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# **Prophetic Conflicts in the Deuteronomistic History**

申命記史書における預言論争

指導教授 長谷川修一

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**Daewook Kim**

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# SUMMARY

## 1. Introduction

In the Hebrew Bible, there are many texts that contain condemnation of false prophecy or conflicts between YHWH's prophets and false prophets. For instance, 1 Kings 18 describes a dramatic contest between YHWH's prophet Elijah and Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel; the contrast between Elijah's overwhelming victory and the prophets' defeat accentuates that the true God is not Baal but YHWH. Yet, false prophets also use YHWH's name (e.g., Jer 14:14; 23:17; Ezek 13:6; Zech 13:3). In these examples, false prophets are overtly or covertly described as prophets associated with other deities, so they can be identified as syncretistic prophets; true prophets worship YHWH exclusively, while false prophets worship other deities or YHWH with other deities. In this sense, the prophetic conflicts in the stories are construed as a polemic against syncretistic Yahwism. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the prophetic conflicts described in those texts were designed to reject syncretistic Yahwism and to promote the exclusive worship of YHWH.

There are narratives regarding the prophetic conflicts in the Deuteronomistic History (e.g., 1 Kgs 18; 22). One may ask whether the narratives reveal a polemic against the syncretism; if it is revealed, one may ask why the syncretism was condemned at the time when the narratives were composed. The latter question is closely related to authors'/redactors' rhetorical purposes.

To test the assumption and to answer the questions, I focused on narratives regarding the prophetic conflicts in the Deuteronomistic History and explored the narratives via the following three steps: first, I demonstrated the polemic against syncretism and messages by examining the narratives; second, I discussed the date of the narratives by showing that the narratives were revised by the Deuteronomists in the Persian period; last, I considered religious settings and rhetorical purposes by surveying biblical and extra-biblical sources, which are associated with the messages of the narratives.

To achieve the above mentioned aims, I have chosen four narratives in the Deuteronomistic History: 1 Sam 28:3–25; 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34; 18:16–40; 22:1–38. In 1 Sam 28:3–25, the dead Samuel, YHWH's prophet, is summoned by a female necromancer, although necromancy is strictly forbidden in the Book of Deuteronomy (18:9–14) that forms the ideological/theological background of the Deuteronomistic History. The appearance of YHWH's prophet through the necromancer leads us to assume syncretism and thus 1 Sam 28:3–25 should be included in this study. In the First Book of Kings, the following three narratives clearly depict conflicts between different prophets. The narrative in 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 portrays a conflict between a man of

God and an old prophet, which is related to Jeroboam's golden calves. In 18:16–40 Elijah competes with Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel, and in 22:1–38, Micaiah is in confrontation with Ahab's prophets.

## **2. Saul, the Dead Samuel and the Woman (1 Samuel 28:3–25)**

To determine a main message of the narrative in 1 Sam 28:3–25, I examined the literary structure of the narrative through the similar behavior of Saul and the woman. The chiasmic structure of the narrative shows the condemnation of Saul's disobedience, who had failed to destroy the Amalekites, and indicates the ideology of segregation. Superiority (or inferiority) and similarities between Samuel and the woman are found, and those show that syncretism between necromancy and Yahwism is implied in the narrative. The narrative is deliberately designed as a fine piece of the entire Book of Samuel, indicating the fall of Saul in a dramatic way while drawing attention to the authenticity of the true king, David, who actually never appears in the narrative itself. The emphasis on Davidic succession indicates the hope for restoration and accentuates the exclusive worship of YHWH. Consequently, the Deuteronomists, using the narrative in 1 Sam 28:3–25, conveyed to the post-exilic community the messages of segregation and of obedience only to YHWH.

## **3. The Old Prophet's Deceit, Jeroboam's Golden Calves and the Disobedience of the Man of God (1 Kings 12:25–13:34)**

I surveyed the similarities and differences between the characters of the narrative in 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 and examined related passages. Because of the old prophet's deceit and the disobedience of the man of God, the true and false prophets are not clearly distinguished in the narrative. The comparison between Jeroboam and the old prophet reveals that disobedience, which is equated with idolatry, is more evil than false prophecy. YHWH's prohibitions, which are associated with Jeroboam and the man of God, are used to condemn Jeroboam's innovations and to highlight the importance of the Mosaic law. The golden calves represent the fusion of YHWH, El, and Baal (in view of Ugaritic texts, biblical texts, a drawing found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and the Samaria ostrakon no. 41), and point to poly-Yahwism in various places. The Deuteronomists sought to separate YHWH from the fusion and to reject poly-Yahwism. By emphasizing the obedience to YHWH's words and by describing contrasts between Jerusalem and Bethel, the Deuteronomists led the post-exilic community to recognize YHWH as the true God, and to admit Jerusalem as the true worship place.

## **4. YHWH, Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:16–40)**

The narrative in 1 Kgs 18:16–40 indicates that the people worship both YHWH and Baal. To reject syncretism, the narrative depicts contrasts between YHWH and Baal. The result of the contest demonstrates that YHWH is the only God, and thereby the narrative exhorts the people to choose YHWH as the true God and to follow the true “husband.” In light of Judg 6:25–32, which shows thematic and lexical similarities with 1 Kgs 18:16–40, YHWH’s fire consuming the wood in 1 Kgs 18:38 can be construed as the destruction of the wooden pole of Asherah and thus as the polemic against Asherah. The Deuteronomists, conveying these messages to the post-exilic community, sought to refute any relation of YHWH with other deities and to promote monotheism in the Persian period.

### **5. Ahab and Saul (1 Kings 22:1–38)**

I reinterpreted 1 Kgs 22:1–38 in light of both comparisons with the stories of Saul and the juxtaposition of the narratives in 1 Kings 20, 21, and 22:1–38. It is reinterpreted that Ahab’s death in 1 Kgs 22:1–38 represents YHWH’s judgment on Ahab’s two sins illustrated in 1 Kings 20 and 21, which draw a considerable parallel to Saul’s two sins. The parallelism between Ahab’s inquiry in 1 Kgs 22:1–38 and Saul’s necromancy in 1 Sam 28:3–25 reveals that Ahab’s inquiry is condemned as syncretistic Yahwism whereas the importance of YHWH’s words is highlighted. The contrast between YHWH and Ahab stresses the feature of the heavenly King YHWH who is the supreme leader in the divine council. This feature shows the only One God, with whom no god is compared, and would be employed to promote monotheism. YHWH’s deceit can be construed as the Deuteronomists’ literary strategy to mimic Ahab’s evil and to express monotheism.

### **6. Conclusion**

Efforts to define the “true Israel,” “true YHWH,” and the “true worship place” are shown in the narratives regarding the prophetic conflicts in the Deuteronomistic History (1 Sam 28:3–25; 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34; 18:16–40; 22:1–38). These efforts indicate that the identity of the post-exilic community, the understanding of YHWH, and the significance of Jerusalem were important theological issues for the Deuteronomists in the Persian period.

It seems that mixed marriages caused idolatry (Ezra 9:11–14; Neh 13:25–27) and accelerated syncretism (Ezra 9:1–2). In this sense, syncretism was considered a problem associated with mixed marriages that threatened the ethnic identity of the post-exilic community. In order to solve this problem, the Deuteronomists, using the narrative in 1 Sam 28:3–25, conveyed to the post-exilic community the messages of segregation and of obedience only to YHWH. The separation from other ethnic groups served to protect the worship of YHWH and at the same

time to preserve ethnicity. Therefore, for the Deuteronomists, the true Israel is the post-exilic community who worship YHWH exclusively, distinguished from the “others.”

To refute the close relationship between YHWH and other deities and the identification of YHWH with other deities, the Deuteronomists, depicting the contest between Elijah and Baal’s prophets in 1 Kgs 18:16–40, show that YHWH is not associated with Baal and Asherah and is the only true living God. It is noteworthy that the people who see the result of the contest confess YHWH as אלהים in the narrative (v. 39); this confession demonstrates that אלהים is not Baal but YHWH. Thus, the narrative insists that YHWH has no consort and that the title אלהים should be used for Him alone by rejecting any link between YHWH and other deities and by showing YHWH’s power. YHWH is indirectly described as אלהים in 1 Sam 28:3–25; 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34. Saul understands YHWH and the dead as אלהים but the narrative illustrates YHWH as אלהים by showing that YHWH is able to handle the dead. Similarly, the golden calves are expressed as אלהים by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:28) but the narrative reveals YHWH as אלהים both through the rejection of the worship of the golden calves and through the emphasis on obedience to YHWH. In 1 Kgs 22:1–38, there is no mention of the term אלהים and other deities. Rather, the narrative describes YHWH as the heavenly king who, using heavenly beings, punishes the earthly king. This denotes that YHWH is the only king to govern the heaven and the earth. Therefore, the deities and divine beings, such as Baal and the dead, were completely eclipsed by YHWH’s role and power in the narratives, and thereby, any attempt to associate YHWH with other deities, such as El and Asherah, was thwarted by the Deuteronomists who portray YHWH as the only One God (אלהים).

The narrative in 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 points to Jerusalem as the only legitimate sanctuary to worship YHWH by denigrating the Bethel altar. This emphasis on Jerusalem reflects the Deuteronomists’ theology of YHWH’s election of Jerusalem and the Temple. For the Deuteronomists, Jerusalem is the “true worship place” for the “true Israel” to worship “true YHWH” exclusively.

Consequently, the Deuteronomists were more concerned with the theological questions about the “true Israel,” “true YHWH,” and the “true worship place” rather than the prophetic conflicts themselves. The prophetic conflicts reflect a confusing religious situation where it is difficult to distinguish between true prophecy and false prophecy, and this difficulty is similar to the theological questions. Therefore, by using the narratives regarding the prophetic conflicts, the Deuteronomists sought to answer the questions. These answers served to lead the post-exilic community to protect their ethnic identity and to worship YHWH alone, exclusively in Jerusalem.