

The first usage of the word prophet in the Old Testament is in Genesis 20:7 where God tells Abimelech that Abraham is a prophet and will pray for him so that he will live. Here it is evident that prophet is a word the meaning of which would be familiar to Abimelech even though it has not been found in the book of Genesis up to this point. It would seem from the context to indicate one who stood in a particularly close relationship to God so that his plans were especially effective.

The next occurrence of the word is in Exodus 7:1. Here again the word is used in a sense that presupposes an understanding of its meaning "and the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a God to Pharaoh and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh that he send the children of Israel out of his land." Here the term is clearly used in a figurative sense. It parallels the statement that Moses is made a God to Pharaoh. This of course is a metaphor. Moses is to occupy the relation of a god to Pharaoh and Aaron is to be in relationship to Moses as a prophet is in relation to God. Thus the word as used here indicates a spokesman for God. This is quite a clear indication of the meaning of the word, and it is this meaning which fits especially well in the subsequent usage in the Old Testament.

The next occurrences are in Num. 11:25-29. Here the verb is used as well as the noun. The Lord places his spirit upon the 70 elders of the people "and it came to pass that when the spirit rested upon them they prophesied and did not cease." The term here evidently has a somewhat different usage than merely to speak for God. Sixty-eight of these men were with Moses in the Tabernacle, no one could hear them except Moses and the other members of their own group. While it is possible that they would speak one thing at a time telling the others what God wished them to hear, the passage seems rather to imply that they were all prophesying more or less simultaneously. If this is the case there would be contained in it an idea somewhat different from that of simply speaking for God. This latter interpretation is especially probable in view of the fact that the two elders who were/^{not}in the tabernacle prophesied in the camp and a young man rushed to inform Moses. When