# God's Own Mouthpieces

Edited by HEIKO SCHULZ

Religiöse Dynamiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart

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**Mohr Siebeck** 

## Religiöse Dynamiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart Religious Dynamics – Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

herausgegeben von Orit Baskin, Yossef Schwartz und Christian Wiese

> Hauptherausgeber Christian Wiese

Wissenschaftlicher Beirat

Mayte Green-Mercado, Katharina Heyden, Karma Ben Johanan, Iris Idelsohn-Shein, Volkhard Krech, Isabelle Mandrella Walid A Saleh, Heather J. Sharkey





# God's Own Mouthpieces

### Prophecy and Reason in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

edited by Heiko Schulz

Mohr Siebeck

Heiko Schulz, born 1959; 1992 PhD; Professor for Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Goethe-University Frankfurt

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#### Introduction

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T.

1. The idea of a prophet and the institution of prophecy are central tenets and as such virtually omnipresent in religious theory and practice throughout the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are no exceptions here: prophetic writings take up a large part of the Hebrew Bible, including numerous references to prophetic figures (Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah¹ etc.); prophecy is a frequent theme in the New Testament,² and, according to Islam, the *Qur'an* was verbally revealed by Allah to Muhammad, his final and unsurpassable prophet.

Now, what a prophet is and does is, according to the three Abrahamic religions in any case, determined by the specific function he (or sometimes also: she) is supposed to fulfill within the religious community to which he belongs: he serves as a translator, interpreter and messenger of God's word and will, as they are revealed to him – a function, which is considered indispensable by the community, due to the fact that God cannot directly be perceived, much less grasped or properly understood by human beings, but instead must be represented and rendered accessible for faith by special individuals serving as a 'mouthpiece for God.'<sup>3</sup> Hence, prophets can, first, be *defined* as divinely inspired and inspiring individuals, occasionally also communities who act as God's spokesperson. Secondly, prophets have a particular *function*, task and mission: they are supposed to 'put words' in the mouths of the members of their community, so as to enable others who, in and through them, also have a share in the divine truth. Third, regarding the *conditions* of being and becoming a prophet, the latter appears as having been appointed, chosen and summoned

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Here and in the following I draw on and partly reuse the opening passage of my own article in the present volume plus my summary of Jean-Pierre Fortin's argument (cf. II. below). For a comprehensive account of the phenomenon of prophecy and the history of prophetic figures within the Ancient Near East and the entire Judaeo-Christian context, see Carolyn J. Sharp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). For further bibliographical information cf. the two articles mentioned above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> And despite being primarily proclaimed as Messiah even Jesus himself is occasionally called prophet in the NT: cf., for instance, Acts 7:37.

 $<sup>^3\,</sup>$  Cf. Micaiah ben Jimla's paradigmatic statement in 2 Chr 18:13: "As Yahweh lives, I speak exactly as Yahweh tells me!"

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by God, so that from a human (first and third person-perspective) the prophetic ministry appears to be the result of a life changing mystical encounter with the divine. Fourth and *content*-wise the prophet's primary and also (eschatologically) ultimate – though by no means exclusive – mandate is to bring a message of hope, promise and healing to his recipients.

2. Interestingly enough, scholars in the past have rarely appreciated and addressed the significance of prophecy as a topic beyond mere historical, theological and/or sociological, but also of genuinely philosophical interest, so that, as of yet, there exists no established field of inquiry. *If* philosophers paid attention to the phenomenon at all they mostly treated it as a special case of the problem of God's foreknowledge; accordingly, they restricted their attention to three consecutive – and considered increasingly complicated – steps of one and the same epistemological core-idea: knowledge of future contingents *simpliciter*; *God's* knowledge of future contingents as being mediated by *prophetic messages*. Exceptions to the rule exist, but they are far between and hard to come by. <sup>5</sup>

Now, it is precisely with some philosophical issues *beyond* this basic orientation that the thematical profile and overall goal of the present volume come into focus. Accordingly, the research-workshop, from which the latter originated (cf. III.), set out to answer *two* groups of questions, first, *historical* ones like the following:

- Where and when did the phenomenon of prophecy originate (in particular: within the Ancient Near Eastern context)?
- Which notion of the latter allows for, informs and determines such identification?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Davison's otherwise excellent article is a case in point; he explains: "Whereas the more general question about God's foreknowledge typically involves just God's knowledge and the future contingent event, the problem of prophecy involves a third element, namely, the prophecy itself, which becomes a part of the past history of the world as soon as it is made. This additional element adds an interesting twist to the general problem, making it more difficult to solve." Scott A. Davison, "Prophecy," in: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/prophecy, 2018 (last visited: May 1, 2020). As for other accounts of (prophecy and) divine foreknowledge see, for instance Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Prophecy, Past Truth, and Eternity," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), 395–424; Eleonore Stump, Georg Gasser, and Johannes Grössl (eds.), *Göttliches Vorherwissen und menschliche Freiheit. Beiträge aus der aktuellen analytischen Religionsphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015). Cf. also Johannes Grössl's article in the present volume.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Peter Geach and Elisabeth Anscombe come to mind: cf. Peter T. Geach, "Prophecy," in idem, *Truth and Hope* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 79–90; G. Elisabeth M. Anscombe, "Prophecy and Miracles," in eadem, *Faith in a Hard Ground: Essays on Religion, Philosophy and Ethics*, eds. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008), 20–39.

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- Which were the initial forms or types of prophecy and what kind/s of variation (oral/scriptural; non-institutional/institutional; non-cultish/cultish) developed over time?
- Which major goal/s and function/s were assigned to prophetic practice/s especially within Judaism, Christianity and Islam?
- When and where did (and who made) this happen, in the interest of whom?
- Are there traces of explicit 'prophetologies' (utilizing at least some of the previous categories) to be found – and if so: where, established by whom and under which historical circumstances?
- What are the major themes and issues discussed in these prophetologies?
- Which trajectories of perhaps: mutual? influence can be found and described within different prophetic cultures and practices in particular, regarding the historical dynamics in the development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam?
- Are there any significant (Jewish, Christian and/or Islamic) philosophers or theologians who assign/ed the theme of prophecy a major place in their writings and overall thinking – and if so, who and in which way? Etc.

It goes without saying that none of the aforementioned questions has been dealt with exhaustively in the present volume; rather, most (or more precisely: most historically oriented) articles address them in a highly selective, yet hopefully also exemplary way. Moreover, something analogous can be said and must be admitted beforehand about the second group of questions pertaining to (some of) the more pressing *systematical* issues concerning the prophecy-theme, for instance:

- Can the concept of prophecy (and/or prophet) be construed in a coherent way and if so, which of its properties have to be considered essential?
- Is the notion of 'prophetic reason' or 'prophetic rationality' internally consistent and how does it relate to its non- or pre-prophetic sibling?
- Are there (at least possible) pieces of evidence available, which suggest that there have ever been (currently are or prospectively will be) prophets who actually possess the ontological and epistemic properties just mentioned?
- If so, does the majority of evidence presented so far stem from either Jewish,
   Christian or Islamic tradition/s and regardless of whether or not: how,
   then, is its persuasiveness to be adjudicated?
- Is it possible and if so, how clearly to distinguish between true and false prophecy?
- How would a theologically informed and appropriate account of prophecy look like?
- Which religious, ethical and/or political problems does the facticity at any rate: the imagined facticity – of a prophet give rise to, both for the latter himself and for his or her receipients or addressees? Etc.

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3. A final remark before the articles to follow will briefly be summarized: some readers may wish to see a certain irony in the fact that although the present volume is edited by a protestant theologian, any systematical treatment of the prophecy-theme from a genuinely protestant perspective is missing - in fact seems to be lacking. Sure enough, there are articles dealing with classic representatives of both catholicism and protestantism in the historical section (cf. Wriedt's and Wenzel's papers on Martin Luther and Karl Rahner, respectively); nothing comparable can be said about the systematical section, however, in which - apart from Islamic (Acar, Reçber) and non-Islamic philosophy (Fehige, Grössl, Schulz) - catholic theology clearly dominates: in the sense of simply standing alone (cf. Fortin's essay). Upon closer scrutiny the gap turns out to be rather undramatic, though, and this due to the fact that, in direct comparison to other areas of twentieth and twenty-first century interconfessional dispute, denominational or confessional differences about prophecy appear much less radical and far-reaching. This being said, I presume and suggest that Fortin's contribution more than makes up for what seems missing at first sight and in fact can be read as a Christian statement per se.<sup>6</sup>

II.

The articles of the present volume have been rubriced unter two headings: 'historical case studies' and 'systematic perspectives.' Needless to say, this distinction has to be taken with a grain of salt: There are many passages in the papers of the first section, which tackle (theologically and/or philosophically) normative and as such genuinely systematic issues.<sup>7</sup> Likewise authors from the second section spell out their views and arguments by taking into account and drawing on other (in particular classical) sources, at least occasionally.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the distinction appears to be justified, at least not far-fetched, if only for the purpose of emphasizing the respective *focus* of the papers within each section: Both the thematical and methodical preferences of authors in section one

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Paul Tillich would probably figure prominently among those who lend themselves to being utilized as a springboard for genuinely *protestant* approaches to prophecy. In Tillich's case the so-called 'prophetic principle' could serve as a good starting-point; cf. Mary Ann Stenger, "Paul Tillich's Ontology: A 'Modern' Relic or a Resource for Feminist Theology," in *Tillich Preview 2009*, eds. Karin Grau, Peter Haigis, and Ilona Nord (Münster: LIT, 2009), 5–24, here 20–21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> A case in point is Fisch's paper, in which the author himself obviously *defends* and subscribes to the very type or model of Talmudic dispute (here: about prophecy and its rationality) that he seeks to account for, at least primarily and in large parts, in a purely *exegetical* or reconstructive manner.

 $<sup>^{8}\,</sup>$  I just mention Fortin's article, which not merely invokes, but appears to be substantially indebted to Thomas Aquinas also.

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are clearly historically and hermeneutically descriptive, whereas those in section two roughly gravitate towards the systematically normative – be it from a theological or a philosophical vantage-point. Moreover, the term 'case studies' should be taken seriously, for this is precisely what the reader can and should expect: a survey of hopefully paradigmatic examples how to deal with the phenomenon of prophecy (and its relationship to reason) within the history and development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Any even remotely exhaustive account of the nature and function/s of prophecy in past and present is not intended, much less actually given, and the same holds for any ambition to cover all three Abrahamic religions in a sufficiently detailed way.

1. Before giving way to the authors and their contributions let me briefly and for introductory purposes survey their articles by following the order, in which they appear in the present volume. I begin with the latter's first section. Thomas Wagner's essay contains and defends an historical-exegetical argument against (some aspects of) Karl Jaspers' theory of a so-called 'Axial Age' ('Achsenzeit'), inasmuch namely, as the latter suggests that the Western-European concept of rationality emerged during this time (roughly between 800 and 200 BCE), under the formative impact of a historically unique phenomenon: biblical prophetism. According to Wagner, this view is flawed in at least two respects: first, biblical prophecy did not so much originate as a unique phenomenon, but merely represents 'a special form of prophecy' within its greater Ancient Near Eastern context, where the oldest verifiable references to prophetic announcements are documented (eighteenth century BCE): other than their predecessors the biblical prophets normally do not operate 'in cultic environments, but rather as critics of cultic and/or social conditions and circumstances.' Second, the idea of prophecy as the root of Western European rationality overlooks the claim to rationality on the part of biblical prophecy itself: Hence, for an ancient Israelite the prophet's visionary experience was 'exceptional but not irrational'; on the contrary, in terms of a cause-effect relationship 'the prophetic vision provided the reason for an historical occurrence, while the historical event served as the effect of what was revealed.' Thus conceived, the vision proved rational, according to Wagner, in pretty much the same way as in modern concepts and instantiations of rationality.

Menachem Fisch's argument, too, is mainly, although not exclusively historically motivated: Fisch aims at specifying the actual function/s – in particular: the *theological* function – of prophets/prophecy in the writings of the Hebrew Bible. According to a widespread opinion prophets appear, throughout the OT-accounts, as 'submissive messengers' of God's will. Drawing on Yochanan Muffs's insights, Fisch supplements a second function: they also and frequently act as legal 'defenders of their people from the wrath of God' – just like Abraham in the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrha (cf. Gen 18). However, even this

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is not the whole story, for in Fisch's view a third, genuinely theological function has yet to be added – one that (not only) Muffs is blind for. Invoking, first, a number of biblical narratives (about Abraham, Moses, Jonah, Balaam, Job) and second, some pertinent Rabbinic disputes about the former, Fisch thus demonstrates that the prophet's task was – and was often taken to imply – a serious challenging of God's (omniscience and) moral perfection, in fact a 'theology of divine moral *imperfection*.' Accordingly, Fisch concludes that in 'clear opposition to the Mishna and Yerushalmi on prophetic suppression, and the entire "Balaam the wicked" rabbinic literature, the fundamental norm of religious disposition for Israelites in general, and Israelite prophets in particular, is one of proud, constructive critical engagement, rather than one of pious, submissive surrender.'

Ahmad Ighbariah's article includes the early history of Islam and therefore spearheads several articles focusing on or at least incorporating Islamic views of prophecy. In particular, the author sets out to elucidate how in the periods following Muhammad's prophethood a re-examination of the concept of prophecy emerged. In general, the Islamic tradition distinguished, according to Ighbariah, between a messenger and a prophet, the latter being the recipient of a divine revelation, the former a recipient plus a communicator of the divine message to human addressees. From the third Islamic century onward Sufi writings engaged intensively with the idea of a third figure, the 'saint' (walī), thereby stirring much controversy, especially with Shi'ite theology. Here the story of al-Khidr and Moses is one of the major Qur'anic narratives that attracted the attention of Shi'ites and Sufis alike; indeed, both interpreted it as evidence for the truth and credibility of their resepctive views: on the one hand both agreed that the mysterious al-Khidr (whose descent is unknown) must be considered a walī and not a prophet like Moses - thus conceived, he could function as a spiritual bridge between Sufism and Shi'ism, as Ighbariah points out. On the other hand, they firmly disagreed about the status of and ranking between saint and prophet: thus, the philosopher and Sufi mystic Ibn 'Arabī (1145-1240) declared the supremacy of the saint over both prophet and messenger, arguing that only the former acquired his knowledge directly from God. Others like, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) contested this view: Since Moses is a prophet while al-Khidr is not, he must be considered superior to the latter, since prophets are superior to any (other) human being.

Ottfried Fraisse's historical survey contextualizes Ighbariah's – and to a certain extent also Fisch's – prior findings, namely by sketching the contours of a vivid interreligious debate on prophecy among medieval Arabic thinkers, esp. in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As Fraisse observes it was the Muslims who gave the phenomenon of prophecy a rational form at the outset of this debate, whereas Jewish and Christian thinkers, for different reasons, kept ignoring it, at least for some time. Among the Muslim thinkers Al-Fārābī (872–950)

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is of special importance, due mainly to his two major accomplishments: first 'he promoted the imagination within the Aristotelian model of the soul to a philosophically stable concept'; second, he gave the psychology of prophecy a political dimension, by placing the (imagination-based) imitative faculty of the prophet 'in the service of society's enlightenment.' By referring to and interpreting a number of contemporary Jewish (Isaac Israeli, Judah Halevi, Maimonides) and, with a side-glance, Christian thinkers (Thomas Aquinas) Fraisse then demonstrates that Al-Fārābī actually set the stage for what the author takes to be a unifying approach to the pertinent prophetological issues: in 'somewhat anachronistic terms,' as he puts it, the phenomenon of prophecy was from then on widely taken as a vehicle 'to inquire into the conditions of (scientific) knowledge.' And although such formulation is usually associated with the modern Enlightenment, it can and should, or so at least Fraisse's argument goes, 'also be applied (with an accordingly modified meaning) to the Medieval philosophy of religion'; for, rightly understood, there are 'enlightenment movements in every epoch, not just in the eighteenth century and in this spirit the philosophical conceptualisation of prophecy can be considered a part of the project of Medieval Enlightenment.'

Adam Afterman's contribution not only supplements, but also specifies Fraisse's account nicely, thanks to an historical survey, which accentuates the issue of prophecy within (medieval) Jewish thought. Drawing extensively on the writings of three medieval authorities, a philosopher (Moses Maimonides, 1138-1204), a mystical kabbalist (Moses Nahmanides, 1194-1270) and a philosophical mystic (Abraham Abulafia, 1240–1291), Afterman states and explains four major theses supposed to account for what he takes to be a radical 'semantic shift' in the contemporary Jewish outlook on prophecy: (1) As opposed to the traditional idea of a contingent divine revelation and communication through language prophecy now began to be re-conceptualized as a natural function of the human intellect – nota bene: an intellect, which appears as transformed and fully realized by making contact with a metaphysical realm, the spiritual 'overflow' of which 'generates, through the human imagination, the mental experience now associated with prophecy or prophetic inspiration.' (2) The very same shift opened a new spiritual or mystical path leading in turn to an experience of mutual integration: mystical perfection was now perceived as 'sprouting from the same soil as prophecy and prophetic inspiration.' (3) Devegut ('communion') and ru'ah ha-godesh ('holy spirit') are the two key terms that were employed to introduce into Judaism and to explain the mechanism of such metaphysical or mystical integration. (4) In retrospect the semantic development just described turned out to be highly instrumental in the development of the kabbalistic path of mystical fusion, as found later in sixteenth-century kabbalah.

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As *Markus Wriedt* observes, the characterization of Luther as a prophet starts early, also - and perhaps surprisingly - as a self-description, but it comes to a temporary halt during and because of the Wittenberg turmoil in 1521-22: Since the radical reformers declared themselves prophets, Luther refused to apply the term - both (and naturally enough) for his opponents and himself. However, shortly after his death Luther began to be and since then continuously kept being identified, by friends and foe alike, with the prophets of the OT, in particular with Elijah. Second and more importantly, the Wittenberg upheaval also influenced Luther's theological views about the matter at hand: true prophecies, though dependent on the efficacy of the Holy Spirit alone, 'do neither contradict nor transcend the biblical message,' so that, by contrast, false prophets (like the radical Wittenberg reformers) can be unmasked fairly easily by their misconstrual of the latter. Accordingly, prophets function as God's own mouthpieces and as such have a twofold task: predicting the future (in case of the OTprophets: the advent of Christ) and interpreting the word of God for the common man. The divine word, in turn, comprises, in essence, the first commandment and the praise of God's Sovereignty; accordingly, Luther identifies two major concerns in the Hebrew prophets: to mark and condemn violations of the first commandment (= Law) and to console and promise comfort for the repenting sinner (= Gospel). Finally, and as far as the rationality-issue is concerned Luther emphatically emphasizes an unbridgeable incommensurability of the human ratio and God's own cognition; and since prophets receive their message from God, they follow exclusively the latter. Wriedt contends, however, that taken as a whole Luther's theology should not be dubbed irrationalist, since in the latter's opinion rationality and irrationality are external categories of judgment; by contrast, the particular modus loquendi theologicus has and complies with its own norms and rules, which as such cannot be put to the test by invoking categories and criteria which do not belong and in fact are wholly alien to faith and the Bible.

With constant reference to Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (TTP) *Michael A. Rosenthal's* article tackles an important epistemic aspect of the prophecy-theme, which under the confines of premodern Islam is also discussed elsewhere in the present volume (cf. Rahim Acar's essay): the question of how to distinguish between true and false prophecy. According to Spinoza there are two mistaken approaches to the issue, one rationalist, one fideist: Maimonides believes that a prophet can be trusted, if and to the extent that he is also a philosopher, whereas Alfakhar (1149–1210) believes that someone can be trusted as a prophet just to the extent that his own 'mind is absent from what has been revealed – he is the empty vessel for God, his mere mouthpiece.' Spinoza takes both views to be flawed, 'the first because it relies too much on reason, the second because it relies on reason too little.' And yet, some scholars have claimed that Spinoza's own account must either be read as rationalist, too –

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and thus as inherently inconsistent – or else as an instance of mere conventionalism (prophecy appears as permitted, valued and justified for political reasons only). Rosenthal argues that at least hermeneutically there is a way out, a reading, in other words, that avoids, in fact escapes the dilemma just mentioned. Upon this reading Spinoza thinks that prophetic speech does indeed make a (possibly justified) claim to be true of the world, but only indirectly and per analogiam: namely through the way in which signs can lead to certain effects, in particular practical ones, hence in the medium of action, conduct and behavior. Thus, despite their usage of and dependence upon anthropomorphic language any purported prophet can be trusted to the extent that he constantly reminds his listeners or readers that the message communicated is not so much 'a discourse about God, but about them and their behavior.' For instance, 'God is merciful' is and can be treated as a true proposition, if and to the extent that its propositional content expresses, what would otherwise and by analogy be the case, if the prophetic speaker plus his or her addressee/s were perfectly merciful themselves – or were at least (self-)consciously striving to be so.

Christian Wiese's article provides a detailed survey of the 'religious, ethical and political dimensions' of modern Jewish interpretations of prophecy, concentrating on five authoritative thinkers from the early to mid-20th century: Hermann Cohen, Max Wiener, Martin Buber, Leo Baeck and Abraham J. Heschel. According to Wiese, the relevant debates at the beginning of the 20th century are initially overshadowed by the explicit and/or implicit confrontation with the historical-critical interpretation of prophecy dominating liberal cultural Protestantism, as it was paradigmatically represented by the Göttingen Old Testament scholar and Orientalist Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). Here, above all, the concept of 'ethical monotheism' as a self-interpretative category of liberal Judaism was polemically directed against what was widely perceived (not only) in the academic field as Christian hegemony. Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) is part of this tradition: On the one hand, he appreciated and respected Wellhausen and perceived in his research 'an excellent basis for a religious dialogue between Judaism and Christianity.' On the other hand, he strongly supported the idea that the genuine ethical spirituality of Jewish monotheism 'formed the most adequate basis for modern society by inspiring humankind's moral responsibility' – more so in any case than Christianity. For him the origin of this form of spirituality is to be found in Israelite prophecy, which therefore made 'the living God' not only 'the God of Israel,' but also 'the God of humanity.'

Initially Cohen's disciple Max Wiener (1882–1950) took sides with his former teacher without reservations. Accordingly, the two standard historical-critical objections from the Protestant side ([a] the moral character of the earlier Israelite religion is to be denied; [b] the post-prophetic religion of Israel marks a decline) are countered by the concept 'of an ethically high, humane, and uni-

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versally thinking monotheistic religion, whose purest representatives were the great prophets of scripture.' Under the growing influence of Ernst Troeltsch (1868–1923) on the one hand, the Zionist movement on the other, Wiener then gradually modified this rationalist-liberal approach to prophecy after World War I, in particular by claiming that the Israelite religion did not reach the height of a 'truly universal' message before Deutero-Isaiah.

A few years earlier (1916) there had already been a fierce literary feud between Cohen and Martin Buber (1878–1965) concerning the relationship between Judaism and Zionism: While Cohen considered it a betrayal of the universal mission of Judaism and of the idea of messianity 'that we should be allowed to make our own state,' Buber declared that Jewish religiosity should be regarded as the 'supreme function of Jewish ethnicity,' so that the former cannot be conceived without 'the living blood and vitality of nationhood.' Based on this notion of Judaism Buber subsequently developed a theopolitical vision of Zionism in a number of pertinent texts from the 1930s and 1940s, a series starting with the prophetically spelled-out idea of the 'kingship of God': The Old Testament prophets (first and foremost Isaiah and Jeremiah) 'insist on the sovereignty of YHVH over everything earthly and heavenly and sharply reject the tendency, characteristic for the kingship of Israel, to separate religion and politics from each other.'

While the basic idea of 'ethical monotheism' is preserved in the liberal interpretation of Judaism by Leo Baeck (1873–1956), there are nevertheless certain shifts to be observed within this overall line of continuity. As is already evident in the second edition of *Das Wesen des Judentums* (1922), these changes pertain primarily to Baeck's increasing tendency to integrate prophetic-mystical ideas into the hitherto purely ethically explained character, form and structure of Jewish religiosity. In his late work *Dieses Volk* (1955), Baeck's 'messianic mysticism,' here influenced above all by Lurianic Kabbalah, is closely connected to the 'prophetic idea of human partnership with God in the completion of the creation' – an idea which, according to Baeck, finds its purest expression in the Hasidism of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Thanks to his idea of a 'Hasidic mysticism' Baeck became, so to speak, the liberal forerunner of Abraham J. Heschel (1907–1972), whose theology and philosophy were deeply rooted in Hasidism from the very beginning, though with a second mainstay in the Old Testament prophecy, as is demonstrated, in particular, by Heschel's two pertinent magisterial studies (*Das prophetische Bewusstsein*, 1933; *The Prophets*, 1962). While the 1933 dissertation indeed aimed at a phenomenology of prophetic 'facts of consciousness,' the relevant post-World War II texts, written in the U.S., were primarily concerned with the prophecy-theoretical implications of Heschel's double insight that 'human beings are the chosen partners of God and that God is dependent on responsible human beings who participate in the process of perfecting the world'. A

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