

The Story of "The Sons of the Prophets" and Its Implications for the School of Theology, Universitas Klabat Discipleship Training Program

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Abstract - This paper aimed to review the roles of the Old Testament prophets, the sons of the prophets, and the implications of their roles to be applied to Universitas Klabat Theology discipleship training program. This narrative review discussed three prophets of the Old Testament based on 1 Samuel 19:18-24, 2 Kings 2, and 2 Kings 4:38-44, which focus on Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha as forefathers of the school of the prophets. Google Scholar and Research Gate were utilized to find related literature. As for bible commentaries related to the three bible chapters, literature focuses on Ellen White's writings were used in addition to other literature. The review results revealed that a discipleship training program needs to train students to preserve the value of the education they received to be passed on to their students and the next generation as well. The focus of the training is to educate students' minds through knowledge of God and His law, physics through developing empathy and willingness to help others, and social needs to tend to those who are in need. These values must be preserved and taught throughout generations to produce future teachers who are grounded in the same values as those taught by Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha in their school of prophets.

Keywords: Disciples, teachers, prophets, sons of prophets, training program.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Theology at Universitas Klabat (UNKLAB) is a Seventh-day Adventist organization. This faculty aims to produce graduates who have a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and who are active in fulfilling God's Great Commission. To fulfill that purpose, the theology department provides theory through the Personal and Public Evangelism course to help students adapt to real church environments. Theology department also offers the Field School course to train students to be directly involved in doing personal and public evangelism at the local church where they are assigned to serve. In addition, the theology department provides the Pastoral Ministry course, which trains senior students to practice their ministering skills by having real-life experience as pastors-in-training at local churches for a year.

Besides academics, UNKLAB also facilitates theology students with prayer circles, Bible study groups, and evangelism groups. In these groups, in addition to studying the bible, students get the opportunity to share their thoughts, exchange bible verses, and pray for each other. They are free to ask and discuss anything from personal, financial, and academic issues to confusing and controversial Bible verses. The main goal of the groups is not baptism but to share the truth about God and to help those who are in need. Hence, the groups often host potlucks and gatherings to provide a warm and welcoming environment to students.

However, the faculty faces many challenges in developing a discipleship training program that can produce future ministers with a strong foundation in the Bible and a heart of ministry. Therefore, this paper is constructed to find the role of the OT *prophets, the sons of the prophets*, and the implications of their roles to be applied to UNKLAB Theology discipleship training program. In addition, the topic discussed in this paper may also be used as a seminar or workshop program where participants can take part in several situations that simulate the real-life ministry and evangelistic work, thus applying the implications provided in this paper.

To guide the review, there are three research questions to be answered.

1. Who are the sons of the prophets?
2. What are the roles of the prophets and the sons of the prophets in the Old Testament?
3. What are the implications that Old Testament prophets offered to the UNKLAB discipleship training program?

Based on the research questions, it is assumed that the sons of the prophets are the biological sons of the prophets and the sons of the prophets have the same roles as the prophets. Therefore, to clarify the assumption, this paper aims to review the roles of the OT prophets and the sons of prophets, their identities, and responsibilities based on 1 Samuel 19:18-24, 2 Kings 2, and 2 Kings 4:38-44. Finally, this paper provides implications of the stories to be applied to the discipleship training program at UNKLAB.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background

The Prophets

A prophet is God's trainee and spokesperson. They are people chosen by God, are close to Him, and have a personal relationship with Him. White (1958) declared that prophets were not only chosen but also trained and tested personally by God. Thus, a true prophet reflects God's character and cannot be swayed by the influences of the world (Quimby, 1947).

The OT records three most distinct characteristics of a prophet. First, God communicated often with His prophets through visions or dreams. Numbers 12:6 writes that God came, made Himself known, and engaged in a conversation through visions. Some examples of these are the vision Samuel had for Eli and

his sons (1 Sam 3), the vision of Isaiah regarding Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1), the calling of Ezekiel (Eze 1:1), and the vision of Iddo regarding Jeroboam (2 Chro 9:29). Next, prophets are to speak solely what God commanded them to convey (Ellison, 1977). This is because God chooses a prophet to become a tool to communicate His will to His people; therefore, they cannot and should not add or remove any word of what God has commanded them to say. Finally, a prophet is a man or woman chosen personally by God. PfandL (2014) stated that one cannot automatically become a prophet merely because their father is a prophet. God specifically and intentionally chooses His prophets (PfandL, 2014). Consequently, no blood relation, royal decree, or any ceremony can turn a person into a prophet.

The Sons of the Prophets

After the prophets come the *sons of the prophets*. As discussed in the previous section, *sons of the prophets* do not necessarily mean biological sons. *Sons* in this term refers to students or successors of the previous prophet. For example, Elijah bestowed his spirit upon Elisha, who then became his successor both as a prophet and as a teacher (Moore, 2018; Orrego, 1992).

Based on this explanation, we can see that *the sons of the prophets* are being prepared in *the schools of the prophets* to become the *father* (teacher) *of the prophets*. Hence, *the sons of the prophets* were the students of the prophets. They were called *sons* since the prophet who taught them was called *father* (Williams, 1966; 2 Kings 2:12, 6:21, 13:14).

The School of the Prophets

The first teacher and the founder of the school was Samuel (Flores, 2014; White, 1888; 1 Sam 19:20). Upon his retirement, Samuel went back to Ramah, where he had established the school of the prophets (White, 1888; 1 Sam 15:34). However, the school expanded further under the care of Elijah (Orrego, 1992). Thus, besides Ramah, the schools of the prophets expanded to Gilgal (2 Kings 2:1), Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), and Jericho (White, 1907; 2 Kings 2:5). After Elijah was taken up to heaven, Elisha succeeded Elijah and became the teacher in place of Elijah (2 Kings 2:15; 4:38).

The Roles of the Prophets in the Old Testament

A prophet's main duty is to communicate with God and deliver the messages God says to His people (Ellison, 1977; Flores, 2014). A faithful and true prophet always delivers God's words without altering a word (Quimby, 1947). Their role is to become a bridge that mediates God and His people (Quimby, 1947).

However, besides their main function as God's spokesperson, the OT prophets also have other purposes. The Bible and the literature showed that a prophet also functions as a teacher, a judge, and a counselor.

Prophets. The first function of a prophet is to be a prophet. According to Harris (2000), Ellison (1977), and Quimby (1947), a prophet is a deliverer of messages, a spokesperson, and someone who tells of future

events. In the OT, a prophet and *the sons of the prophets* also anointed kings (Orrego, 1992; 2 Kings 9:1-10). The role of a prophet was best illustrated by what Aaron did for Moses in Egypt. At that time, God stands before all nations just as Moses stood before Pharaoh, while the Prophets speak what God commanded as Aaron spoke in place of Moses before Pharaoh.

Teachers. Besides being a prophet who prophesies and anoints kings, a prophet is also a teacher. These prophets were chosen and appointed personally by God as teachers (White, 1903). This function was first fulfilled by Samuel, as the founder and first teacher of *the school of the prophets*; Elijah, as the next teacher of the school; and Elisha, as the successor of Elijah and the one who expanded the school. As teachers, the prophets were responsible for educating, revealing God's purposes for Israel, teaching love, and disclosing God's plan of redemption (White, 1917). In *the schools of the prophets*, the *fathers* train and teach *their sons* about the knowledge of God, His law, guidance, protection, miracles, and power (White, 1958).

Judge. In the OT, the prophets were also judges over Israel and performed related duties (Harris, 2000). As judges, their responsibilities include pointing out sin and wrong behaviors (1 Kings 18:18; 1 Sam 7:3-4), exposing crimes and giving a verdict (1 Kings 21:19; 2 Kings 1:16, 17; 1 Sam 13:13-14), and giving warnings as consequences of sin or wrong behaviors (2 Kings 3:13, 14; 1 Sam 15:22, 23, 28).

Counselor. In addition to being judges over Israel, the Old Testament prophets were also counselors to Israel and their kings (1 Sam 10:8; 1 Sam 12:20,21; 2 Sam 7:24:18, 19; Jer 27:12-14). As counselors, the prophets were to give warnings, call to repentance, and give hope and peace of mind during troubled times (Harris, 2000). Prophets also often led or opened the way during wars (Williams, 1966). Most importantly, they helped the poor and hungry (2 Kings 4:38, 43), the weak, and widows (Flores, 2014; 2 Kings 4:1).

Hermeneutics

Although there are many verses discussing the foundational principles of the prophets, the *sons of the prophets*, and *the schools of the prophets*, this paper only focuses on three chapters. The first chapter, 1 Samuel 19:18-24, talks about Samuel as head of the school of prophets. The next chapter, 2 Kings 2, talks about Elijah and his successor, Elisha. Finally, the last chapter, 2 Kings 4:38-44, talks specifically about Elisha after he succeeded Elijah.

1 Samuel 19:18-24

This chapter began with David running and hiding for fear of Saul, who was determined to kill him. David ran to *Samuel the prophet* and *told him everything that had happened to him*

David . . . fled and . . . he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. 1 Sam 19:18

Later, it was revealed that Saul had not given up on finding and killing David. He sent many messengers to find the whereabouts of David and to take him. However, instead of finding David, he found that every

messenger he sent was possessed by the Holy Spirit and *prophesied* just like the *sons of the prophets* who were there.

So, he [Saul] sent men to capture him [David]. But . . . **the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they also prophesied.** . . . and he [Saul] sent **more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied.** 1 Sam 19:20, 21

The end of the story mentioned that Saul personally went to take David, who was with Samuel; nevertheless, Saul happened to *prophesy* as well.

So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. . . he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. 1 Sam 19:23, 24

Based on 1 Samuel 19:18-24, a prophet is a place where people come to express their worries and fears. In other words, a prophet is a place to find peace, guidance, and protection. A prophet is also a tool that God uses to communicate His will; hence, prophets often prophesy. Finally, as God's right hand, prophets affect the people around them. God's power that flows through them can reach and therefore affect other people, as in the case of Saul and his messengers.

2 Kings 2

The story in 2 Kings 2 opens with God's plan to lift Elijah to heaven in a fiery chariot and a whirlwind. On their journey, Elijah and Elisha met *the sons of the prophets* three times at two different schools and 1 time before crossing the Jordan.

Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, . . . the LORD has sent me to Bethel." . . . So they went down to Bethel. **The company of the prophets at Bethel** came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" . . . Then . . . they went to Jericho. **The company of the prophets at Jericho** went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" . . . Then . . . the two of them walked on. **Fifty men from the company of the prophets** went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 2 Kings 2:1-7

After that, God lifted Elijah up to heaven just as what the *sons of the prophets* said during their visits to Bethel and Jericho. While Elisha saw the fiery chariots lifting Elijah to heaven, he called Elijah as *father*.

Suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "**My father! My father!**" 2 Kings 2:11-12

Upon feeling abandoned by both his *father/teacher* and God, Elisha did not realize that God's spirit that was on Elijah was now on him. As Elijah's cloak marked Elisha as his successor, so did God's spirit mark Elisha as his chosen prophet.

Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak. . . that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. . . the water, . . . divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, . . . said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. 2 Kings 2:13-15

It can be seen from this chapter that a prophet can only be a true prophet when God's spirit is with them. It means God chooses them to be His representatives for his people. God's spirit upon Elisha was felt and seen by *the sons of the prophets* and everyone Elisha met after he crossed the Jordan River.

2 Kings 4:38-44

Not long after Elijah was lifted to heaven and Elisha became the next prophet, Elisha visited *the school of the prophets* in Gilgal. There, *the sons of the prophets* cooked and ate poisonous wild plants, followed by Elisha feeding a hundred during a famine. In the first part, Elisha and *the sons of the prophets* sat together. Elisha asked his servant to prepare food for *the sons of the prophets*. However, the servant did not realize that they had cooked and eaten poisonous plants.

Elisha returned to **Gilgal** and there was a famine in that region. While **the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets."** One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold. . . no one knew what they were. 2 Kings 4:38-39

Soon after *they* ate, *they* felt the poison, cried, and stopped eating. However, Elisha mixed the food with some flour and told the servants to give it back to the people.

As they began to eat it, they cried out, "**Man of God, there is death in the pot!**" . . . **Elisha said, "Get some flour." He put it into the pot and said, "Serve it to the people to eat."** And there was nothing harmful in the pot. 2 Kings 4:40-41

After that, a visitor came and gave them more food, but Elisha told his servant to share it with others.

A man came . . . bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. "**Give it to the people to eat,**" . . . 2 Kings 4:42-44

This chapter revealed that in addition to teaching and caring for their students, prophets should also care for the people around them. They should be willing to help and use their talents and resources for the good of others. God will bless what his servants have and are willing to share with those who are in need.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applies a narrative review method discussing *the prophets and the sons of the prophets*. This method was chosen for can specifically introduce *the prophets and the sons of the prophets*, and to provide their roles based on biblical history written in 1 Samuel 19:18-24, 2 Kings 2, and 2 Kings 4:38-44. This

study specifically focuses on Old Testament prophets who founded and taught at the first school of the prophets. Google Scholar and Research Gate were utilized as the main source to find related literature. This study also searches the Ellen White Estates for bible commentaries related to the three bible chapters. Upon reviewing the bible, and related books and articles, sources were grouped by theme, providing a clear section for the identity of *the prophets and the sons of the prophets* (RQ1), the roles of *the prophets and the sons of the prophets* (RQ2), and the implications of their roles that can be implemented in UNKLAB's theology discipleship training program (RQ3).

There are several steps in analyzing scriptural text and giving implications on the text to be applied to the school of theology's discipleship training program in UNKLAB. The procedures are as follows:

1. Biblical texts from the books of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha were analyzed.
2. Research questions were constructed.
3. Pre-assumptions were composed.
4. The analyzed biblical texts were separated into three groups: Identity, Roles, and School of the Prophets.
5. Literature from books and the writings of Ellen White was used to clarify the identity of the prophets and the sons of the prophets, the roles of the prophets and the sons of the prophets, and the school of the prophets.
6. Implications were derived based on the analysis of the biblical text and literature.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: WHO ARE THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS?

The first pre-assumption points out that the *sons of the prophets* are the children of the prophets, which means the children of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. However, as the bible and the literature have described in chapter 2, *the sons of the prophets*, who were sometimes called *the children of the prophets* and *the band of prophets*, were the students in *the schools of the prophets* under the care of the *prophets (father)*. The *prophets* or *fathers* were the teachers and the ones God appointed over the school and the students. In this paper, the *fathers* were Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha.

RQ 2: WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE PROPHETS AND THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The second pre-assumption points out that *the prophets* and *the sons* have the same responsibility or roles. The literature revealed that the roles were somewhat similar, yet the *prophets* had certain responsibilities that the *sons* could not yet fulfill until they became the *prophets*. A *prophet's* specific roles include teaching, judging, and counseling, while the *sons' specific roles* were to respect their teacher, to learn and train well to become the next successors of prophets, to build an intimate relationship with God, and to help with chores. However, both the *prophets* and the *sons of the prophets* can anoint kings or rulers, preach, help people in need, and receive visions or dreams.

RQ 3: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS THAT OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS OFFERED TO UNKLAB DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM?

The Education

The schools of the prophets mainly focused on building moral and ethical codes of Israel as a method to avoid sinning against God through idolatry and other transgressions of the law of God (Heaton, 1994). Moral upbringing should be the main goal of the school instead of earthly materials. Just as the schools of the prophets preserved and enhanced moral upbringing and ethical codes (Flores, 2014; Knight, 2016), SDA schools today should make the scripture the basis of their education. Therefore, the priority of the teachers is to strive for wisdom from God to help them teach and train their students above better or new classrooms, textbooks, teaching tools, and number of students (White, 1958). When God truly establishes the teacher and the school, society will see the difference, just as Queen Sheba noticed the difference in Solomon's kingdom (school), which will result in honoring God's name (Taylor, 2016; White, 1958).

The education that God established in the schools of the prophets was not focused merely on religious knowledge but also on mental and physical welfare (Orrego, 1992). Thus, students should have a proper or special place to learn (Flores, 2014; 2 Kings 6:1, 2). In this special environment, students will be taught about the knowledge of God along with self-control, peacefulness, and temperance (White, 1958). In other words, the *schools of the prophets* should not focus merely on intellectual development but also on performing duties as members of society, such as helping with house chores and other physical work.

The Subject

White (1958) stated that Samuel established the schools of the prophets to nurture the moral and spiritual well-being of young people. These young people were prepared to be God-fearing men and leaders in the future. Students who studied at the schools of the prophets were carefully chosen by Samuel based on their godly characters and pure lives. The subjects taught at this school were preaching, prophesying, God's law, music, and poetry (Flores, 2014; White, 1953). The school also educated students on the importance of prayers, the correct way to pray and to approach God, how to exercise faith, how to acknowledge the Holy Spirit, and how to obey God and the Holy Spirit. The focus of the school was to teach God's will and people's duties toward God (White, 1953). Moreover, the school did not fail to focus on restoring God's lost image in humans (White, 1953).

The Method

The *schools of the prophets* had specific methods. They focused on the continuance perseverance of the school's identity and a balanced development of mental, spiritual, physical, and social (Knight, 2016). They also prepared students for the heavenly life through lifelong service on earth (Knight, 2016). The final method that the school applied was the study and understanding of biblical prophecy written in Revelation (Knight, 2016). By combining the three methods, the *sons of the prophets* were able to express love for

each other, kindness, truthfulness, perfection in character, improvement in God's gifts, humbleness, discipline, and restoring God's lost image (White, 1958).

Therefore, in addition to preaching the word of God, giving bible lessons, and teaching biblical principles, UNKLAB's discipleship training program should also tend to the needs of people who may come from different races, cultures, tribes, and customs (Flores, 2014). The education of the mind, body, and soul should be balanced so that students may be able to fulfill their responsibilities as future teachers, counselors, and preachers.

V. CONCLUSION

Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha realized the importance of educating young men to be fervent in studying the word of God, to transform a corrupt nation into God's loyal children, and to maintain the knowledge and characteristics of God. Thus, they established *the schools of the prophets*. Therefore, UNKLAB's theology discipleship training program are to become the vessel to train students to become good ministers who will minister people's mental (knowledge, moral and ethical codes), physical (the willingness to help others), and social needs (to attend to the need of the poor and hungry, the weak, and widows) in addition to ministering their spiritual needs. Each course and program offered at school should focus on moral upbringing and ethical codes that are based on God's law.

However, this paper is not without limits. Although the identity, the roles, and the implication of a biblical discipleship training program are discussed in this paper, they only focus on the story of "*the sons of the prophets*" based on 1 Samuel 19:18-24 (Samuel), 2 Kings 2 (Elijah), and 2 Kings 4:38-44 (Elisha). This paper also mainly emphasizes the context of the Theological Department of Universitas Klabat. Therefore, future studies may conduct systematic reviews on the same topic yet in different environments, such as at a church, a theology school, or different universities. A meta-analysis study can also be conducted to explore variables that may affect the roles of *the prophets* and the *sons of the prophets* in the discipleship training program, such as cultural, religious, and social aspects. In addition, an experimental study could be conducted to examine the success of the program as well as to test different variables that may affect the success of the program and the roles of the teachers.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

D.S. conceived the idea in this paper, wrote drafts, and conducted all processes related to the writing of this paper.

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