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Thomas L. Shaffer

Notre Dame Law School, thomas.l.shaffer.1@nd.edu

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The Biblical Prophets as Lawyers for the Poor

Thomas L. Shaffer*

*University of Notre Dame, Valparaiso University

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The Biblical Prophets as Lawyers for the Poor*

Thomas L. Shaffer

Abstract

Lawyers practicing poverty law often lack mentors and role models. This author discusses how biblical figures, who served poor people, could be mentors and role models for lawyers practicing poverty law. Prophets, and particularly prophets-as-lawyers, redefine power relationships. Shaffer discusses his personal journey through out his career in using religious guidance to help him better understand his career. He also discuss his teachings to his law students of the value of learning from prophets in their legal careers.

KEYWORDS: poverty law, religion, poor, poor people, poverty, poverty lawyer, Gaines, lloyd gaines

*This was given in a conference at Fordham University Law School called "Religious Values and Lawyering for the Poor," January 31, 2003. Earlier versions of it were included in two earlier conferences: "Faith and the Law," Ohio State Bar Association, November 14, 2001, Columbus, Ohio; and "Lawyers and Social Healing," College of St. Catharine, St. Paul, Minnesota, February 15, 2002. I am grateful to those who attended each of these three programs, for valuable contributions to my project on lawyers as prophets, of which this is first of three parts. The second and third parts have been published: *Lawyers as Prophets*, 15 *ST. THOMAS L. REV.* 469 (2003); and *Lawyers and the Biblical Prophets*, 17 *NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS, AND PUB. POL'Y* 521 (2003).

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