



BRILL

The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel

Author(s): R. P. Carroll

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 19, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 1969), pp. 400-415

Published by: [BRILL](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1516735>

Accessed: 12/10/2012 08:32

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



BRILL is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Vetus Testamentum*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE ELIJAH-ELISHA SAGAS: SOME REMARKS ON PROPHETIC SUCCESSION IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

BY

R. P. CARROLL

Glasgow

I

The sacral traditions underlying the book of Deuteronomy have their origins in the pre-conquest period and in the settlement in Canaan period of Israel's early history. The compilers and editors of Deuteronomy were concerned with presenting these traditions in a form which would recall the Israel of their day to a renewed experience of Yahweh's covenant with his people. Thus Deuteronomy took the form of a series of sermons given by Moses to Israel just prior to the entry into Canaan. However much of the material in these sermons reflected developments in Israel's culture characteristic of later periods.

Two post-conquest institutions which provided the Deuteronomists with no legal precedent to fall back on were prophetism and the monarchy. The paucity of references to these institutions was due to the emphasis placed on the sacral traditions in the formulation of Deuteronomy. The main approach to the legislation for king and prophet was a pragmatic one.¹⁾ The authors were concerned with some of the abuses of the monarchy and the problems posed by false prophets. The essential point made about the king was his status as the person chosen to be king by Yahweh²⁾. The legislation for the prophet dealt with the problem of identifying the authentic prophet of Yahweh amid the prophetic activity in Israel. The observations show an obvious adaptation of Israel's experience of prophetism over the centuries.

A significant section in the regulations for the prophet provides the initial basis for this study.

¹⁾ For the king see Dt. xvii 14-20; cf. 1 Kings x. 28; xi 3. For the prophet see Dt. xiii 1-5; xviii 15-22.

²⁾ "you may indeed set as king over you him who Yahweh your God will choose.", xvii 15.

“Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren-him you shall heed-just as you desired of Yahweh your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And Yahweh said to me ‘They have rightly said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’ ”¹⁾

This statement provides both the sole reference and the *locus classicus* for the concept of prophetic succession in the Old Testament. There are two possible interpretations of what precisely was envisaged by the Deuteronomists in their sketch of the prophet. They may have intended their statement to be a prediction with a single fulfilment in the future, namely, the coming of an eschatological figure ²⁾. However the view taken in this paper is that they had in mind a succession of prophets of which Moses was the prototype ³⁾. The institution of prophecy was to be a continuous and permanent office constantly supplying the people of Israel with a covenant mediator who would recreate the role of Moses for the nation ⁴⁾.

Two factors emerge from this passage which are relevant and important for a discussion of the notion of prophetic succession in the Old Testament. They are, the idea of continuous action on the part of Yahweh in raising up prophets to meet situations, and the Mosaic nature of such prophets. The idea of continuity is conveyed by translating the terms *'āqīm* and *yāqīm* in a distributive sense, that is, “I will raise up/he will raise up” from time to time. The words *kāmonī* and *kāmōkā* demonstrate that Moses is to be the model for these prophets. Thus Deuteronomy set forth a series of Mosaic prophets as an image of prophetism in Israel.

The statement in Deuteronomy does not make clear whether the prophetic office was to be a continuous line of prophets extending

¹⁾ xviii 15-18.

²⁾ See G. VON RAD, *Deuteronomy*, London, 1966, pp. 123f. This is the view taken by the early church, Acts iii 22; vii 37.

³⁾ Cf. H-J. KRAUS, *Worship in Israel*, Oxford, 1966, pp. 106ff.; also E. W. NICHOLSON, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, Oxford, 1967, pp. 77, 117.

⁴⁾ Cf. “. . . the ‘prophet’ contemplated is not a single individual, belonging to a distant future, but *Moses’ representative for the time being*, whose office it would be to supply Israel, whenever in its history occasion should arise, with needful guidance and advice: in other words, that the reference is not to an individual prophet but to a *prophetic order*.”, S. R. DRIVER, *Deuteronomy*,³ ICC, Edinburgh 5th Imp. 1960, p. 229.

from Moses down through Israel's history, each prophet succeeded by the next prophet, rather similar to succession in the monarchy, or a series of prophets with the individual prophet emerging to meet a given situation, in the same fashion that prevailed during the period of the judges. The legislation was an attempt to fit the phenomenon of prophecy into an ideological scheme. This scheme was probably more ideal than actual¹). Deuteronomy sought to give order to a movement in ancient Israel which defied such systematic treatment. The desire to anchor all of Israel's institutions in the pre-conquest period led to the formulation of prophetism in terms of a series of Mosaic prophets mediating Yahweh's covenant to his people Israel.

There was a tradition in the northern kingdom of Israel which regarded Moses as a prophet²). This tradition informed the Deuteronomists and provided sufficient authority for them to assert that Moses was the prototypical prophet. Thus they were able to place the whole phenomenon of prophetism within the context of Israel's sacral traditions belonging to the Mosaic period. Moses can hardly be considered a prophet in the normal Old Testament sense. Yet certain features of the portrait of Moses in the Old Testament link him with the prophetic figures of the post-conquest history of Israel. The prophets of Israel had some shamanistic functions in common with Moses³). For example, prayer and healing were aspects of the prophet's role in Israel⁴). In this sense Moses may justifiably be called a prophet. However it would probably be more accurate to see his claim to be a prophet as resting in his role as the mediator of the word of Yahweh to Israel. Moses mediated the covenant to Israel at Sinai and spoke the word of Yahweh to the people there. Therefore his prophetic role lay in being a spokesman for Yahweh. At this level Moses was the outstanding prophet in the history of Israel's religion. Hence the essential point in Deuteronomy's regulations for the

¹) Cf. the remarks of M. NOTH, "Office and Vocation in the Old Testament", *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh & London, 1966, p. 247.

²) Hos. xii 13 (Heb. 14). The E tradition viewed Abraham as a prophet, Gen. xx 7; both traditions belonged to the north and this is a further factor in accepting the northern provenance of Deuteronomy.

³) It is part of the function of this paper to discuss some of the common features which linked Moses to the later prophets in the Old Testament. For the role of the shaman in religion see M. ELIADE, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, London, 1964.

⁴) Cf. Gen. xx 7; Exod. xxxiii; 2 Kings vi 17; these prophetic functions will be discussed more fully below. It is significant that the reference to Abraham as a prophet was related to his role as healer and intercessor, see Gen. xx 7, 17.

prophet was the demand that the authenticity of any prophet arising in Israel should be proved by his functioning as the mouthpiece for the words of Yahweh. In so far as the prophet declared the word of Yahweh he was a true Mosaic prophet. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the Mosaic parallels and office depicted in the Elijah-Elisha sagas.

II

The Elijah-Elisha sagas provide a scenario of prophetism in Israel which is relevant for a study of prophetic succession in the Old Testament ¹⁾. The two important factors which emerged from our consideration of Deuteronomy, namely a series of prophets and the Mosaic pattern of prophetism, may be applied to the sagas to see what their significance for the idea of prophetic succession is. The traditions gathered around Elijah the prophet and his successor Elisha belonged to the northern kingdom. Thus the sagas had the same background as Deuteronomy. This fact may account for the inclusion of such an extensive group of prophetic traditions in the Deuteronomistic books of Kings. The compilers of the books of Kings were interested in the Elijah-Elisha sagas because they gave weight to the Deuteronomistic thesis of a Mosaic prophetic succession.

The sagas dealt with some of the exploits of the Transjordanian prophet Elijah, especially the conflict between Yahwism and Baalism, and his successor Elisha, who also came from the territory east of the Jordan ²⁾. These sagas provide the only example in the Old Testament of a prophet appointing his own prophetic successor ³⁾. Hence they are of paramount importance for this investigation. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha represents a single example of prophetic succession and needs to be studied as such without succumbing to the temptation to generalise on the strength of it. The main problem is whether this specimen of succession is to be understood as a definitive act, characteristic of prophetism in general, or simply an isolated case with no more significance to it. It is therefore necessary to examine the sagas in a context of prophetism in ancient Israel.

Israel shared the phenomenon of prophecy with many nations in the Ancient Near East. The institution in Israel first appeared just

¹⁾ The sagas are contained in 1 Kings xvii-2 Kings xiii.

²⁾ Elijah came from Gilead, 1 Kings xvii 1; and Elisha from Abel-meholah, 1 Kings xix 16.

³⁾ 1 Kings xix 16.

before the emergence of the monarchy ¹). Bands of mantics roamed the countryside manifesting aspects of an ecstatic nature ²). The first prophet of note to appear in Israel was Samuel. His career was intricately bound up with the rise of the monarchy and he was responsible for the anointing of the first two kings of Israel ³). The next prophet of note was Nathan, the man who provided prophetic approval for the Davidic dynasty ⁴). Behind Jeroboam's assumption of power in the north was the word of the prophet Ahijah ⁵). Jehu ben Hanani was involved in Baasha's leadership, though his function was one of pronouncing Yahweh's judgment against the king ⁶). The next prophet to appear was Elijah the Tishbite. Thus there was a succession of prophets in Israel whose role at times was that of kingmaker. The prophetic bands were part of the social and religious life of the nation and formed a background for the activity of those major individual prophets who had such a decisive influence on political life in Israel. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that each prophet was specifically succeeded by another prophet, for example, we cannot say that Samuel passed on the office of prophet to Nathan. It is, perhaps, possible that these prophets occupied the office of prophet and that after their demise the next major prophet automatically found himself the occupant of that office by virtue of his possessing the word of Yahweh. The charisma and the word of Yahweh identified the prophet as the man of God and he became Yahweh's spokesman and messenger for his generation. The crux of the problem is whether there was a definitive prophetic office in Israel and whether the occupant of that office anointed his successor to be its next occupant.

This problem is accentuated, rather than solved, by the instance of direct prophetic succession in the case of Elisha. After fleeing from Jezebel's persecution the prophet Elijah arrived at Horeb in a state of despondency. There Yahweh ordered him to return and anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel,

¹) 1 Sam. iii 20; x 5, 10ff.; xii 1.

²) 1 Sam. x 5, 10-13.

³) 1 Sam. x 1, 25; xii 1; xv 1; xvi 13. Samuel was the link between the old institution of the judge and the new one of the prophet, for he was both prophet and judge, 1 Sam. vii 15ff.

⁴) 2 Sam. vii 4-17; he was also involved in Solomon's succession to the throne of David, 1 Kings i 22-40.

⁵) 1 Kings xi 29ff.; xii 15; xiv 2.

⁶) 1 Kings xvi 1ff.

and Elisha to be prophet in his place¹⁾. Elijah returned from Horeb and found Elisha ploughing so he “passed by him and cast his mantle upon him”²⁾. Elisha’s reaction to this act was the instigation of a communal meal made from the ploughing team he had been using in the fields. At the end of the meal, shared with the local people, “he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered to him”³⁾. Thus there was the investiture by virtue of casting the prophetic mantle followed by what was probably a sacrificial meal. The mantle of Elijah also figured in the delegation of Elijah’s power to his successor at the time of Elijah’s translation⁴⁾. Elijah appointed his successor, who then became his servant until the prophet had disappeared from the scene. Elisha did not assume power until he had received the double share of Elijah’s spirit. This reception of the double share identified Elisha as the first-born among the prophets, that is, as the one entitled to become the new leader of the prophetic guilds in the place of the departed leader⁵⁾. So when Elisha returned from the other side of the Jordan, after Elijah’s departure, with his master’s mantle, the sons of the prophets were compelled to acknowledge “the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha”⁶⁾.

Having set Elijah and Elisha in the general context of prophetism in Israel, it is necessary to enquire how typical were they as prophets. The prophet in Israel functioned in a number of roles, mainly in the sphere of the cultus⁷⁾, and in political life. The political involvement of the prophet often made him a kingmaker⁸⁾ and a royal counselor⁹⁾. There were groups of prophets attached to the palace who advised the king on policy and matters of war¹⁰⁾. In cultic matters

¹⁾ 1 Kings xix 15f. The use of the word “anoint” in this context may simply have been carried over from its occurrence with reference to the two kings; cf. NORTH, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

²⁾ 1 Kings xix 19.

³⁾ 1 Kings xix 21.

⁴⁾ 2 Kings ii 8-14; the mantle was part of the insignia of the prophet. This mantle may have been Elijah’s “hairy garment” 2 Kings i 9; cf. Zech. xiii 4; Matt. iii 4; also the cloak worn by the Sufis of Islam.

⁵⁾ First-born is used here in its metaphorical sense, in the same way that Israel was Yahweh’s first-born, Exod. iv 22; the first-born was entitled to a double share of the inheritance, Dt. xxi 17.

⁶⁾ 2 Kings ii 15.

⁷⁾ See A. R. JOHNSON, *The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel*², Cardiff, 1962.

⁸⁾ 1 Sam. x 1; xvi 13; 1 Kings xi 29ff., xix 15f.

⁹⁾ 2 Sam. xxiv 11; 1 Kings i 22ff.; xxii 8.

¹⁰⁾ 1 Kings xxii; cf. 2 Kings iii 11ff.

the prophet might offer sacrifice ¹⁾ or prayer ²⁾). In the social domain the prophet, or seer, could be of assistance in domestic affairs ³⁾. In certain circumstances the prophet was associated with healing ⁴⁾. The *nebi'im* in ancient Israel shared some religious characteristics with the shamans of Siberia, North America, South America, Indonesia, Oceania, and other countries ⁵⁾. The main phenomenon in common was the ecstatic nature of their religious experience ⁶⁾. Ecstasy was a marked feature of Israelite prophecy from its beginnings in the pre-monarchy period ⁷⁾. From the mantic bands, who moved about the country prophesying, to the canonical prophets, whose oracular proclamations raised prophetism in Israel to such a distinctive level, ecstasy was an integral part ⁸⁾. Sometimes this ecstatic experience was induced by music, ⁹⁾ and sometimes by concentration on objects to such a degree that the prophet entered a trance and perceived visions ¹⁰⁾. However, in the later great prophets, such as Amos, Isaiah, or Jeremiah, ecstasy was a less marked phenomenon than in the earlier bands of dervishlike individuals. It is usual to differentiate between the prophetic guilds and the canonical prophets. Allowance must be made for degrees of difference in the wild mantics whose behaviour when in a trance made prophetism a byword for madness ¹¹⁾, and the quiet visionary experiences of an Isaiah in the temple ¹²⁾, or the poetic creativity of a Second Isaiah. Yet throughout the history of prophetism in Israel there was always an element of ecstasy. In order to distinguish between the early *nebi'im* and the later

¹⁾ 1 Sam. vii 9; 1 Kings xviii 30ff.; cf. I Sam. ix 13.

²⁾ 1 Sam. vii 5ff.; xii 18, 23; II Kings vi 17.

³⁾ 1 Sam. ix 6; 1 Kings xvii; II Kings iv.

⁴⁾ 1 Kings xiii 1-10; xiv; xvii 17ff.; 2 Kings iv; v.

⁵⁾ See ELIADE, *op. cit.*; also A. S. KAPELRUD, "Shamanistic Features in the Old Testament", *Studies in Shamanism*, ed. C-M. EDSSMAN, Stockholm, 1967, pp. 90-96.

⁶⁾ Hence the comparison between prophetism and shamanism in this paper.

⁷⁾ 1 Sam. x 10ff.; see J. LINDBLOM, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Oxford, 1962 pp. 46-65 for a discussion of ecstasy in Israel.

⁸⁾ Cf. 1 Sam. x 10ff.; xix 20ff.; and Ezekiel's experiences.

⁹⁾ 1 Sam. x 5; 2 Kings iii 15; among the shamans the drum was used to make ecstatic experiences possible, see ELIADE, *op. cit.* pp. 163-80, esp. pp. 174f.

¹⁰⁾ Cf. 2 Kings viii 11f.; Jer. i 11-14; Am. vii 1-9; it is suggested in this paper that these visions of Jeremiah and Amos came about by their concentrating on such objects until they went into a trance and received Yahweh's message.

¹¹⁾ Cf. 2 Kings ix 11 where the gibbering of the young prophet was associated with madness, the same word was used of Jehu's wild chariot driving, 2 Kings ix 20.

¹²⁾ Is. vi 1ff.

canonical prophets we have introduced a comparison between prophetism and shamanism. These two phenomena belonged to totally different cultures and probably were completely unrelated to each other. But prophetism in the Ancient Near East displayed many of the epiphenomena characteristic of shamanism in Central and North Asia, the Arctic, and other parts of the world. Therefore we have felt justified in referring to the ecstatic in prophetism in terms of shamanism in order to isolate the element common to all the various types of prophet in the Old Testament¹⁾. In Israel the shamanistic features of prophetism were subordinated to Yahwism, so that eventually major religious figures emerged in the nation's history. These individuals gave Israelite prophetism a distinctive significance that it never achieved in other Canaanite cultures. Though prophecy never lost its shamanistic strain it transcended its primitive origins and culminated in such outstanding prophets as Isaiah of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah. Therefore the prophet in Israel was a composite personality made up of shaman, cultic figure, politician, royal counsellor, healer, intercessor, poet, and supremely, Yahwist.

This brief consideration of some of the aspects of Israelite prophecy demonstrates that Elijah and Elisha were fairly typical prophetic figures. They displayed shamanistic features²⁾, they were involved in kingmaking³⁾, healing⁴⁾, prayer⁵⁾, sacrifice⁶⁾, the promulgation of the word of Yahweh⁷⁾, domestic affairs⁸⁾ and were the champions of Yahwism in Israel⁹⁾. They worked in a context of prophetic groups, especially Elisha who appears to have had a peripatetic ministry¹⁰⁾. Elijah was a more solitary figure, disappearing from time to time¹¹⁾.

¹⁾ The emphasis placed on shamanism in this paper is mainly due to the fact that it is about the Elijah-Elisha sagas; these sagas present prophetic figures whose religious psychology is akin, in many ways, to the shamans of other cultures. The sagas, with the possible exception of the Samuel narratives, are the most comprehensive picture of the prophet within a historical and social context in the Old Testament.

²⁾ 1 Kings xviii 12; 2 Kings ii 11; iii 15; for his comment on shamanism see LINDBLUM, *op. cit.* pp. 6ff.

³⁾ 1 Kings xix 15f.; 2 Kings viii 13; ix 1-3.

⁴⁾ 1 Kings xvii 17ff.; 2 Kings ii 19-22; iv 32ff.; v.

⁵⁾ 1 Kings xvii 20; 2 Kings iv 33; vi 17, 18.

⁶⁾ 1 Kings xviii 30ff.; cf. xix 21.

⁷⁾ 1 Kings xvii 2; xviii 36ff.; xxi 20ff.; 2 Kings vii 1ff.

⁸⁾ 1 Kings xvii 8-24; 2 Kings ii 19ff.; iv; vi 1-7; cf. viii 1-6.

⁹⁾ 1 Kings xviii; 2 Kings i 3; iii 13ff.

¹⁰⁾ 2 Kings iv 8-10; 38ff.; vi 1-7; viii 7ff. cf. note 2, p. 9 below.

¹¹⁾ 1 Kings xviii 7-16; 2 Kings ii 16.

Although Elijah had contact with the royal house ¹⁾, it was Elisha who often became a resident of a town and was available for royal consultation ²⁾. They were not the only individualistic prophets of the period for Micaiah ben Imlah was regularly consulted by king Ahab ³⁾.

The Elijah-Elisha sagas provide a definite example of prophetic succession but in spite of their being typical prophets it still remains uncertain whether there was a well defined official status for the prophet in Israel. The prophet Gad was known as "David's seer" which suggests that he had a permanent position at the court ⁴⁾. Nathan was associated solely with the affairs of David, and his important oracle ⁵⁾ gave a prophetic foundation for the Davidic dynasty in the southern kingdom. The prophets in the court of king Ahab appear to have been led by Zedekiah ben Chenaanah, though Micaiah was constantly consulted ⁶⁾. These prophets may well have been office bearers, and though it is possible to regard Elisha in a similar position, Elijah cannot be put into such a category. To summarise this section of the paper it may be said that there are indications in the Old Testament to support the idea of prophetic succession in ancient Israel, and also signs that some prophets had official status ⁷⁾. But whether these two aspects of prophetism were coincidental must remain an open question, because the data available in the Old Testament is not comprehensive enough to supply a satisfactory answer to the problems posed in this part of the article.

III

The sagas must now be examined in the light of the second aspect of the Deuteronomic legislation for prophetism, namely the Mosaic character of the prophet. Two incidents in the life of Elijah reveal him to have been a prophet of such calibre that a comparison with Moses becomes inevitable. The background to his career was that

¹⁾ 1 Kings xviii 2ff.; xxi 20ff.; 2 Kings i.

²⁾ 2 Kings xii 9ff.; v 8ff.; vi 11ff.; 32ff.; viii 7ff.

³⁾ 1 Kings xxii, esp. v. 8.

⁴⁾ 2 Sam. xxiv 11.

⁵⁾ 2 Sam. vii 4ff.

⁶⁾ 1 Kings xxii 8, 24.

⁷⁾ Apart from the group of prophets attached to the cultus or the court, there were individual prophets functioning at the same time as other notable prophets. Thus David was associated with Nathan and Gad, and Ahab had dealings with Micaiah as well as Elijah. It may have been a case of official prophets having status and nonofficial prophets without status, cf. Am. vii 10ff.

period in Israel's history when Yahwism and Baalism had reached the apex of their conflict. Ahab's consort, Jezebel, had established a clique of Baal-Melqart's devotees in the kingdom and was intent on replacing the Yahwistic religion with her own version of Baalism. Ahab, himself a Yahwist, had built an altar for Baal and a temple in Samaria¹⁾. Hence there was a prevailing tendency towards a syncretistic form of religion in Israel at that time. The fanaticism of Jezebel found an outlet in the persecution of those prophets whose devotion was to Yahweh the ancient God of Israel²⁾. So Elijah appeared at a period of crisis for the ancient faith of Israel. Under the threatening aegis of Jezebel the religion of Israel could have been reshaped until Yahwism became simply a strand of tribal tradition in another Canaanite religion. Yahweh would then have become another god in the Canaanite pantheon.

The conflict reached an either-or climax when Elijah summoned the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel³⁾. The issue at stake was the people's commitment to Yahweh—"How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."⁴⁾ The outcome of the trial was a triumph for the forces of Yahweh. The popular reaction was a declaration of faith in Yahweh—"And when all the people saw it (the fire of Yahweh), they fell on their faces; and they said, 'Yahweh, he is God; Yahweh, he is God.'"⁵⁾ This achievement was important because it clarified the issues involved. It was a case of choice, the people had to decide whether their loyalty was to Yahweh or Baal. If they were under the impression that Yahweh and Baal could be worshipped together then it was Elijah who underlined the basic idea of Israel's religion, namely, that Yahweh was a jealous God who would brook no rivals. This was a restatement of the original Mosaic faith—"I am Yahweh your God . . . you shall have no other gods besides me."⁶⁾ In confronting Israel with the essential feature of

¹⁾ 1 Kings xvi 32; in spite of his wife and his official involvment in Baalism Ahab was a sincere Yahwist. This is evidenced by the Yahwistic names of his children, 1 Kings xxii 51; 2 Kings i 17; viii 18, 26. Some weight must be given to the remark "Ahab served Baal a little", 2 Kings x 18.

²⁾ 1 Kings xviii 13; xix 1ff.

³⁾ 1 Kings xviii 19ff.

⁴⁾ 1 Kings xviii 21.

⁵⁾ 1 Kings xviii 39.

⁶⁾ Exod. xx 2, 3 cf. Dt. v 6, 7; vi 4. The defeat of Baalism should not be exaggerated, for throughout the lives of Elijah and Elisha Baalism was a feature of Israelite social life. Thus one stage of Jehu's revolution involved the destruction

their faith Elijah was defending the faith against the inroads being made in it by the Canaanite religions, and this was the action of a spiritual successor to Moses. Hence Elijah on Mount Carmel may be viewed as a clear instance of a Mosaic prophet proclaiming the word of Yahweh to the people and mediating the covenant between Yahweh and Israel his people ¹).

The second incident in Elijah's ministry which marked him as a prophet like Moses occurred when he fled from Jezebel's threats to the desert. From the wilderness he travelled to Horeb, the mount of God, where centuries before Moses had met with Yahweh ²). There he experienced a theophany—"And Yahweh passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind; and after the wind and earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice . . ." ³) The phenomena associated with theophanies were similar in this instance to those of Moses' theophany though the divine message was different. The theophany was a further parallel between the experience of Elijah and that of Moses.

A further incident in Elijah's life suggests a parallel with Moses. A certain amount of mystery surrounded the death of Moses ⁴). But the tradition relating to Elijah's end was not one of death but a legend of translation ⁵). Thus Moses and Elijah shared unusual retirements from active service. This lack of a death notice for Elijah was a seminal point in the prophet's later development as an eschatological figure ⁶). Post-exilic prophecy saw Elijah as the forerunner of the day of Yahweh ⁷). In the New Testament both John the Baptist and Jesus were considered by the public to be Elijah ⁸). Because he had

of the temple Ahab had built for Baal, and the massacre of a large number of Baal worshippers, 2 Kings x 18ff.

¹) Cf. "Without Moses the religion of Yahwism as it figured in the Old Testament would never have been born. Without Elijah it would have died.", H. H. ROWLEY, "Elijah on Mount Carmel", *Men of God*, London, 1963, p. 65. Cf. also the remarks of TH. C. VRIEZEN, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, London, 1967, p. 191.

²) 1 Kings xix; cf. Exod. xix 16ff.; xx 18.

³) 1 Kings xix 11f. In the case of Moses Yahweh thundered his answer; whereas for Elijah it was the noise of silence which prefigured the divine presence.

⁴) Dt. xxxiv 5, 6.

⁵) 2 Kings ii 9-12.

⁶) See notes and 8 below. Presumably it was believed that as he had never died he was still in a position to re-enter the human sphere.

⁷) Mal. iv 5,6 (Heb. iii 23f.); cf. Eccclus. lviii 10.

⁸) Matt. xi 14; xvi 14; xvii 3,4 10ff.; Mk. ix 4, 5 Luk. i 17; ix 8; Jn. i 19-23.

never died his return was constantly expected. His return became a literary phrase in the *Mishnah* denoting the end of time ¹⁾. The mystery surrounding the burial of Moses gave rise to a legend of a dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses ²⁾. Furthermore the pseudepigraphical work *The Assumption of Moses* was written around this particular legend ³⁾. Thus the two major characters in the establishment of Yahwism in Israel became significant figure in the development of eschatological concepts. They were finally grouped together with Jesus in the scene on the mount of transfiguration ⁴⁾, It may, therefore, safely be concluded that Elijah was a prophet of the line of Moses; in fact he might be termed a 'second Moses'.

But to what extent may Elisha be called a Mosaic prophet? Apart from the possible theophany at Elijah's translation there were no outstanding scenes parallel to Moses in his career. However there were some minor incidents in his life which have their parallel in the work of Moses. On the day of Elijah's translation the two prophets crossed the Jordan by the agency of Elijah's mantle ⁵⁾. After Elijah had disappeared in the windstorm, Elisha returned across the Jordan using Elijah's mantle which he had now inherited. In the exodus from Egypt Moses had parted the waters of the Reed Sea with his rod ⁶⁾. After his death his successor Joshua took the children of Israel through the Jordan ⁷⁾. There is an obvious parallel between the actions of Elisha the successor of Elijah and the actions of Joshua the successor of Moses in the crossing of the Jordan ⁸⁾. A further parallel may be seen in Elisha's role in providing water for the armies of the three kings and the provision of water in the wilderness of Zin by Moses for the people of Israel ⁹⁾. Both men provided water under the directions of Yahweh. A notable feature of the early tradi-

¹⁾ Baba Metzia i 8; Shekalim ii 5; Eduyoth viii 7; Sotah ix 15.

²⁾ Cf. Jude 9.

³⁾ For this book see *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. II, *Pseudepigrapha*, ed. R. H. CHARLES, Oxford, 1963 reprint, pp. 407-24.

⁴⁾ Matt. xvii 1-8; Mk. ix 2-8.

⁵⁾ 2 Kings ii 6-14.

⁶⁾ Exod. xiv 16.

⁷⁾ Jos. iii.

⁸⁾ Of course this parallel can be overexaggerated. There were major differences in the various crossings, especially in the instruments used to divide the waters.

⁹⁾ Cf. Num. xx 2-13; 2 Kings iii 9-20. The comparison only holds good for the supply of water. The tradition about Moses was used to explain why Moses never led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan.

tions of Israel was the supply of bread, or manna, gathered each day by the Israelites ¹⁾. The miraculous element in this tradition was the never-ending supply of manna. Certain miracles associated with Elijah and Elisha utilised this principle of an unceasing supply of goods. Elijah's stay with the widow at Zarephath resulted in her reserves of meal and oil being extended for the duration of the famine ²⁾. A parallel miracle in the life of Elisha was the incident with a prophet's widow, when her supply of oil was increased until it afforded her enough money to pay her debts. ³⁾ In another situation Elisha received bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves, which provided enough food for a hundred men ⁴⁾ This paper suggests that these miracles in the sagas were an extension of elements in the legends grouped around Moses. One final example of a possible parallel situation between Moses and Elijah concerns their authority as men of God. On the occasion that the king sent soldiers down to take Elijah to the palace the prophet called down fire on two bands of fifty soldiers ⁵⁾. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered unholy fire to Yahweh, fire from Yahweh's presence consumed them ⁶⁾. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against the authority of Moses resulted in fire from Yahweh consuming two hundred and fifty of their followers ⁷⁾. The challenge to Elijah's authority was answered by divine fire as was the revolt against the leadership of Moses ⁸⁾. Without wishing to force similarities and parallels between two areas of popular tradition, it is suggested that there may have been an attempt by the compilers of the books of Kings to draw attention to the resemblance between Moses and Elijah by including these anecdotes in their history.

To conclude this section, it is fairly clear that Elijah was a religious leader of the calibre of Moses. As the leader of militant Yahwism

¹⁾ Exod. xvi; the term manna probably was derived from *man*, a word, which does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew, perhaps used in Canaanite dialects, see M. NOTH, *Exodus*, London, 1962, p. 135.

²⁾ 1 Kings xvii 8-16.

³⁾ 2 Kings iv 1-7.

⁴⁾ 2 Kings iv 42ff.

⁵⁾ 2 Kings i.

⁶⁾ Lev. x 1-3. This incident was related in order to establish the rights of the post-exilic Aaronic priesthood. However there may have been such a tradition known to the compilers of Kings.

⁷⁾ Num. xvi.

⁸⁾ We assume that Elijah's reaction to the soldiers was due to an affront to his dignity and a challenging of his authority as a prophet of Yahweh, rather than an act of pique, or a caprice.

his career echoed that of Moses in a number of important ways. He was the first really major prophet of the monarchy period. He passed on his prophetic leadership to his servant Elisha ¹⁾. In appointing a successor Elijah was also like Moses, who appointed Joshua as his successor ²⁾. The theophany at Horeb and the mystery surrounding his end made him like Moses as well. However Elisha was not cast in the same mould as his master. He stood in the Mosaic role in so far as he declared the word of Yahweh. Any other similarities between his work and that of Moses must be tentatively inferred from the information given in the sagas. The anecdotes about Elisha in the sagas contained legendary and historical material. Stories of miracles and supernatural incidents naturally gather around a religious figure of Elisha's calibre. The relevant question at this point is-why were these particular anecdotes included in the edition of Kings? Of the many stories attributing wonderful deeds to the prophet only some will have been chosen for inclusion in the biography of Elisha ³⁾. But there is no data available to posit a theory of decision making underlying the choice of such stories in the Old Testament. However certain patterns may be discerned which can give some idea of the presuppositions which informed the editors of the sagas. It is suggested in this study that part of the motivation behind the selection principles employed by the compilers of the volumes was the desire to present prophetic material shaped by the model of the Mosaic prophet. Thus the legends of Elisha's miracles were selected to illustrate certain Mosaic features in that prophet's work. There is another possibility, namely, that the legends arose in the northern kingdom already shaped by a myth of prophetic succession of a Mosaic order. Therefore the sagas might almost be regarded as an experiment, or model, based on a dogma of the prophet being like Moses. They provided the fullest account available of the lives of Yahwistic prophets and exhibited the dogma of the Deutero-

¹⁾ Elisha was known as he "who poured water on the hands of Elijah", 2 Kings iii 11; cf. 1 Kings xix 21.

²⁾ Num. xxxiv 9; it is not without significance to note that in the famous "let us now praise famous men" sequence in Ecclesiasticus xliv-L, Joshua was known as "the successor of Moses in prophesying", xlv 1.

³⁾ The stories may have been taken from hagiographies of the prophets; different editors may have added material to the various editions of Kings in the process which finally produced this post-exilic edition. See O. EISSFELDT, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, Oxford, 1965, pp. 291ff., for his remarks on this aspect.

nomists so well that they were worked into their edition of the history of Yahweh's people.

IV

One problem that confronts the scholar in a study of the Old Testament is the amount of random information available on the culture of ancient Israel. Yet out of all this information it is very difficult to form reliable patterns that reflect what Israelite religion and civilisation were about in any comprehensive way. This problem is exemplified by the above discussion on the notion of prophetic succession. From the data considered there is certainly evidence to confirm the viewpoint that there was such a succession operating among the prophets. But there is no conclusive evidence that would provide an adequate diagram for the idea. There is also a case to be made for the theory that the succession was of a Mosaic order. But not sufficient to guarantee that it was a factor in the forefront of prophetic activity. There is very little information available to decide whether the Deuteronomists were demanding an ideological conformity in their legislation for the prophet, or were trying to describe the authentic prophet in the light of Israel's experience of prophetism. This study suggests that both ideas are valid for a discussion of the subject. Reality and the ideal were combined in the attempt to deal with a movement which in its essence defied any such legislation. The independence of the prophet accounts for the lack of uniformity in the traditions surrounding the individual prophets in the Old Testament.

This prophetic independence was one of the major elements in the struggle to keep Israel loyal to Yahweh. For the official prophets could be relied on to support popular measures ¹⁾, or maintain the *status quo* ²⁾. Whereas the great canonical prophets spoke the word of Yahweh in spite of the reception afforded them ³⁾. Thus the prophet Amos dissociated himself from the official prophets yet maintained his right to prophesy because he had been commissioned to do so by Yahweh ⁴⁾. It was this independence of the individual prophets

¹⁾ Cf. Mic iii 5; 1 Kings xxii 6ff.; Jer. v 31; vi 13ff.

²⁾ Cf. Am. vii 10ff.; Jer. xxviii 10f.

³⁾ The experience of the great prophets was one of obloquy throughout the history of prophetism in Israel. Perhaps Jeremiah's life is the best example of it, Jer. xx 1ff.; xxvi; xxxiii 1; xxxvii 11f.

⁴⁾ Am. vii 10-17. Amaziah's complaint was partially due to the seditious nature of Amos' prophecy, and partially because he was off-limits in Amaziah's estimation of the situation.

over against the groups of cultic, or royal, prophets which creates some of the problems inherent in this subject. In the final analysis the prophet of Yahweh could not be organised into an office bearing group. Thus on one side there was an official line of prophets, and on the other side the individual prophet speaking to specific situations, and then retiring from the scene. So all comments on prophetic succession in Israel must leave room for the charismatic personality to function outside the ideological framework set for the prophet by Deuteronomy. Eventually the independence of the prophet ceased to be valuable in the period of national restoration after the return from the exile, and he became part of the Temple choir ¹⁾).

Yet the model of Moses for the prophetic figure was a seminal idea in Israel. Much of Jeremiah's self-understanding was based on it ²⁾ The figure of the Suffering Servant in Second Isaiah poses a possible source of study in the light of it. The early church based some of its messianic beliefs on the identification of Jesus with the Mosaic prophet. This paper has limited itself to some considerations of the Elijah-Elisha sagas in the light of Deuteronomy, but further studies could be applied to Jeremiah and the picture of prophecy given in the appendices to the book of Second Isaiah with, perhaps, constructive results.

¹⁾ Cf. the remarks of A. R. JOHNSON on this point, *op. cit.* pp. 68ff.

²⁾ See W. L. HOLLADAY, "The Background of Jeremiah's Self-understanding: Moses, Samuel, and Psalm 22", *JBL*, 1964, pp. 153-64; also his "Jeremiah and Moses-Further Observations", *JBL*, 1966, 17-27.