command and was later condemned by the Lord. This demonstrates that even after receiving a clear word from God, one can be deceived, and obedience to God's explicit instructions is paramount. It also highlights that prophets can lie and thus it is important to discern truth from fiction.

**6. Were there female prophets (prophetesses) in ancient Israel, and who were some examples?**

Yes, there were prophetesses in ancient Israel. Examples include:

- **Miriam:** Referred to as a prophetess in Exodus 15:20.
- **Deborah:** A prophetess and judge in Judges 4:4.
- **Huldah:** A prophetess consulted during the reign of Josiah in 2 Kings 22:14.
- **Isaiah's wife:** Referred to as "the prophetess" in Isaiah 8:3, although it's debated whether she held the title because of her own prophetic functions or solely by virtue of being Isaiah's wife.

**7. What were the "companies of prophets," and what was their function?**

Companies of prophets were groups or bands of individuals associated with prominent prophets like Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. Their exact function isn't entirely clear, but they may have served as assistants, disciples, or messengers promoting true religion. They are sometimes described as engaging in ecstatic praise and worship, often accompanied by music. Only one instance in the excerpt describes a prophet from one of these companies giving a word from the Lord.

**8. What does the lecture suggest about the meaning of the Hebrew word "naba" (to prophesy) in the context of these prophetic companies?**

The lecture notes that "naba" can have a range of meanings, including prophesying in an ecstatic state. In some instances, particularly concerning the companies of prophets, the term may refer to a state of prophetic frenzy or ecstatic praise, possibly accompanied by music, rather than necessarily delivering specific oracles. The Spirit of God comes upon prophets and gives them the ability to praise God.