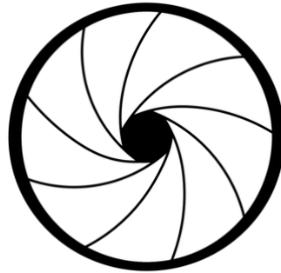


Seers, Diviners, and Prophets
The Word of God in Men



by

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The Broad World of Mantic Practices

The biblical prophets were part of a wider cultural landscape which included a variety of mantic practices. Derived from the Greek *mantis*, a **mantic practice** is any regularly employed means by which the will or word of the gods is revealed to human beings. The Greek *mantis* was any number of soothsayers and oracles and its related forms indicate any kind of oracle or prophetic utterance.¹ It is, as Matthew Neujahr has argued, “a far-flung net, yielding a remarkably heterogenous haul.”² It is important that we understand that such practices were commonplace in the ancient world, and not nearly as extraordinary as they would appear in our current context. Texts can be said to describe mantic practices if they meet one of two criteria:

- (1) There is explicit mention of an intermediary who is responsible for conveying a message from the divine or other supernatural revealer.
- (2) If there is no intermediary, the content or context of divine speech could be considered to be revelatory or oracular in nature.³

Types of Mantic Practices

Omens and Divination

The most common type of mantic text found in the ANE is the **omen**. This is any kind of determination of divine favor, or a prediction of events based on the observable phenomena in the physical world. Omens could, and often did occur naturally.⁴ The process by which one obtains or reads an omen is called **divination**. Omens could be obtained via a number of practices:

- *Astrology*: the reading of the position of planets and stars, but also astronomical phenomena such as comets, asteroids, and eclipses.
- *Extispicy*: the reading of the entrails of sacrificed animals.⁵
- *Auguries*: practices like rolling the bones or casting lots. (Tarot cards are a type of modern augury.)
- *Dreams/Visions*: messages revealed directly to the mantic practitioner.

¹ See entries in Liddle-Scott, 1079–80 for the various forms. Although the Greek *mantis* appears in literature much later than the Hebrew Scriptures, it provides a broad catch-all term for practices related to prophecy.

² Matthew Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*, BJS 354 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2012), 5.

³ Martti Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Prophecies*, SAAS 7 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998), 9–11.

⁴ Anne Marie Kitz, “Prophecy as Divination,” *CBQ* 65 (2003): 26–33.

⁵ Extispicy was, by far, the most prevalent form of divination in Mesopotamia, especially in the LBA, if the extant evidence reveals the facts on the ground. Neujahr provides excellent definitions of the use of these divination practices in Babylon and Assyria. See Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East*, 83–92.

Among the Mesopotamian cultures, diviners were not free to practice independently. Divination was heavily regulated by the temples, and there was an extensive literature of commentaries on the various divination texts to ensure accurate readings.⁶

Most of these practices were forbidden to the Israelites, although how strictly the Israelites observed these bans is up for debate (Lev 19:31, 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11). Still, there were some divination-like practices in ancient Israel, including the casting of lots, a practice of the common people (Josh 18:10; 1 Sam 14:42; Ps 22:8), and the Urim and Thummim, which was reserved for the priests (Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 14:41; 1 Sam 28:6).

Oracles and Visions

Oracular revelation is a specific type of mantic revelation, offered by a designated **oracle**. An oracle was presented usually in response to a question presented by a petitioner. Most often, oracles related to the ruler of a nation, rather than to individuals as in the case of other mantic revelation. They were articulated utterances, which were predictive in nature, but generally nebulous in content.⁷

Somewhat similar to oracular revelation, visionary revelation is reception of divine message via dream or vision. These dreams and visions may come unbidden, or they may be induced by a particular process or state. Dreams and visions are generally said to derive from “abnormal mental states,” what might be considered ecstatic states. Oracles and visionaries usually received their revelations in what Simon Parker describes as “abnormal mental state” (1 Sam 10:9–14, 19:23–24).

These states could, but were not necessarily, be confused with possession by a spirit or power.⁸ In response to this, there are warnings against dream omens in the Hebrew Scriptures (Deut 13:3, 5; Jer 23:23–40). Given that a number of prominent biblical figures including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Ezekiel, and Daniel, received revelations via dreams, it seems that the Hebrews’ dreams were somehow distinct from other ANE dream/vision omens but unfortunately, there is not enough substantial evidence to delineate them.

A Note About Magic and Witchcraft

Our modern context tends to get oracles and divination mixed up with the world of magic and witchcraft, but in the ANE, mantic practices and magical practices were quite distinct. In the

⁶ Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination*, CNIP 19 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1995), 11. The commentaries still exist, but sadly the divination manuals are largely lost. For discussion, see Uri Gabbay, *The Exegetical Terminology of Akkadian Commentaries*, CHANE 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 2–7.

⁷ This list is a paraphrase of Neujahr’s chapter on the Sibylline prophecy type as observed through the ancient world. It does not appear in his work. His willingness to accept the Greek model as the prototype for Hebrew prophecy is debatable, but the categories do apply in a broad sense. See Neujahr, *Predicting the Past*, 191–242.

⁸ John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 119–20; Simon B. Parker, “Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel,” *VT* 28 (1978): 271–85.

ANE, magic was considered a medical practice. Witchcraft, on the other hand, was paramount to poison, and was often treated that way. They were viewed as just as real as medicines or surgery.

Magic

There are many magical texts known from Mesopotamia. Modern ideas of magic must be put aside. For the ANE peoples, magic was manipulation of the physical world, usually through spoken words and specific gestures or ministrations, although many incantations also involved amulets or talismans.⁹ The most extraordinary thing about magic is that it was not considered supernatural. Magic was a means of healing, of providing care for people who were ill, both physically and mentally.¹⁰ The magical texts were highly regimented and carefully organized, and magicians were seen as part of the caste of physicians (*asū/āšipu*) alongside exorcists (*ḫābu*) and assorted types of functionaries. Magic was not a means of divination per se, but it was closely related to divination in some respects. Maladies could be symptoms of physical illness, but also witchcraft or an omen from the gods, which is why these practitioners were closely associated.¹¹

Witchcraft

The Mesopotamian people acknowledged the reality and power of the witch (*kaššaptu*) in their society. These practitioners, who were usually female, could cause all kinds of maladies. Magical texts often address witchcraft, which is treated negatively. Legal texts deal with punishments for witchcraft. Medical texts from the period treat witchcraft as a legitimate matter which the physician (*āšipu*) had to deal with judiciously.¹² Far from being mystical curses or hexes, the witches were credited with ability to cause actual sicknesses which the physician had to purge through medical procedures accompanied by incantations and rituals. These anti-witchcraft rituals extended to Ugarit, where similar incantations in both syllabic Akkadian and

⁹ A good example of this is the *Muššu' u* tablet, which goes over a series of gestures and words which are meant to loosen the attachment of evil spirits causing illness. For a translation and discussion, see Barbara Böck, “When You Perform the Ritual of Rubbing’: On Medicine and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *JNES* 62 (2003): 1–16.

¹⁰ The intertwined fields of magic and medicine in the ANE is outside of this project’s scope, but these resources are provided for additional research. A rather compendious volume has recently appeared on the scene—Johann Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, WAW 36 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Brill has a series entitled “Ancient Magic and Divination” (AMD) which includes a number of monographs on the subject. Of interest is Strahil V. Panayotov and Luděk Vacín, eds., *Mesopotamian Medicine and Magic: Studies in Honor of Markham J. Geller*, AMD 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

¹¹ For a recent consideration of the Marduk-Ea incantation from Babylon, see Amar Annus, “The Spiritual Dimensions of Healing Rituals in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 59 (2020): 2486–2503. It seems that physicians could be male or female, and in some circumstances, they were consulted along with the exorcists and diviners when a prominent person was ill (*CDA* 2:344–347). There is a common refrain concerning unclear diagnosis: (*amīl*) *asā* (*amīl*) *āšipa* (*amīl*) *bârâ* (*amīl*) *šâ'ila šu-ud-di*, “notify the physician, the exorcist, the diviner, and the interpreter of dreams.” Quoted from René Labat, ed. *Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1951), 170. These are meant to be distinct, but related roles.

¹² The comprehensive catalogue of anti-witchcraft texts is Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, eds. *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, 3 vols., AMD 8/1–3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010–2019), abbreviated *CMAwR*.

consonantal Ugaritic have been uncovered.¹³ Of particular interest in the Ugaritic corpus are the *Beschwörung* texts like KTU 1.24 and 1.178.¹⁴ These appear to be something similar to necromancy, perhaps with affinities to the practices repeatedly banned through Israel's history (1 Sam 28:3; 2 Kgs 23:24).¹⁵

A Brief Tour of ANE Prophetic Texts

How do modern scholars know about ancient mantic practices? Because mantic practices were associated with temples and regulated, it was common in the ANE world to create archives. The Assyrians put considerable effort into this kind of work. This allowed practitioners to check precedence, consult manuals, and to train the next generation of practitioners. Below is a brief tour of the sites in Mesopotamia and the Levant where prophetic texts have been found. This is not an exhaustive inventory of mantic texts from the region. It is representative of the largest caches of documents, but hardly exhaustive.¹⁶

Archives and Libraries

A **library** is a broad collection of texts in one location. These are texts which have literary significance, such as epics or religious documents. An **archive** is “a group of texts of administrative, economic, juridical and similar types, including letters.”¹⁷ An archive will have documents from one of these spheres. Archives were “living” repositories, with new documents being added to a cache in a location with a specific purpose and remained active during a span of time.¹⁸ Generally, the documents in an archive are from the region in which the archive was kept,

¹³ Gregorio del Olmo Lete, and Ignacio Márquez Rowe, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts from Ugarit*, SANER 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014). The best known of these are the snake bite texts (KTU 1.100, 1.107). Olmo Lete deals extensively with KTU 1.107 at length on pages 157–64. See Johannes C. de Moor, “East of Eden,” *ZAW* 100 (1988): 105–11.

¹⁴ Olmo Lete and Rowe, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts*, 92. There is difficulty bringing this term into English, with the term meaning something like “invocation of presence.” Olmo Lete offers the translation of “conjuración.”

¹⁵ See also Esther J. Hamori, “The Prophet and the Necromancer: Women’s Divination for Kings,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 827–43. Also, see her full volume, Esther J. Hamori, *Women’s Divination in Biblical Literature*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Hamori’s analysis falls within a feminist critique, but she is correct that what was positive magic and what was negative witchcraft was generally defined along gender lines. The *āšīpu* as depicted in the literature is always male while the *kaššaptu* is female.

¹⁶ The exceptions are Ugarit, which lacks a significant prophetic corpus, and the single, partial text found at Tušhan.

¹⁷ Olof Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur: A Survey of the Material from the German Excavations*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 6 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1986), 20–21.

¹⁸ Cécile Michel, “Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use of Private Archives: The Case of Old Assyrian Archives (nineteenth century BCE),” in *Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views of Record-Keeping*, ed. Alessandro Bausi, Christian Brockmann, Michael Friedrich, and Sabine Kienitz, Studies in Manuscript Cultures 11 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 44–46.

while a library may contain documents from a wide catchment. *To put it succinctly, a library usually contains archives; but an archive does not constitute a library.*

The Assyrians were the great archivists of the ancient world. While other cultures maintained repositories of documents, the Assyrians seem to have done it as a core component of their culture. There are both official and private archives from every period of Assyrian history. Official archives are significant because they were assembled by government representatives, either local or national. These usually found their ways into libraries, such as the great library of Ashurbanipal, at Nineveh.



Private archives, however, could be accumulated by families, individuals, and even scribal schools.¹⁹ The purpose of these private archives appears to have been for reference and precedent. It is reasonable to assume documents which might have been consulted frequently were kept together. This was a necessity for business, and the existence of these substantial private archives in the Old Assyrian Period provides good evidence that the practice may have continued or been revived later. Entire archives could be transferred by individuals, and it appears that communities maintained knowledge of the archives they possessed as well as those others might have that spoke to the particulars of their trade or affairs.²⁰

Late Bronze Age Prophetic Archives

Mari

The earliest of the extant archives is from the ancient city of Mari, located in northeastern Syria near the Euphrates. Mari was the center of a small kingdom that flourished in the eighteenth-century BCE before it was destroyed by Hammurabi. The city was settled by Semitic-speaking people, apparently sharing linguistic characteristics with the city of Ebla to their west and north, both of which were distinct from the Sumerian culture to the south. The archives that have been found there include Old Babylonian cuneiform texts from the reign of the last two kings, Yasmah-Addu (ca. 1792–1775) and Zimri-Lim (ca. 1774–1760 BCE).²¹ For the most part, the prophetic texts from Mari can be divided into four categories:

- *Oracular Letters*: These are letters from a diviner or visionary in response to a request from the king. They offer an oracle of success or danger to the king. (ARM 26 195–223, 243, 371, 414; 27 32; IM 6 1 (A.3760); 7 38 (A.1968), 39 (A.1121, A.2731)
- *Letters from the Gods*: Unlike the oracular letters, these are messages not requested but are forwarded to the king, assuming that the king is prepared to receive these message if they arise. (FLP 11674, 2064; ARM 26 192, 194).
- *Dream Reports*: Unbidden dreams, usually given to the spouse or an advisor of the king, were sent to the diviners for interpretation, and the interpretation reported to the monarch. (ARM 26 224–240).
- *Secondary Mantic Notes*: These are not directly mantic texts, but confirm a prophecy or vision through a secondary omen, such as the appearance of the *hurra* bird (Letter A 222)

¹⁹ Michel, “Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use,” 48–51.

²⁰ Such is the case of one text from Kültepe (AKT 3, 84) which was a request by a merchant for his wife to retrieve a particular tablet stored near the city gates. Michel, “Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use of Private Archives,” 61.

²¹ Malamat notes the high number of NWS terms in the Mari texts, which he takes to mean that the prophetic texts may have originated with an NWS-speaking group. Abraham Malamat, “The Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 41; Abraham Malamat, *History of Biblical Israel: Major Problems and Minor Issues*, CHANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 21–22. Sasson cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from this kind of similarities, given the distance from which we view the evidence. See Jack M. Sasson, “About ‘Mari and the Bible’,” *RA* 92.2 (1998): 97–123.

or the confirmation of an unrecorded omen (ARM 10.81).²² The utterance may not be recorded with the confirming omen.

These omens were generally received by a person referred to in Akkadian as the *muḫḫû(m)*. It seems likely that this is derived from *maḫû*, a state of frenzy or altered state of mind.²³ These ecstatic diviners were individuals, distinct from the professional community of diviners who handled other, more tightly regulated omens. These professionals were known as *āpilum*, literally “reader.” The *āpilum* was not an ecstatic and offered the ruler divinations based on rigid standards.²⁴ They appear to have been a part of a collective group or community while the *muḫḫûm* was often an individual.

Both of these groups were closely affiliated with religious authority, as expressed in the temples of the various gods. A third, independent category was known as the *nabī*. They were some kind of intuitive diviners, who received their messages from the gods outside of the temple hierarchy.²⁵ They were not trained or necessarily ecstatic, and their utterances deal mostly with the well-being of the king or issuing commands for new works.²⁶ In the case of the Mari archives, the reports of these *nabī* were mostly delivered second hand. The *nabī* would receive a dream or vision in an ecstatic state, and it would be reported to the professional diviners who would interpret it as they would other omens. At least some of these dreams came without the necessary divination rituals. The text below is from the *nabī* Zunana. He sees a dream from the god Dagan, telling him that his king Zimri-Lin, needed to act to free Zunana’s servant girl:

²² Anne Marie Kitz, “Prophecy as Divination,” *CBQ* 65 (2003): 26–27. These is an excellent anthology of mantic texts from Mari available in Jack M. Sasson, *From the Mari Archives: An Anthology of Old Babylonian Letters* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 272–89. The majority of the texts cited in this paragraph can be found in Sasson’s volume. Those not in Sasson can be found in Nissinen’s volume cited above.

²³ Martti Nissinen, C. L. Seow, Robert K. Ritner, and H. Craig Melchert, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, WAW 12 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 6. There is a sense from the Mari texts that this ecstatic state was sometimes difficult to accomplish: *m[u]-uḫ-ḫu-um ittalk[am] ana ma-ḫe-e-e[m] ul i-[...]*, “the ecstatic comes [and is unable(?)] to go into a trance” (*CAD* 10:90–91).

²⁴ Herbert B. Huffmon, “Prophecy in the Mari Texts as an Innovative Development,” in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome 4–8 July 2011*, ed. Alfonso Archi (Winona Lakes, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 205–14; Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison*, CHANE 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 65–67.

²⁵ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 9–10. Malamat, “The Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy,” 34–35. Elsewhere, Malamat maintained that this type of prophecy is present only in Mari and the biblical texts. See Abraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 59–62.

²⁶ Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 59.

u D[aga]n bēlka ušall[i]lamma mamman ul ilputanni.

“Dagan, your lord, appeared to me in a dream without the necessary rituals.”
(ARM 26 232:8)²⁷

Some of the utterances of the *nabī* sound a lot like the biblical prophets. Consider, for example, this message from Kibri-Dagan to the same king, Zimri-Lin. Apparently, Kibri-Dagan had been commissioned to rebuild a temple of some sort, but he had become ill, and he received a vision from Dagan commanding him *not* to complete the work or the temple would fall into the nearby river.

ummā[mi ilumma] bītam annēm ḥarībam lā te[ppesā].

“Thus says the god [Dagan]: you may not build this ruined house again!”
(ARM 26 234:1'-2')²⁸

This text is similar to several dreams in the biblical text.²⁹ For example, consider YHWH’s warning to Solomon concerning idolatry and the potential destruction of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 9:8). While Solomon is asleep at Gibeon YHWH appears in a dream and speaks directly to him.

wayo `mer YHWH `elāw...wāḥabayit hazeh yihāyeh `elāyôn

And YHWH said to him, “...and this house will be a heap of ruins.”
(1 Kgs 9:8)

While many Hebrew prophets did receive the word of YHWH in dreams, it was hardly the normal means of revelation.³⁰ The Hebrews seem to have *allowed for* YHWH speaking through dreams, but they did not have an institutionalized approach to them as other ANE cultures did. The Mari diviners delivered their messages from the margins of society, and then they were interpreted by the professional caste.³¹ In the Hebrew model, the dreams generally are given directly to the ruler. Dreams given to non-Hebrew kings need to be interpreted by Hebrew interpreters like Joseph and Daniel, but as in the case of Solomon’s dream, the message is very clear and delivered directly.

²⁷ Translation adapted from Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 65. It could be argued that the mention of a vision without the necessary preparation (*liptum*) marks this text as an outlier, and that such direct revelation was an anomaly.

²⁸ Translation from Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 69. When a line appears with a strophe ('), that indicates the *reverse* side of a tablet with writing on both sides.

²⁹ Abraham Malamat, “Prophetic Revelations in New Documents from Mari and the Bible,” in *Volume du Congrès International pour l'étude de l'Ancien Testament, Genève 1966*, ed. P. A. H. de Boer, VTSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 221. See ARM 2 90:19, 3 40:13.

³⁰ Hans M. Barstad, “Mari and the Hebrew Bible,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 70 (2005): 21–32. Barstad charts out parallels to the biblical narrative, but they are broad categories indeed.

³¹ Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 61–62.

Ebla

About 250 miles west and a little north of Mari sits the much older city-state of Ebla. The two cities were rivals during the LBA, although Ebla dates back to the EBA. Mari was generally within the sphere of the Mesopotamian influence, but Ebla is remote enough that the city had its own idiomatic approach to things. While the central archives found at Ebla date mostly from the twenty-fourth century BCE reigns of Irbab-damu and Išar-damu (ca. 2340-2300 BCE), there are palace archives that are almost contemporaneous with those found at Mari.

The palace archives are mostly administrative documents, but a handful of divination texts were excavated at a site called Chapel G3. These are chiefly animal auguries.³² Ebla contains no mention of mantic functionaries like those named at Mari. The archives at Ebla are in Old Babylonian, and they contain two terms for diviner in the record: *bārû* (equivalent to *naṭalu*) and *lú-máš*. Elsewhere in the administrative archives the word *nabī* appears, but it has no connection to divination.³³ Neither Mari nor Ebla were Akkadian-speaking cities, and given their chronological distance from the biblical prophets, it is hardly surprising to find that their vocabulary is not analogous.

Emar

To the east of Ebla, the city of Emar grew up toward the end of the LBA. The site is at the modern town of Eski Meskene, close enough to Emar as to almost form twin sites. When the site was excavated, archives were uncovered that were slightly later than those found at Mari, roughly contemporary with the Ugaritic kingdom (ca. 1375–1175 BCE). Akkadian tablets found there testify to the presence of diviners or seers, with the terms appearing in multiple languages (Akk. *bārû*, Hurr. *f/wurulinni*) due to the power of the Hittite kingdom at the time.³⁴

For the diviners at Emar, “divine knowledge is encoded in various observable or imaginable aspects of the world.”³⁵ Texts found in Temple M₁ include a number of divination texts, offering insight into the Mesopotamian view of prophecy in the Late Bronze Age. Extispicy figures prominently, and there are a number of manuals (*Emar* 666–684, Msk 74100b and 74129a) and models (*Emar* 667–668) that must have served as reference works.³⁶ Celestial and calendrical

³² For a thorough survey of the Ebla divination corpus, see Alfonso Archi, *Ebla and Its Archives*, SANER 7 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 687–98.

³³ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 159–60. Stökl maintains that “*nabû* is not attested in connection with divination anywhere in the cuneiform record,” *ibid.*, 63–64. It seems likely that this is a homonym, meaning perhaps “to call” or “name.”

³⁴ This professional class of diviner appears throughout the Mesopotamian corpora. Malamat equates it with the Roman *haruspex* or augur. See Malamat, “A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy,” 33.

³⁵ Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 219.

³⁶ Matthew Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Diviners of Late Bronze Age Emar and Their Tablet Collection*, AMD 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 221–26. According to Heimpel, extispicy was the most common divination method in Mesopotamia. The complete absence of the practice from Israel is probably not an oversight. See Wolfgang Heimpel, *Letters to the Kings of Mari: A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Mesopotamian Civilizations (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 173–74.

omens (*Emar* 650–665) also appear regularly. There is no evidence of ecstatic practices or dream interpretation, although the corpus at Emar is relatively small.

Ugarit

No site has provided textual materials quite like those uncovered at Ras Šamra, the ancient city of Ugarit. This was the center of a thriving kingdom we have already discussed. Its most significant literary contribution is the mythological Ugaritic Baal Cycle.³⁷ Unlike the other sites mentioned, Ugarit lacks a large mantic archive near a temple. Instead, there is only one known, private archive, belonging to a palace functionary named *bn 'Agaptarri*.³⁸ That archive consists of a wide variety of documents, including a copy of a document found in the archive of the High Priest (KTU 1.118, which is a copy of KTU 1.47). A large number of the texts are clearly augury or extispicy texts.³⁹ There are also a number of consultation texts, with omens granted for specific requests (KTU 1.104, KTU 1.124).⁴⁰ There are a number of astrological texts, and the *Keret Epic* contains some oracular passages that could be considered prophetic in nature (KTU 1.15 ii 16–iii 16).⁴¹ The final category of texts are the manuals for gathering and interpreting various omens.⁴² There is good reason to think of these documents as forming a reference library of sorts.⁴³

Unsurprisingly, the Canaanite culture of Ugarit has similarities to practices found in the biblical texts. As in Mari, there is was a *muhhû(m)/mahhû* class associated with a temple (Ug. 5 162/RS 25.460), but these diviners utilized a bloodletting ritual that sounds eerily like the practices of the prophets of Baal.

³⁷ As noted previously, a comprehensive discussion of the Ugaritic religious texts can be found in Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*.

³⁸ Greorio del Olmo Lete, “(bn) 'Agaptarri's House: A Functional Analysis of an Ugaritic 'Archive' (PH Room 10),” *JAOS* 137 (2017): 483–503. See also Robert P. Gordon, “Prophecy in the Mari and Nineveh Archives,” in Gordon and Barstad, *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, 37.

³⁹ Pardee provides a list and interpretation of these texts. See Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, WAW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 127–31.

⁴⁰ Olmo Lete, “(bn) 'Agaptarri's House,” 490–92. Olmo Lete provides a complete listing of these texts.

⁴¹ For astrological texts, see Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 131–32. There are several competing ways to catalog the Ugaritic texts. The most cited designation, KTU or CAT, is generally used here. This is from Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte aus ausserhalb Ugarits. Teil 1*. AOAT 1/24 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976). An expanded version of this is available in English as Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*, 3rd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013). Designations like RS are excavation numbers, tied to the location and order in which they were found. The parlance is not extremely important to the discussion at hand, but a table of other common designations is available in Michael Williams, *Basics of Ancient Ugaritic: A Concise Grammar, Workbook, and Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 108.

⁴² Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 134–48.

⁴³ Nicolas Wyatt, “Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone: El's Oracle to the King Keret (Kirta) and the Problem of the Mechanics of Its Utterance,” *VT* 57 (2007): 483–510.

aḥḥūa kīma maḥ-ḥe-e damīšunu ramku,
 “my brothers are drenched in their own blood like ecstasies.”
 (CAD 10:90).⁴⁴

wayiqarā`ū bəqōl gadōl
wayitəgodədū kəmišəpatam baḥarbōt wūbarəmaḥīm
‘ad-šəfad-dam ‘alēham
 “And the cried out loudly
 And cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances
 with the blood flowing all over them.”
 (1 Kgs 18:28)

Additionally, the texts present the gods as being active in rituals. The gods sometimes drink (*yšt*) offered wine (RS 24.252). In this participation, the gods may be transferring power to their followers. In particular, there was a connection to the Ugaritic king, a sort of blessing upon him or his successor conveyed by the divine participation.⁴⁵ Elijah explicitly slights the Canaanite god by exposing his absence on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18:25–27) and then grants Ahab the right to drink only once the Canaanite prophets were defeated (1 Kgs 18:41–42).

Iron Age Archives

Nineveh

By far, the largest contemporary corpus of mantic texts comes from the Assyrians. For this reason, Simon Parpola and other scholars are insistent that Assyrian prophecy laid the groundwork of Hebrew and Mediterranean thought.⁴⁶ Since the Assyrians were the dominant literary culture of Iron Age II, there is an assumed cause and effect, but proximity does not indicate causality. As already observed, there was an thriving mantic environment in the region long before the emergence of the Assyrians.

One thing the Assyrian and Hebrew voices do have in common is that they are largely focused on the rulers of the people. Assyrian inscriptional references to prophetic activity are limited to the reigns of Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (669–631 BCE), perhaps because they were literate rulers.⁴⁷ Assyrian prophecy seems to have been almost exclusively tied to the cult of Ištar/Mullissu and occasionally Nabû, although the prophets appear to have served

⁴⁴ J. J. M. Roberts, “A New Parallel to 1 Kings 18:28–29,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 76–77.

⁴⁵ Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 192–95.

⁴⁶ For the seminal arguments dealing first with iconography, see Simon Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” *JNES* 52 (1993): 161–208. Parpola later expanded this to include the prophetic texts in *Assyrian Prophecy*, SAA 9 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ Gordon, “Prophecy in the Mari and Nineveh Archives,” 38.

outside of the deities' temples.⁴⁸ Additionally, they supported the king as a patron of the temples. It is no surprise then that Assyrian prophecy is overwhelmingly in favor of the monarch.

Most mantic texts are labeled as *šipir maḥḥu* (“message [to the king] from the ecstatic”).⁴⁹ Others such as “The Dialogue Between Ashurbanipal and Nabû,” (K1285 or *SAAo 3 13*) have prophetic texts embedded in a larger narrative or discourse.⁵⁰ In the text, Ashurbanipal makes a petition to Nabû and the god responds, even advocating for the king in the council of gods. The god Nabû repeatedly affirms the leadership of the Assyrian king, commanding him *lā tapallah*, “Fear not!” several times. The opposition to the king (*giššišu ayyābyu*) are shown to be insignificant. Whatever the king wishes to do, he may do it with Nabû’s blessing. Similarly, Esarhaddon received a number of confirmation oracles from diviners including Nabû-hussanni, Bayâ of Arbela, and La-dagil-ili of Arbela. The prophetess Urkittu-šarrat also issued a supportive declaration (*SAAo 090 002*).

Tuṣḥan

Although perhaps only anecdotally connected to the Levantine prophets, there is a particular tablet found at Ziyaret Tepe (ancient Tuṣḥan) in southeastern Turkey that is worth mentioning. Tuṣḥan is at the absolute extreme north of what can be considered Levantine, almost 500 miles northeast of Jerusalem. The tablet (ZTT 25) dates from around the time of the Divided Monarchy and the House of Omri, and it describes payments to both a prophet (written as *muḥḥû(m)/maḥḥû*, but probably representing Assyrian *raggimu*) and an augur (*dāgil išṣūri*).⁵¹ In this text, the prophet is paid a rather substantial sum, what Nissinen calls “a small fortune.”⁵² It reflects well on the account of Naaman the Aramaean who brought a substantial amount of compensation for Elisha (2 Kgs 5:5). Apparently, these kinds of elaborate offerings were fairly common practice for centuries in Mesopotamia.⁵³ It is not hard to see how this applies to the

⁴⁸ John W. Hilber, “Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms,” *JOAS* 127 (2007): 29.

⁴⁹ Matthijs de Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies*, VTSup 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 289.

⁵⁰ Jason Atkinson, “Prophecy in K1285? Re-evaluating the Divine Speech Episodes of Nabû,” in Gordon and Barstad, *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, 59–90.

⁵¹ Martti Nissinen, “The Prophet and the Augur at Tuṣḥan, 611 B.C.,” in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 331–34. The Assyrian *raggimu* derives from *ragāmu*, meaning “to call out” or “summon.” It is sometimes applied to mantic practices, and in some situations bringing legal accusation (*CAD* 14:62–66, particularly definition 4).

⁵² Nissinen, “The Prophet and the Augur at Tuṣḥan,” 335. ZTT 25 was first published in Simo Parpola, “Cuneiform Texts from Ziyaret Tepe (Tuṣḥan), 2002–2003,” *SAAB* 17 (2008): 1–113. An annotated version is available through ORACC, <http://oracc.org/atae/P481186/>. Texts quoted from this online repository will be denoted in the citation as SAAo. SAAo is an online annotation of Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, SAA 3 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989) and other volumes published under the SAA series header.

⁵³ Elsewhere, Nissinen provides a translation of ARM 26 199, where a prophetess demands compensation that includes a richly decorated garment and a nose ring. See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 31. Barstad notes this kind of fee arrangement at Mari as well, see AEM 1 199 and 1 206. There, the female seer (*qammatum*) is

narrative of Balaam, who was paid to curse Israel (Num 22:7–14). Later southern prophetic literature frowns on such largesse for prophets (Micah 3:5, 11), making a distinction between the Israelite understanding of the prophets' compensation and that of the Assyrian model.

NWS Prophetic Texts

Finally, we should consider the smattering of extant NWS texts with prophetic elements. Although most are fragmentary, they nonetheless reflect the attitudes of NWS-speaking peoples to prophecy in the general context, and therefore are worth consideration. There are two monumental texts with allusions to prophecy, and they show the intimate relationship between prophecy and the Levantine idea of patronage kingship.

- *The Amman Citadel Inscription (CAI 59)*: This is one of the few texts written in Ammonite, and it dates from the ninth century BCE. The text is fragmentary with only eight lines remain, three of which are reasonable intelligible.⁵⁴ probably alludes to a prophetic message from Milchom, the Ammonite chief deity, to an unknown ruler.⁵⁵ It shows some affinities with the language of the Jerusalem temple dedication (1 Kgs 7:13).
- *The Zakkur Stela*: What is left of this stela shows an Aramaic dedication to a deity, usually credited as Iluwer, the patron of the city of Apish. The text seems to indicate that a prophet of Iluwer named Baalshamayan provided divine sanction for a military campaign against Ben-Hadad of Damascus.⁵⁶

The remaining NWS texts are mostly ostraca, written in the early sixth century BCE and found at the military outpost of Lachish. They are Judahite letters, and they include casual references to YHWH and refer to specific prophets (Ostrakon 3, 6, 16).⁵⁷ There is, however, one other text which has attracted significant attention. The Deir 'Allā Plaster references Balaam son of Beor, who prophesied against Israel for Moab (Num 22:1–6, 24:1–25; Deut 23:4; Joshua 13:21, 24:9–10). The text is badly damaged, and there are multiple reconstructions of the text.⁵⁸

compensated generously as well. It appears to have been a longstanding practice. See Barstad, "Mari and the Hebrew Bible," 26–28.

⁵⁴ Sigfried H. Horn, "The Ammān Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 193 (1969): 2-13; Victor Sasson, "The 'Ammān Citadel Inscription as an Oracle Promising Divine Protection: Philological and Literary Comments," *PEQ* 111 (1979): 117–25; William F. Albright, "Some Comments on the 'Ammān Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 1970 (198): 38–40; Walter E. Aufrecht, "The Amman Citadel Inscription," *COS* 2, 139; Andrew Burlingame, "Line Five of the Amman Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 376 (2016): 63–82.

⁵⁵ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 202–3; Kent P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*, HSS 27 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 9–33.

⁵⁶ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 203–7. The fragments were not found *in situ*, and so are dated by the reference to Ben-Hadad. See Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, "Tell Afis in the Iron Age: The Aramaic Inscriptions," *NEA* 77, no. 1 (2014): 54–57.

⁵⁷ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 212–18; See discussion of what the letters have to say about official attitudes toward prophets in the twilight of the Judahite kingdom, see Nadav Na'aman, "The Distribution of Messages in the Kingdom of Judah in Light of the Lachish Ostraca," *VT* 53 (2003): 169–80.

⁵⁸ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 207–12; See also Baruch A. Levine, "The Deir 'Alla Plaster Inscriptions," *JAOS* 101 (1981): 195–205. See discussion of this inscription in chapter five.

These NWS texts do not provide much in the way of insight into the mechanics or modes of prophecy. They do, however, show that the prophetic office was active in the Levant during Iron Age IIA–B, and that there was both support and opposition to it not just in Israel but also in the Transjordan and in Aram.

The Jews and the Archival Impulse

It seems likely that the Hebrews would have been aware of these archival practices. The Assyrians seem to have influenced societies well beyond their direct sphere of power. Given their access to alphabetic scripts, the Hebrews would have logically archived many documents, but since they employed perishable materials like papyrus, their archives have not survived.⁵⁹ In later periods, the Jews created massive repositories of documents. The postexilic archives at Elephantine and Alexandria in Egypt speak to a cultural commitment to archiving materials, and it is not unreasonable to assume that this impulse had a historical precedent. Additionally, there is good evidence that the temples of Jerusalem and Gerizim (Samaria) both had extensive libraries, which would have included many archives.⁶⁰ This practice would not have suddenly appeared, and the absence of any substantial uncovered archives is not an absolute indication that they did not exist.

Additionally, the protest that there are no archives of the Hebrew prophets may be ignoring the evidence that is right in front of us. Prophetic archives tended to be compiled from shorter, oracular passages. Is there a better way to describe the prophetic works present in the Hebrew Scriptures? Examining the structure of Isaiah, de Jong sees the same effort in the compilation of Isaiah's oracles. At least the first part of Isaiah (1–39) is a carefully ordered prophetic archive, but of a higher order than anything evident from Assyrians or earlier archives.⁶¹ Isaiah contains narrative sections as well as oracles predicting future events, including condemnation motifs.

Likewise, the books of Amos and Hosea, both of which are northern texts, are archival. They contain a number of oracles which are thematically linked but also clearly distinct.⁶² Thus, Andersen and Freedman can describe the structure of Amos as having “more structure than a mere anthology of Amos’ oracles but less symmetry than a completely fresh literary work.”⁶³

⁵⁹ Matthieu Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls: Could Any Hebrew Literature Have Been Written Prior to the Eighth Century BCE?” *VT* 66 (2016): 556–94. Richelle argues that the significant number of bullae (seal impressions) argues for a large literary output, but the relatively wet conditions of the region would have caused these archives to deteriorate and be lost.

⁶⁰ Reinhard G. Kratz, *Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 106–7, 133–36. Kratz sees the distinction between historical and biblical Israel as being literary. Historical Israel cannot be known from the biblical record because it is an ideological product. In this, he has a great deal in common with other critics focused specifically on the Book of Kings who were discussed in chapter one.

⁶¹ Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, 438–39.

⁶² The relationship of these, and other literary prophets, to the IPM is discussed in Appendix C.

⁶³ Frances I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 10. See also James L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, OTL

Hosea is structured in more of a narrative framework, but still clearly is a compilation rather than a complete composition.⁶⁴

Most Mesopotamian archives include only sayings or findings, but this may very well be a symptom of the restrictions of the cuneiform script. If the Israelites valued prophecy at least as much as the Assyrians, it is reasonable that they would have followed the impulse to archive these prophetic entries. While the records of the Israelian prophets, especially the works of Elijah and Elisha, are viewed as distinct from the literary prophets, this is as much about the fact that they are embedded in the Book of Kings rather than standing independently as it is about their style. If they were to be read as a work within a work, they would not look much different from Isaiah, Amos, Hosea or Jeremiah.⁶⁵

Biblical Prophet(s)

It is hard to deny that the prophets of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms were *aware* of the various mantic practices in the ANE world. There appears to have been a common language among these mantic offices in various societies, and the biblical prophets borrow some of this language. This shared vocabulary has led some scholars to conclude that Hebrew prophecy was essentially the same as the mantic utterances of ANE cultures.⁶⁶ Some, such as Martti Nissinen, conclude that the differences are not evidence of the Hebrew prophets' difference, but the alterations made to the text by later scribes who wanted to distinguish their legendary prophets from their historical context. "No general dividing line between biblical and extrabiblical prophets can be drawn in this respect."⁶⁷ He sees parallels in the following categories:

- *Ecstatic practices*: Spirit journeys (2 Kgs 5:26, 6:17; Ezek 3:12–15, 37:1–14) and visions (Ezek 1, 10; Amos 7:1–9, 8:1–3, 9:1–4; Zech 1–6).
- *Extravagant behavior*: For Nissinen, the use of musical accompaniment (2 Kgs 3:15) and the assorted "extravagant behavior" of the prophets (Isa 20:1–6; Ezek 4–6, 24:15–27; Hosea 1) should be view as a form of ecstasism.⁶⁸

It has already been conceded that the Hebrew prophets were not isolated from the stream of prophetic style and expression, but influence need not always flow from extrabiblical to biblical.

(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 12–14; Hans W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Walder Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 98–100.

⁶⁴ Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), xxiii.

⁶⁵ Appendix C includes a rudimentary examination of the influence of the Israelian prophets upon subsequent northern prophets like Amos, Hosea, and Jonah as well as the southern preexilic prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

⁶⁶ Martti Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 183–91.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶⁸ Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 184–86.

One might answer Nissinen as Simon Parker does, argues that Hebrew prophecy was different because of the focus on a coherent revelation from YHWH. “Israel did not have mythic-epic literature, and no ancient Near Eastern society had a Bible.”⁶⁹ For Parker, there is no reason the Hebrew prophets could not have had an archive to fall back on as a guide for their work. Mari had such an archive centuries earlier. Their prophecy was unique in its revelatory character.⁷⁰ In Parker’s thinking, the Mari prophecies were recorded at the time of composition and continuously archived over a long period of time, “over decades or centuries, as is usually assumed of an accumulation of levels of interpretation in the case of the Hebrew Bible.”⁷¹ This kind of record would have been employed as a measuring stick for further prophetic work, which could have prevented the excesses of ecstaticism found in the prophecies of other ANE cultures. While he admits there is no evidence to support the supposition, he asks why this could not be true for the Hebrew prophets as well.

The Royal Seer in the Davidic Kingdom

Since there is this allowance for shared expression, we can now turn our attention to the types of mantic practices in the Hebrew Scriptures. The similarities can be noted without prejudice. The first category of mantic or prophetic practices were those of the seer during the reigns of David and Solomon. They occupy a role which appears to be relatively similar to the Akkadian professional diviner (*āpilum*).

Samuel: The Priestly Seer (*r’h*)

The word prophet (*nbi’*) appears early in the Hebrew Scriptures, being applied to both Abraham (Gen 20:7), Aaron (Exod 7:1), and Moses (Deut 18:15). For the purposes of this survey, however, we will begin instead with Samuel, who is the first person referred to as a *seer* (*r’h*). Like the *āpilum*, Samuel was closely associated with the priesthood, a trait he shared with a number of literary prophets, including Hosea, Habakkuk, Joel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. He derived from an Ephrathite family living in the Ephraimite hills (Gen 35:16, 19; 1 Sam 1:2).⁷² As a boy, he received visions (*mr’h*) from YHWH (1 Sam 3:1–14), and as an adult he served as

⁶⁹ Simon Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7. Of course, Grabbe dismisses Parker and others like him as “partisans.” Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 110. Some of Grabbe’s rhetoric toward more traditional scholars has already been surveyed in chapter one. He was directly criticizing Simon Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari and in Israel,” *VT* 43 (1993): 50–68. In this article, Parker took the response of Mari’s royal caste to the prophecies found there as representative of the usual official response to prophecy.

⁷⁰ Here, it is presupposed that the Torah existed in some written form to influence the prophets. This is not the position of many mainstream commentators.

⁷¹ Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari,” 62.

⁷² Ephrath is given as the original name of the site of Bethlehem. The relationship between the two toponyms is unclear, as significant individuals are called Ephrathites (Ruth 1:2; 1 Sam 1:1, 17:12). It appears to have sometimes been confused with, or perhaps simply overlapped with, Ephraim (Judg 12:5, 1 Kgs 11:26).

priest at the shrine of YHWH at Shiloh. His prophetic role was key to the anointing and accession of David as king.

The text refers to Samuel as a prophet (1 Sam 3:20), but there is good reason to believe that this title was not used during his lifetime. In 1 Samuel 9:9 Samuel is said to have been a seer (*r'h*). This is a literal translation of the Hebrew term. This capacity to “see” defined Samuel’s work, but *r'h* lacks cognates with the same mantic sense and appears only sparingly in the biblical text.⁷³ Within Samuel-Kings, the only other person referred to using this word is Zadok the priest (2 Sam 15:27) and outside of references to Samuel here and in 1 Chronicles (1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29), it is used to refer to only one other person, Hanani the Seer (2 Chr 16:7, 16:10). Isaiah uses it as a part of a couplet with prophet, which incidentally describes the literary nature of prophecy (Isa 30:10).

Gad: The Itinerant Seer

One of David’s key spiritual advisors was Gad, who appeared before David in times of crisis, first before David is king and is on the run from Saul in the caves of Adullam (1 Sam 22:5) and then toward the end of David’s reign when he violated YHWH’s commands and conducted a census (2 Sam 24:10–25). He is called both prophet (*nbî'*) and seer (*hzh*). Although the Chronicler pairs Gad with the prophet Nathan, they do not appear before David together in Samuel-Kings (1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 29:25).⁷⁴

This term *hzh* has the distinction of appearing in two of the oldest known NWS references to prophecy, a seal from Deir Rifa in Egypt, dated to ca. 1700 BCE, and the Tell Deir 'Alla inscription which was found in Jordan.⁷⁵ The Deir 'Alla inscription dates to the eighth century BCE and may be a Transjordanian dialect of Hebrew. Like *r'h*, Isaiah employed it in a couplet with *nbî'* (Isa 29:10). Amaziah uses it as an insult when he confronted Amos over his prophecies

⁷³ The passage includes a folk etymology for *nbî'*. See Appendix D for more information on the various words. The fact that “seer” (*r'h*) is the root of “vision” (*nr'h*) may be a clue as to the meaning. There is no cognate equivalent to *r'h* in Akkadian, but it appears that *amāru* covers the same semantic range. It could be applied to divination and auguries, with the diviner “seeing” the meaning of the divinatory act. The semantic range for both words is enormous, and this specific meaning of one who “sees” generally does not seem to appear in the Assyrian record. See Hans F. Fuhs, TDOT 13:211. Given the association with *nr'h*, it has perhaps a meaning similar to *amāru* in passages dealing with being able to recall and understand dreams: DIŠ LÚ *šumma awīlum šu-ut-tam ša i-im-ma-ru la ukāl*, DINGIR-*šu- it-ti-[š]u ze-e-ni*. “If a man cannot remember the dream he has had, then his deity is angry with him.” (VAT 7525). See CAD 2:1a6', 8. Translation from Franz Köcher and A. L. Oppenheim, “Old Babylonian Omen Text VAT 7525,” *aFO* 18 (1957–1958): 64.

⁷⁴ The Chronicler preserves a sense that these individuals left written records (דבר) that pertained to both continuity with Samuel. Chronicles seems to shift the focus from prophets to priests, even going so far as to reattribute elements of prophetic oracles to members of the priestly class. Certainly, some of the prophets derived from the priestly caste, but not all. See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Seer and the Prophet: The Case of the So-Called Linen Ephod,” in *Prophecy and Its Cultic Dimensions*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, JAJSup 31 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 136–38.

⁷⁵ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 251. In the Deir 'Alla inscription, it is used to refer to Balaam b. Beor who is also known from Scripture. It may be related to the Egyptian *hōzi'u*, borrowed from NWS. See James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86–87.

(Amos 7:12), indicating that this term may have been a part of the Judahite vocabulary, as distinguished from the northern speech. Alternatively, it could have been meant as an insult, pointing out Amos's lack of sophistication and proper training. Micah used it negatively by coupling it with oracles that employed practices condemned by Deuteronomy (Micah 3:5–12, cf. Deut 18:9–14).

Nathan: Were Seers Also Prophets?

In the text as it stands, there is no clear-cut division among *nbi'*, *r'h*, and *hzh*. It may be that the use of *nbi'* in 1–2 Samuel to describe these seers is projected back from the author's context to a period when it was not in use, but equally as likely, the people of the southern Levant were familiar enough with the Akkadian cognate *nabī*, in use throughout the world, that it could be applied to Samuel and Nathan without any lexical confusion. There are some plausible distinctions made in the use of *nbi'* in the Hebrew Bible. Where Samuel is described by *nbi'* without the definite article, both Nathan (2 Sam 7:2; 12:25; 1 Kgs 1:8–45) and Gad (1 Sam 22:15, 2 Sam 24:11) are generally referred to using this term with the attached definite article (*hnbi'*). While Nathan is in the center of David's court activities, Gad appears as an outlier, so perhaps the role of *hzh* was not a court role and Gad instead served in an informal capacity. They do, however, both serve a vital function in the placement of the Jerusalem temple since Nathan provided direction on the construction plans (2 Sam 7:1–17), and Gad commanded David to build the altar at the threshing floor of Araunah, which became the temple mount (2 Sam 24:18). This could be a case of the Hebrew equivalents of *āpilum* and *nabī* working in concert to build the Davidic kingdom.

The Rise of the Northern Prophets

After the division of the Hebrew kingdoms between Rehoboam in the south and Jeroboam I in the north, there is a silence of the seers. The royal seers disappear from the south and do not reappear until Isaiah during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:2). In contrast, a prophetic voice rises in the northern kingdom, beginning with the appearance of Ahijah (1 Kgs 11:29) and running to the death of Elisha (2 Kgs 13:21). During this time, the only indication of a prophetic voice in the south is the man of God who travels to give an omen to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 13). These northern or Israelian prophets have certain attributes which mark them out from the seers who came before them and the southern prophets who followed.

1. They Serve as the Loyal Opposition to Evil Kings

No Court Patronage. Parker argues that prophetic classes tended to be closely associated with the courts.⁷⁶ Drawing on examples from Mari, he points out that the form of Israelite prophecy varied from that at Mari, which had a developed “science” of divination, but when the Mari documents are compared to the Lachish letters, he finds affinity in the official response to and treatment of the prophets. The Davidic seers certainly appear to have maintained this close proximity to the throne in Jerusalem, as did Isaiah who later appears to have been consulted regularly by the King Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:1–7, 20:1–12).

⁷⁶ Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy,” *VT* 43 (1993): 68.

There is always a clear relationship with the king in ANE prophecy. For example, almost all the Mari prophetic documents derive from the reign of Zimri-Lin in the early eighteenth-century BCE.⁷⁷ Except for three of the documents, they are all addressed directly to the king. There are several prophetic voices in the text, including visions from his queen Šibtu, some of the high officials and several from people who occupied the office of *āpilum*.⁷⁸ In this society, the prophets seem to have been associated with specific deities and they were named as such. For example, “Abiyu *āpilum* of Adad” (FM 7 38) and “Lupaḥum, *āpilum* of Dagan” (ARM 26 199).⁷⁹ The prophets of Mari were concerned solely with affirming the king’s decisions. This kind of behavior is echoed in the Scriptures, particularly in Jehoshaphat’s requests for a prophet of YHWH when allying with both Ahab (1 Kgs 22:5–7) and Joram (2 Kgs 3:11). The indication is that he did not trust prophets who never disagree with the king. The Israelian prophets in the Book of Kings appear to be a specifically oppositional class. They defy the king and the prophetic class associated with him.

The House of Omri did appear to have tight affinity with the prophetic class. Prophets were present at a number of crucial moments, easily within reach should the Omride king need them to answer oracular inquiries or provide omens (1 Kgs 20:13, 22, 28). Time and again, the narrative seems to indicate that kings assumed that prophets were at their service, certainly dependent upon the king’s largesse (1 Kgs 18:1–19; 2 Kgs 1:9–16). There appears to have been at least an expectation of maintaining this same support for the king, and it would have been vital for the Omrides if they wished to maintain power. In particular, in preparation for the campaign against Moab, Joram seemed to assume that the kings would seek divine sanction through the court prophets (2 Kgs 3:11–13).

Jezebel maintained a substantial contingent of prophets at Samaria, possibly feasting in the open space around the palace known as the upper platform, which was elevated above the rest of the city via a substantial casemate wall. Recently, Finkelstein has pointed out that this was not a defensive structure (1 Kgs 18:19) but does not conjecture a purpose for it.⁸⁰ The necessary earthworks required an enormous investment of time and resources, and Finkelstein points out that the palace is one of the largest Iron Age buildings known in the Levant, there must have been a significant reason.⁸¹ There is considerable evidence that the platforms were used for feasting and celebrations throughout the Omride period. Another assembly of four hundred prophets attended the Hebrew kings when discussed a joint campaign against the Aramaeans after the latter had seized Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kgs 22:6). Perhaps this upper platform was where

⁷⁷ For a survey of the reconstructions of Zimri-Lin’s reign, see Jack M. Sasson, “The King and I: A Mari King in Changing Perceptions,” *JOAS* 118 (1998): 443–70.

⁷⁸ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 21–23, 31–34.

⁸⁰ Finkelstein sees great importance in the upper and lower platforms at Samaria. He believes the lower platform functioned as the quarters for the officials who served the kingdom, but he does not speak to the function of the upper platform. Perhaps this See Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 87–94; Israel Finkelstein, “Observations on the Layout of Iron Age Samaria,” *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 194–207.

⁸¹ Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 91.

such assemblies gathered, especially since the kings are depicted as sitting “at the threshing floor, at gate of Samaria” (2 Kgs 22:10). The threshing floor would have been the highest point, presumably a reference to the summit of the hill, which was built up to form the upper platform, so the assembly could have been in that space. The large assembly appears to have been present specifically for the conversation, perhaps indicating their dependence upon the king while Micaiah has to be summoned.⁸² Later, when Elisha confronted the Omride king Joram, he points to a prophetic class that served the Omride kings, which he holds to be distinct from the prophets of YHWH (2 Kgs 3:13). There is also the implicit sense that these prophets are provided for by the king when Jehu summons the prophets of Baal to a special feast and brings out garments from the wardrobe (מלתחה) for their observance (2 Kgs 10:22).⁸³ The IPM seems to preserve a sense of court affiliation for these prophets of Baal whose function seems to have been assuring that Baal was consenting to the actions of the Omride kings.

No Davidic Preference. Despite their opposition to the northern kings, the Israelian prophets do not offer an alternative in the southern, Davidic kingdom. In the Davidic narratives of the Book of Kings, the Jerusalem temple is depicted as the center of covenant activity, and much of the Book of Kings, as well as much of the Latter Prophets, is focused on cultic centralization in Jerusalem.⁸⁴ The construction of the temple was given pride of place in the opening narrative and presented as a splendid fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (1 Kgs 6). The Book of Kings ends with the destruction of the temple when Jerusalem falls to the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25:13–17).⁸⁵ Elijah and Elisha, the paragons of the northern prophets, do not reference Jerusalem once.⁸⁶ Outside of the House of Baal which Jehu destroyed, they also do not discuss northern cult centers, whether devoted to YHWH or other gods. The destruction of these sites figures prominently in the Josianic revival, metonymically marked by the desecration of Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15–30). In that moment, Jehu spared the remains of the unnamed prophet who had confronted Jeroboam about his false cult sites (1 Kgs 13:1–10).⁸⁷ In essence, this moment brings the northern cults to an end and fulfills the prophecy made to Jeroboam.

⁸² Note also that the biblical text has Jehoshaphat asking for “the word of YHWH,” but the prophets answer Ahab’s question with the statement that “the lord (יהוה) will give it into the king’s hand.” Jehoshaphat is depicted as noticing this and reiterating his request for a message from a prophet of YHWH, distinct from the gathered prophets (1 Kgs 22:5–8).

⁸³ This term appears only here and in Jeremiah 38:11 and is likely a loan word from the Akk. *maštaku/ktu*. See HALOT, s.v. “מַלְתָּחָה,” 594. There are certainly cultic affinities in both biblical references, but no indication of the nature of this wardrobe or the garments (לבוש) that are provided to the prophets. Still, the provision of the garments and the fact that there was someone in charge of their safekeeping would seem to indicate royal patronage.

⁸⁴ Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, “‘Until This Day’ and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 202. Geoghegan follows Cross and Childs in proposing there are two preexilic redactions of Kings. Childs relied upon the “until this day” formulation for this dating. Geoghegan’s emphasis on the Levitical priesthood stems from the priestly involvement in Josiah’s reforms.

⁸⁵ Keith Bodner, *The Theology of the Book of Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 67.

⁸⁶ Simon DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 148–49.

⁸⁷ Victor H. Matthews, “Josiah at Bethel and the ‘Monument’ to the Unnamed Prophet from Judah,” *BTB* 50. 4 (2020): 200–206.

This seems at odds with Cross's Josianic origin, as he believed that Jerusalem cult centralization was a key theme of the DH. Giffone discusses cult centralization in DH at length in a recent article, but never mentions the passages of the Book of Kings dealing with the northern kingdom or any northern prophets.⁸⁸ For the southern kingdom portions of the Book of Kings, the restoration of the temple was seen as a righteous act. By the time of Josiah, the narrative presents a confluence of the prophetic message, the Davidic monarchy and the temple worship.⁸⁹ There are implicit condemnations of the use of temple goods as tribute to foreign invaders, an affront to YHWH (2 Kgs 16:6–9, 18:13–18). The construction of a non-Yahwist site within the temple grounds was a corruption of the truth (2 Kgs 16:10–16, 21:1–9).⁹⁰ It is only logical that such records foreshadow the final desecration by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 24:13–14) and the eventual restoration in the return (Ezra 1:7–8). This focus on reconstruction may be reflective of a priestly influence, as Ezra-Nehemiah focuses so strongly on the temple, but it is just as likely that the construction and restoration in Kings were the historical root of Ezra-Nehemiah's temple focus. Postexilic prophets were centered in Jerusalem, and the temple was a singular focus. Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah focus almost exclusively on it and the restored priesthood. Ben Zvi emphasizes that the Jerusalem temple would have been central to any reconstructed social memory of the past, a reasonable assertion that applies to written texts as well if they were generated in the Persian period.⁹¹

The northern prophets deal with none of these. Instead, they focused their message on YHWH's worship wherever the people were, giving the appearance that the temple was not yet elevated to a singular place of worship outside of Jeroboam I not wishing the northern people to travel there (1 Kgs 12:25–32). The overall arc of the northern narrative seems to be that the worship of YHWH remained decentralized throughout the kingdom's history.⁹² Given the division between the Samaritans and the Jews that emerged over the site of worship, it seems reasonable to conclude that a postexilic redactor would have included some sense of Jerusalem's centrality, even if he was working from preexilic sources, and yet it is not even hinted at in the

⁸⁸ Benjamin D. Giffone, "According to Which 'Law of Moses'? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles," *VT* 67 (2017): 432–47.

⁸⁹ Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Prophets': References to Generic Prophets and Their Role in the Construction of the Image of the 'Prophets of Old' Within the Postmonarchic Readership/s of the Book of Kings," *ZAW* 116 (2004): 562. If I am understanding Ben Zvi's argument correctly, he does not see the text as prophetic in its origin but rather a generic sense of "the prophets" as a literary device.

⁹⁰ Later in 2 Kings, there is a reference to Manasseh's shedding of "innocent blood" (דַּם נָקִי) in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:4, see also 2 Kgs 21:16). This resonates with murder passages from Deuteronomy (Deut 19:10–13, 21:8–9), and in context seems to be applied to his idolatry in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 21:10–16). It may be that part of his idolatry involved the violent oppression of the Yahwists in the city, and this gave rise to the Talmudic tradition that Manasseh killed Isaiah. The Jerusalem Talmud reflects this connection (y. Sanh. 10:2, 28c).

⁹¹ Ehud Ben Zvi, "Memory and Political Thought in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah: Some Observations," in *Leadership, Social Memory, and Judean Discourse in the Fifth–Second Centuries BCE*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2016), 11–12.

⁹² For a list of Iron Age IIA cultic sites, see Israel Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples," *ZAW* 132 (2020): 250–65.

Omridic texts. This decentralized focus on YHWH may support Halpern's idea of a Hezekian first edition of the Book of Kings.⁹³

Just as the Jerusalem cult is not mentioned, the Davidic kingdom is also not in focus. For the rest of the Book of Kings and the postexilic literature, the supremacy of the Davidic line is incontrovertibly central. This continuity could be temporarily stunted, such as during Athaliah's control of Judah (2 Kgs 11:1–3), but these aberrations would ultimately be corrected.⁹⁴ In the Omridic prophets, however, there is no primacy given to the Davidic line. In fact, there is a clear break with the Davidic covenant once the Omrides appear on the scene.⁹⁵ With over a third of the Book of Kings occupied with the Omride-Nimshite rulers, the Davidic narrative really does not pick back up until the restorations of the kingdom under Hezekiah (2 Kgs 17). Davidic kings are relegated to a supporting role in the Omride-Nimshite drama, epitomized by Jehoash of Israel's embarrassing the southern forces under Amaziah in battle (2 Kgs 14:8–16). Unlike contemporary Assyrian and Aramaean records which emphasize continuity even through dynasty changes, the authors of the Book of Kings carefully delineate the Omrides from the southern House of David.⁹⁶ The northern Yahwistic prophets do not address the legitimacy of the Davidic line, nor do they undermine the claim to the throne of the Omride-Nimshite dynasty. The Omride claim to the throne was seen as divinely appointed, just as the Davidic line is.⁹⁷ Kings of both lines treat each other as peers. In a demonstration of YHWH's sovereignty over rulers beyond Israel, Hazael was apparently anointed as king of Aram-Damascus not by an Aramaean prophet but by Elisha, after Elijah was told to anoint him (1 Kgs 19:15–17; 2 Kgs 8:7–15).⁹⁸

In keeping with this covenantal aspect, the IPM prophets delivered condemnations that were in keeping with some sense of YHWH's covenant being extended to the northern kingdom. The condemnation formulas became the basis of Kings, and they are recalled at the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:14–18). At the same time, these condemnations are not unconditional. Ahijah offered a covenant to Jeroboam I if he would obey (1 Kgs 11:38–39). Baasha had the kingdom torn from

⁹³ Halpern and Vanderhooft, "The Edition of Kings," 193–94; Halpern, "Sacred History," 48. Refer back to the section on Halpern in chapter one.

⁹⁴ Galil argues that one major chronological issue can be resolved if one marks the beginning of Joash's reign not at his acclamation (2 Kgs 11:12) but at the death of his father (2 Kgs 9:14–29). See Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, CHANE 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 46–49. See also Appendices E and F.

⁹⁵ 1 Kings 2:2–4 reiterates 2 Samuel 7:12–13. 1 Kings 3:3–14 harkens back to 2 Samuel 14:17. 1 Kings 5:1–6 connects the building of the temple to the relationship of Hiram and David in 2 Samuel 5:11. The ark being brought into the temple in 1 Kings 8:12–22 has deep connection to David's actions in 2 Samuel 6:17 and 7:4–25.

⁹⁶ Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 48–50; Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 24–25.

⁹⁷ This is not a matter unique to Kings, as Samuel also shows this in the interaction between David and Nathan. Afoakwah has argued that the confrontation over David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah was meant to be a "mirror image" of the divine covenant. See James Donkor Afoakwah, *The Nathan-David Confrontation (2 Sam 12:1–15a): A Slap in the Face of the Deuteronomistic Hero?* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015), 281–90.

⁹⁸ The act of anointing is not itself reported in the text, although it appears to be assumed to have occurred in the narrative. Elisha's relationship with Hazael seems to indicate Elisha's strained relationship with Hazael as an acknowledgement of his selection as king (2 Kgs 8:7–15).

him after he was used to correct the sins of Nadab (1 Kgs 16:1–4). Ahab repented and was given grace (1 Kgs 21:25–29). Jeroboam II was able to secure his kingdom out of YHWH’s compassion (2 Kgs 14:27). Such statements echo the promises to David (2 Sam 7). The giving of covenant and its reversal was placed in the hands of the prophets, something Nissinen sees as an Assyrian template but may just as easily be a component of Israelite society at the time.⁹⁹ This shared vocabulary could be taken either to represent some kind of later editors’ handiwork or a genuine dependence upon some kind of centralized archive or source containing both narrative and oracular materials. Prophets would have readily drawn upon established tropes when delivering messages.

2. Non-Affiliation with a Northern Cultic Center

In the north, there was no stable cult of YHWH as there was in Jerusalem, so it is easy to see why the Israelian prophets were often encountered in out of the way places and along roadsides. In Judah, there was a close affinity of the prophets and priests. Depictions of the Davidic kingdom include pairings of prophet and priest (1 Kgs 1:8, 32, 38; 2 Kgs 19:2, 32:2). Isaiah is depicted in the temple (Isa 6:1, 37:1–7). Jeremiah was a son of a priest (Jer 1:1). Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek 1:3). There is good reason to assume that in the preexilic period, the Judahite prophets had a reasonable relationship with the temple and the priesthood until Jeremiah, who is often depicted in conflict with the priests (Jer 20:1–6). It must be said, however, that there was a prophetic class also aligned against him (Jer 26:7–11).

In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam I appointed non-Levites as his cult functionaries from outside of the priesthood, and there was a progression away from the Jerusalem liturgy (1 Kgs 12:31–33, 13:33). Just how this northern cult of YHWH functioned, aside from the establishment of nominally Yahwist sites at Dan and Bethel is not really described. There is no apparent indication of any kind of organized cult of YHWH in the north after Jeroboam, and one would assume at least some reference would be made in relation to the northern prophets if they were affiliated with an organized Yahwistic cult in the region. At some point during the reign of Omri and his successors, a class of priests of Baal was established in Samaria, which Jehu had to kill (2 Kgs 10:11, 19). Even if one allows that the prophets served as priests of YHWH, there is no appearance of affiliation with any site. Indeed, during the Omride period, there was an oppositional relationship between the Yahwistic prophets and the organized religious system which the Omrides instituted.¹⁰⁰ The reference to Obadiah feeding a hundred prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs 18:4) seems to indicate that there were Yahwist elements in the northern kingdom, and while the “official” prophets would have had their meals provided by the king in the royal district of Samaria, these Yahwistic prophets were left to fend for themselves.

⁹⁹ Martti Nissinen, “Prophets and Prophecy in Joshua–Kings,” in Jacobs and Person, *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, 112–13.

¹⁰⁰ Even Grabbe sees the prophets and priests as distinct, and sometimes even conflicting, classes. See Lester L. Grabbe, “Introduction and Overview,” in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets, and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis, JSOTSup 408 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 9–10.

It seems that not only were the Israelian prophets acting as “the loyal opposition,” operating outside of the court structure, but they were also outside of the temple structure. They seem to have yielded some kind of authority and were allowed some access to the court, but they were independent of the royal patronage which rendered so many of the court prophets of the Omride kingdom unwilling to speak against the king (1 Kgs 22:5–28).¹⁰¹ Later, Jeremiah condemned the prophets of his day for their own willingness to compromise to please the king toward the end of the southern kingdom (Jer 23:24–40).¹⁰² The test of their truthfulness would be their compliance with YHWH in the affairs of the kingdom. What is fascinating about this is that the Yahwistic prophets do this without any reference to the southern kingdom, Jerusalem, or the Davidic dynasty. Their appeal to fidelity with YHWH is instead based in covenantal statements, that their identification as the sons of Israel means they are in a vassal relationship with YHWH and their identification with Canaanite deities and the royal religion was a violation of that relationship.

3. The Supernatural

The practice of magic. In at least one place, Saul called on his prophets to perform divination through dreams and the Urim. When this failed, he is portrayed as seeking a medium (בעלה) to summon the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 14:41, 28:3–25). Previously, Saul had expelled the diviners (ידעוני) from Israel (1 Sam 28:3), indicating that not only was divination widely practiced in the region during Late Iron Age I, but it may have been directly associated with a cast of functionaries who served Saul when he was king. At the very least, seers like Samuel, Nathan, and Gad had to contend with these competing mantic voices. The practices themselves are not strictly condemned in the narrative, although they are prohibited in the Torah and are later credited with being the reason for Saul’s downfall (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10–12; 1 Chr 10:13–14).¹⁰³

The Israelites were apparently not alone in their opposition to witchcraft and its associated practices, although as Schwemer points out, “there was but a fine line between punishable witchcraft on the one hand, and legitimate aggressive rituals and defensive anti-witchcraft rituals on the other. Where this line was drawn very much depended on the particular social constellations in which a given ritual practice took place.”¹⁰⁴ Given how these practices appear

¹⁰¹ This makes the Omride prophets quite distinct from those at Mari who, despite the similarities in some respects, were very much integrated into a highly developed temple culture. See Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 63–64.

¹⁰² Cristiano Grottanelli offers an interesting perspective on this subject. See Cristiano Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets: Monarchic Power, Inspired Leadership, and Sacred Text in Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118–22.

¹⁰³ Rannfrid Thelle, “Reflections of Ancient Israelite Divination in the Former Prophets,” in Jacobs and Person, *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, 29–30. Thelle makes a side comment that “Chronicles is somehow more ‘Deuteronomistic’ than Samuel on the judgment of Saul.” This could be seen as evidence of the early date of this particular episode since it does indeed lack any direct judgment on the various divinatory practices throughout Saul’s reign.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû: The Cuneiform Sources of a Magic Ceremony from Ancient Mesopotamia* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 1. The ritual of Maqlû is attested throughout the Akkadian speaking world, from both royal and private archives. See pages 43–58. Although no extant copies were

frequently in juxtaposition, with a king like Saul banning the practice but then seeking a practitioner out, it is safe to say that the situation in Israel, like other nations, was unclear.

This creates an issue for the two most prominent Israelian prophets, Elijah and Elisha.¹⁰⁵ Both performed acts which, in their context, were certainly magic. Resurrections certainly fall into that category (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37), but so also would promoting conception (2 Kgs 4:8–15), the purification of food (2 Kgs 4:38–41), the healing and giving of leprosy (2 Kgs 5:1–27), and striking people blind (2 Kgs 6:15–19).¹⁰⁶ Additionally, they called fire down from heaven (1 Kgs 18:36–39; 2 Kgs 1:9–16) and provided food stuffs miraculously (1 Kgs 17:8–16; 2 Kgs 4:1–6). This is not to say that the prophets performed “magic” in the same ways described in the ANE record. There appears to have been a ritual performed for resurrection which included crying out to YHWH and stretching your body over the dead person, but aside from that the supernatural acts of the prophets are presented as natural, almost casual to the prophet.¹⁰⁷ What is more, Elijah acts independent of any kind of temple, in contrast to the usual practice, even in Hebrew society, of associating healing with the priesthood (Lev 13–14) and the temple.¹⁰⁸ This is played out in the Naaman narrative as well, with Naaman expecting to receive healing in Samaria, which was both a political and cultic center, but instead must go to Elisha’s house where he is not even received by the prophet (2 Kgs 5).

The use of divine omens. Ahijah’s appearance on the roadside and the rending of the garment was a divinatory omen offered to Jeroboam, which was then confirmed by events (1 Kgs 11:30–32). The anonymous man of God’s death was perceived as an omen of sorts (1 Kgs 13:26).

found at Ugarit, there are certainly allusions to a similar vocabulary. See Olmo Lete, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts*, 147 fn. 24 for a quotation of Maqlû in KTU 1.96.

¹⁰⁵ Isaiah also seems to have functioned as a healer (2 Kgs 20:7).

¹⁰⁶ At least one commentator has compared these healings to shamanic rituals from elsewhere in the world. See Stuart Lasine, “Matters of Life and Death: The Story of Elijah and the Widow’s Son in Comparative Perspective,” *BI* 12 (2004): 124–25. For his Mesopotamian example, Lasine relies upon Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc van de Mieroop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 142–43. While there are a few vague similarities to the resurrection passages from the Book of Kings and the Assyrian inscriptions cited (*ABL* 439/140: 14; and 1397/299 rev.: 5), they are insubstantial. The Assyrian examples from Bottéro appear to offer some kind of substitution for the dead person’s soul, while the biblical accounts are stripped down, personal rituals.

¹⁰⁷ Considering the healing of Naaman’s leprosy, Hugo Gressman noted a century ago, “all the incomprehensible formulas and rites that usually define magicians and healing specialists are missing [...]. Instead [one finds] a simple and clear act without drama that can be carried out with playful ease.” Hugo Gressman, *Die älteste Geschichtschreibung und Prophetie Israels* (Göttingen, 1910), 297. Translated by Isabel Cranz, “Naaman’s Healing and Gehazi’s Affliction,” *VT* 68 (2018): 541–42, fn. 2. A more recent study is Laura M. Zucconi, “Aramaean Skin Care: A New Perspective on Naaman’s Leprosy,” in Dolansky, *Sacred History, Sacred Literature*, 169–78. Zucconi makes a number of points concerning the contrast between Elijah’s healing of Naaman and the attempts to discover healing for Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:1–3).

¹⁰⁸ For a more thorough treatment of the temple’s role in health care, see Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, HSM 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 263–65. Avalos argues that the Mesopotamian and Hebrew cultures shared the belief that illness divine in origin, although he does somewhat garble the distinctions between a pestilence and more common illness. See pages 238–46.

Abijah received a message that Jeroboam's wife was coming in disguise (1 Kgs 14:4). Elijah and Elisha saw the withholding of rain as a sign of God's displeasure (1 Kgs 17:1–7, 18:41–46) and they received visions of the heavenly realm (1 Kgs 22:19–23). When Elijah hears from YHWH in the Scriptures, it is generally portrayed as something spoken directly to him (1 Kgs 18:1, 19:9, 21:17), and yet at times he receives messages in natural phenomena, such as the cloud over the sea (1 Kgs 18:44). In the same vein, at times Elijah and Elisha are asked questions, as if they are oracles, and they respond in kind, although almost never offering the answer their interlocutor is looking for. The testimony of the prophets in the Scriptures is as much about a counterbalance and limit to kingship, as Cross once asserted, as it was about declaring the word of YHWH.¹⁰⁹

In all of the Book of Kings, the northern prophets are unique among the biblical prophets in this supernatural emphasis. Aside from a dream announcing Eli's death and God providing direct instruction in dealing with Saul and David, the Davidic seers served solely as mouthpieces for YHWH. They did not perform miracles. Likewise, Isaiah is able to use some level of divination, does have a single episode of controlling the shadow of the sun (2 Kgs 20:5–11), and at one point acts as a healer (2 Kgs 20:7–8; Isa 38:21–22) but other than that he serves chiefly as an advisor. Jeremiah demonstrates no supernatural powers at all. The postexilic prophets provide a number of supernatural visions in their oracles, but no miracles accompany their testimony.¹¹⁰ It is hard to deny that the Israelian prophets did present omens, including their condemnation motifs.

The Shift to the Southern Kingdom

Until about forty years ago, it was commonplace to believe that the text of the northern literary prophets was carried to the south when Samaria fell.¹¹¹ Such confidence has evaporated in recent scholarship. The primary reason for this is the rejection of the Elijah and Elisha materials as historical, with the materials being reclassified as mythical or legendary because of the supernatural content. There must have been, then, separate sources for the northern traditions.

¹⁰⁹ Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Ethic*, 221.

¹¹⁰ The only postexilic book which comes close to the northern prophets in terms of supernatural narrative is the Book of Daniel. The setting, a solitary prophet opposing a series of kings who derive power from other gods, is quite similar to Elijah. The question of whether Daniel should be considered a prophet has been debated since the rabbinical period. Daniel was considered a prophet by the early church (Matt 24:15), reflective of some, but not all Jewish tradition. The consensus is that Daniel should not be included in the prophets from a genre or canonical perspective. For discussion, see Carol A. Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2018), 12–18, 53–54; Paul R. House, *Daniel*, TOTC 23 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 18–23; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 497–512; Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 20–24. An additional, intriguing resource that brings together threads of genre and comparative studies is Tawny Holm, *Of Courtiers and Kings: The Biblical Daniel Narratives and Ancient Story-Collections*, EANEC 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

¹¹¹ See, for example, the way Greenwood mentions this as axiomatic. David C. Greenwood, "On the Jewish Hope for a Restored Northern Kingdom," *ZAW* 88 (1976): 376.

If this is the case, then it is only reasonable that these northern prophets would not have affinities with the southern prophets. In fact, one can observe a development of prophetic ministry from these early northern prophets (Elijah, Elisha) to the northern literary prophets (Amos, Hosea, Jonah) and then down to the southern prophets (Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah). There is then a radical shift during the exilic period, after Jerusalem falls, and the prophets who emerge after that period (Ezekiel, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi, etc.) are *very* distinct from the preexilic prophets. These postexilic prophets are not the focus here, and so shall not be dealt with in this section.

Literary Prophets from the North

Amos

Of the northern prophets, Amos bears the closest resemblance to the message and setting of the northern Israelian prophets, although his book lacks a supernatural element. This does not mean there was not a supernatural element, only that his prophetic oracles were recorded without a great deal of explicit narrative. What context that can be gleaned from the book makes it clear that Amos was an outsider to the court, possibly a wealthy herdsman or tribal leader disinterested in the affairs of court.¹¹² His message of condemnation is completely in line with the IPM, and Barstad saw in Amos's oracles an implicit battle against Canaanite worship.¹¹³ This unites the message of Amos and the prophets of the Book of Kings, showing that they at least were battling the same general issues. Amos seems to have a sense of the prophets as a particular class within society whose role is to be the voice of YHWH (Amos 3:7, 7:14).¹¹⁴ This may perhaps indicate the success of the project to develop "the sons of the prophets."

While Amos does not hesitate to reiterate condemnations for national sin, he also has a broad theological perspective on the calling and covenant of nations (Amos 3:2, 9:7).¹¹⁵ This echoes the role of the Omridic prophets in appointing kings of Aram, ministering to foreign military commanders (1 Kgs 19:15; 2 Kgs 5:1–14, 8:7–15). Damascus and the Phoenician states are

¹¹² Amos is described with two unique terms. First is the *dis legomenon* נָקֵד, which appears in Amos 1:1, but also is used to describe Meshah the king of Moab (2 Kgs 3:4). The other, בּוֹקֵר, is a *hapax legomenon*. Based on a cognate of נָקֵד in Akkadian and Ugaritic, it would appear that Amos was not so much a goatherd himself but a wealthy man who only reluctantly joined in the prophetic calling. Glück goes so far as to associate the term with the Sumerian NA.GAD, a title of kings which he claims lost some of its royal associations with time. See Peter C. Craigie, "Amos the *nōqēd* in Light of Ugaritic," *Studies in Religion* 11 (1982): 29–33; J. J. Glück, "Nagid-Shepherd," *VT* 13 (1963): 144–50.

¹¹³ Hans M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Amos ii 7B-8, iv 1-13, v 1-27, vi 4-7, viii 14*, VTSup 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 2–6. Barstad admits his position is in the minority. See also Arvid. S. Kepulrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1971), 67. See also Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books*, 25–29. Admittedly, Barstad's position is dated, but in its essentials, it has been reiterated recently in Göran Eidevall, *Amos*, 150–51, fn. 16. Eidevall notes that Amos possibly employs Aramaeo-Canaanite victory motifs in his descriptions of YHWH (Amos 4:13).

¹¹⁴ John Barton, *The Theology of Amos*, Old Testament Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113–17. Because of his diachronic view of the text, Barton feels there are two competing views of prophecy in Amos.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70–77.

singled out for punishment along with the states in the Transjordan. Unlike the unhearing, unresponsive Baal that Elijah faced, YHWH is actively involved in the affairs of all nations (Amos 2:1).¹¹⁶

Amos is filled with subtle allusions to the Elijah and Elisha materials. The condemnation of the luxuries of Samaria is well known (Amos 6:4–6). There are also references to “garments taken in pledge,” possibly an allusion to Gehazi’s sin (Amos 2:6–8; 2 Kgs 5:22–27). There is a clear bias against the women of Samaria, which perhaps reflects the corruption not just of Jezebel but also the women encountered in the siege of Samaria (Amos 4:1; 2 Kgs 6:24–32).¹¹⁷ Also, the attempts to silence the prophets are parallel (Amos 2:12). Finally, the work of Jehu as the destroyer is found in both Amos and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:17; 2 Kgs 9:1–10; Amos 3:13–15). Amos is, at the very least, a part of a continuity with the IPM.

Hosea

Although the chronological data at the beginning of Hosea lists Judahite kings, the book itself has a northern milieu.¹¹⁸ Gomer’s firstborn is named Jezreel (Hos 1:4–5). An emphasis is placed on cavalry, a characteristically northern military unit (Hos 1:7). The emphasis on Baal worship (Hos 2:17) and the type of Canaanite cultic sites (Hos 4:13, 17) also point to this northern origin.¹¹⁹ Hosea addresses both Israelite kingdoms, but direct address is often pointed to the northern kingdom (Hos 4:15, 5:5–6), and Israel is singled out for direct rebuke in several chapters. While Hosea lacks extraordinary supernatural elements such as healings and resurrections, the extraordinary living metaphor of his marriage to the adulteress Gomer is somewhat in the strain of Elijah and Elisha’s lifestyle prophecy, the way in which they were actively involved in the narrative of their oracles, participating in practical manifestations of their message such as their relationships with resurrections and healings in concert with their calls to return the kingdom—resurrect the kingdom—through a return to covenant.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 184–85.

¹¹⁷ For discussion, see Hans W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Walder Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 203–7.

¹¹⁸ As mentioned in chapter 2, there are some like James Bos, who prefer to date Hosea to the Persian period. For the linguistic reasons reviewed in that chapter, Hosea should be viewed as a preexilic, Israelian composition, see that earlier discussion.

¹¹⁹ Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books*, 44–45. Huber has recently argued that the Baal worship reflected in the book has more to do with the internal cohesiveness of the worship of YHWH than a specific Canaanite cult, and if one dates Hosea later. See Caitlin Huber, “‘No Longer Will You Call Me ‘My Ba’al’’: Hosea’s Polemic and the Semantics of ‘Ba’al’ in 8th Century BCE Israel,” *JSOT* 44, no. 4 (2020): 616–23. To make her argument, however, Huber argues that the presence of Baal does not necessarily indicate opposition to YHWH and that in Hosea’s day, the name no longer denoted a deity. She dismisses the presence of cultic practices associated with Canaanite religion as being equally associated with YHWH worship. She even goes so far as to bring the debate concerning a female consort for YHWH into the conversation, arguing that Hosea’s entire prophetic motif is reflective of a more syncretic YHWH worship. In other words, she sees Hosea’s witness as both later and in a more syncretistic mindset.

Hans Walter Wolff argued that the Hosea was a direct successor of a prophetic tradition which would have included the northern prophets of the Book of Kings like Ahijah, Elijah, and Elisha (Hosea 4:5, 6:6, 9:7–9, 12:10–14).¹²⁰ In this thinking, this was an obvious conclusion. This particular line of prophets represented the voice of YHWH amidst the corruption of the priesthood and “official” religion.¹²¹ This seems to place Hosea in line with the northern Yahwistic prophets like Elijah and Elisha.

Jonah

The last northern prophet to be considered is Jonah, who has only a cursory reference in 1 Kings 14:25. If one accepts that this Jonah is the historical figure behind the Book of Jonah, then his northern pedigree is clear. The only reference in the Book of Kings to his prophetic work, however, is a reference to a restoration of lands under Jeroboam II. His oracle of YHWH’s provision is probably paraphrased in the text, echoing the promises made to Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 14:27). Cooper observed that both here and in the Book of Jonah, “the change of fortune entails the falsification of a prophetic threat of destruction.”¹²² It would seem that the message of the Book of Jonah was at least partially influenced by the IPM, given the condemnation motifs, the opposition to the status quo, and of course the supernatural elements. At the same time, the message of the Book of Jonah is one of restoration rather than condemnation, which usually characterizes the prophets in this portion of Scripture, but it also resonates with Elijah’s message to Ahab upon his repentance for the Naboth affair (1 Kgs 21:24–29).

¹²⁰ Hans W. Wolff, “Hoseas geistige Heimat,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 81 (1956): 83–94. “Gewiß aber sieht er sich in einer Phalanx, die durch die Generationen Israels hindurchgeht, aus der Ahia von Silo, Elia und Elisa, Micha ben Jimla und Amos für in die Geschichte des Nordreichs gehören.” See also Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), xxii–xxiii. Wolff’s arguments may be dated, but more recently, Hubbard sees a broader succession of the prophetic message, reaching back to Moses. David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea*, TCOT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 137. See also J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 35, 234. Dearman allows for an implicit succession from the northern prophets but is not more definitive due to the lack of references to the prophets by name.

¹²¹ Margaret Odell challenged Wolff’s conclusion, arguing that Hosea saw himself as distinct from these prophets, even in opposition to them. Margaret S. Odell, “Who Were the Prophets in Hosea?” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18.1 (1996): 78–95. She relies upon a “Deuteronomistic prophet” as her template for this criticism, and in some places she stumbles. For example, she splits a semantic hair in Hosea 12:10, arguing that it should be rendered as a speech about prophets rather than YHWH saying he spoke to the prophets, but she completely ignores verse 13, which is a reference to Moses that clarifies the meaning of verse 10. Hubbard allows for an amalgamation of YHWH and Baal cults, but still sees Hosea as rejecting what came from the Canaanite Baal worship. See Hubbard, *Hosea*, 88–90; Wolff, *Hosea*, 215–16.

¹²² Alan Cooper, “In Praise of Divine Caprice: The Significance of the Book of Jonah,” in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image, and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, ed. Philip R. Davies, and David J. A. Cline, JSOTSup 144 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 145.

Southern Literary Prophets

Micah

Micah and Isaiah both lived and ministered through the fall of Samaria, so their testimony is the first beyond the northern prophetic class. In the case of Micah, there is an explicit reference to the northern kingdom in parallel with the southern (1:1, 3:1). The references to the presence of the Assyrian armies in Judah (5:5–6) and the exile of “the remnant of Jacob” (5:6–8) seem to testify to parts of the book being written after the fall of Samaria. According to Jeremiah, Micah’s ministry was the impetus behind Hezekiah’s reforms (Jer 26:17–19).¹²³ There have been multiple attempts to create a redactional history of the text of Micah, mostly motivated by the sense that it must be reflective of the DH’s influence on the message. It is more likely that the text is a coherent literary work dating to the appropriate time.¹²⁴ Like many of the prophets, Micah endured opposition from the authorities (Micah 2:6). He opposed false prophets, whether devoted to other gods or speaking in the name of YHWH, credits his visions to the filling of the Spirit (Micah 3:5–8). There is also a sense in which Micah sees Israel’s opposition as being led by YHWH as retribution for apostasy (Micah 2:13). Unlike the northern prophets in the Book of Kings, however, Micah focuses on the Jerusalem temple (Micah 4:2), but this is due to his southern origin.

Isaiah

Even those who separate Isaiah into two or three chronologically distinct redactions acknowledge that the so-called “First Isaiah” is an eighth century BCE work by a historical prophet.¹²⁵ As such, the text would likely reflect some understanding of the prophetic school or

¹²³ It may be that there is a subtle affinity with Deuteronomy in Micah’s call to “Arise, plead your case before the mountains” (6:1–2). Consider that the exiles from the north would have likely journeyed to the south via the main road that passed between Ebal and Gerizim, where Moses commanded the Israelites to erect two stelae with the curse and blessings on them (Deut 11:29–31). This not a verifiable connection, but an interesting possibility.

¹²⁴ For a summary of the various theories, see Anton Schoors, *The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, trans. Michael Lesley, *Biblical Encyclopedia* 5 (Atlanta: SBL 2013), 175–79. Although he credits Micah 4:1–4, 6–8 and 7:8–20 to possible later hands, Allen concludes there is no reason to assume complex redaction of the text. Common sense perceives the text as a composite of multiple oracles, but there is no reason to assume extensive or multiple redactions. Redactional theories have abounded, especially as the focus of redaction has shifted to treating the twelve Minor Prophets as a single redactional work. See Jakob Wöhrle, “So Many Cross-References! Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Intertextual Relationships and their Significance for Redactional Critical Analysis,” in *Perspective on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations, Redactional Processes, and Historical Insights*, ed. Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 3–20. For a non-redactional consideration, see Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 215–24. Although Allen is dated, his reasoning makes sense. The issue really is whether a reader comes to the text looking for reasons to date portions to a later period or if one wishes to see the text as whole unless there is incontrovertible evidence that a passage cannot date to the original context.

¹²⁵ The division of the text of Isaiah has a diverse literature, and it is not the focus here, but a note is necessary. It was Bernhard Duhm who first proposed that the book may consist of three prophetic collections. See Bernard

“sons of the prophets” who appear in the IPM. Isaiah lived through the fall of Samaria, and his role during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:1–37) closely paralleled Elisha’s role in an Aramaean siege of Samaria (2 Kgs 6:24–7:20), but with very different responses from the respective kings. The dissonance between the two siege accounts highlights the high view of the IPM. The relationship of Isaiah to the IPM will be dealt with below.

Consider Isaiah’s words concerning revelation (Isaiah 8:16–20). There, the prophet asks, “Should not a people inquire of their God? ... To the teaching (תורה) and to the testimony (תעודה)!” In context, these two authorities are held up in opposition to the mutterings of mediums and necromancers (Isa 8:19), so they must have some significance. Since the two words stand in the same relationship to their roots, it is worth considering what is meant here.¹²⁶ If תורה speaks to the teaching or instruction of YHWH, then what is תעודה? The most reasonable explanation would be that these represent two harmonious authorities, one which teaches the will of YHWH and the other which bears witness. In other words, it may be that Isaiah is appealing to the Law and the Prophets, or rather the acknowledged testimony of the prophets.¹²⁷

While the separation into two terms may indicate the combined witness of Law and Prophets, Blenkinsopp sees this phrase as connecting to the sealed tablet mentioned earlier in this oracle (Isa 8:1–4), and he identifies a strong connection to prophetic teaching, arguing that it was meant to be a transmission of prophetic texts to Isaiah’s disciples.¹²⁸ It is unlikely that Isaiah would have had the full corpus of prophetic texts in mind, including his own, but rather a corpus of prophetic witnesses that supported the Law.¹²⁹ This prophetic witness must, of necessity, predate Isaiah. He

Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, HKAT 3/1, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914; 1st ed., 1892). The first thirty-nine chapters were seen as original, with a “Second Isaiah” or Deutero-Isaiah writing or editing a second collection. For theories, see R. Norman Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, NCB (Greenwood, NC: Attic Press, 1975), 20–23; Paul D. Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), xliii–xlvi. See also Klaus Batzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001). Some recent works have turned away from this thesis, but it is still relatively prevalent.

¹²⁶ תורה deriving from ירה (to teach) and תעודה deriving from עוד (to witness or confirm), TDOT 10:495, 1e. There was a correlation to the prophetic office (2 Kgs 17:13–15, Amos 3:13). It is worth noting as an aside that the translators of LXX had significant trouble with תעודה, which they rendered as both φανερός and βοήθεια. Alex Douglas suggests this was an intentional change to enforce strict Torah observance among Gentiles in later periods. See Alex P. Douglas, “A Call to Law: The Septuagint of Isaiah 8 and Gentile Law Observance,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 87–104.

¹²⁷ Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 260.

¹²⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 19 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 244–45. Some have argued this is a late addition, perhaps postexilic in nature, but Blenkinsopp does not agree. See, for example, Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 371. Resorting to dark means of divination such as necromancy would fit with the period of military struggle that the oracle is set in.

¹²⁹ H. G. M. Williamson sees תעודה as connecting to the prophetic testimony, probably not in its entirety but certainly what came in the tradition of Moses, the credited prophet of the Torah. H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, vol. 2 of *Isaiah 1–27: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2018), 337–38. Wegner sees it as the specific prophecies Isaiah had presented concerning the kingdom, especially as it is entrusted to Isaiah’s followers (למד). Wegner, *Isaiah*, 117. Although differing in degree, all agree that תורה refers to prophecy alongside Torah.

is describing the precedents of his prophetic office, which apparently was being transmitted to his disciples or the school of prophets that would follow him.¹³⁰ Only one commentator, J. J. M. Roberts, sees the phrase as corresponding not to the prophets but rather to their rivals, the necromancers.¹³¹ Roberts bases his position on a particular semantic reading in which he rejects the usual reading of the Hebrew words and an implied shift of speakers.¹³² Such a view rejects not only the scholarship of others such as Bleckinsopp, Goldingay, and Wildberger (cited above) but also the line structure of the Masoretic Text, something Roberts admits freely. Certainly, there could have been rival instructions and testimonies from the necromancers, but given that the same phrase appears in previous verses and clearly speaks to the prophetic message, Roberts position must be relegated to the minority.

In the biblical record, this distinct kind of prophets appear in Judah only after the fall of the northern kingdom.¹³³ It was a primarily northern phenomenon (2 Kgs 17:23). Jehoshaphat acknowledged the existence of prophets, and yet had none of his own to call upon (2 Kgs 3:11). The determination that he was a “righteous” king may have more to do with welcoming prophets and their voices.¹³⁴ It was only during the reign of Hezekiah that Judah accepted the prophetic office, including Micah and Isaiah and extending through the end of the kingdom in Jeremiah.¹³⁵ These prophets emerge at the time of Judah’s first great apostasy – from the death of Uzziah until the reign of Hezekiah (Isa 1:1). Na’aman makes a great deal of the “addition” of the prophetic materials to the Book of Kings, but he does not seem to notice that supposed righteous kings, like Uzziah/Azariah receive only seven verses (2 Kgs 15:1–7). If the author was filling in areas of ignorance in the northern kingdom, why did he not fill in areas of ignorance for a king who reigned for fifty-two years? This idea of filling in narrative gaps falls short. The prophets and their interactions occupy the central position in the narrative from the north/south split until the fall of Samaria. Isaiah’s reference to “the law and the testimony” may refer back to this period. Additionally, the language of portions of Isaiah may have a particularly northern

¹³⁰ This is Goldingay’s position. “This may denote entrusting the contents of his message to his disciples, or perhaps actually putting it into writing and literally sealing it. That might be the beginning of the origin of the book called Isaiah.” In this, he agrees with Bleckinsopp. See John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 114. Wildberger, while rejecting the early date of this portion of the text, still describes this passage this way: *Er fordert Hinwendung zum überlieferten prophetischen Wort*, (“He [Isaiah] demands turning to the traditional prophetic word”). Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja*, vol. 1, *Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament 10* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 354.

¹³¹ J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 142.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 141.

¹³³ These Judahite prophets are distinct from the Davidic seers due both to their setting and their role. See pages 199–203.

¹³⁴ Na’aman, “Prophetic Stories as Sources,” 158–59.

¹³⁵ Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 100–102. The synchronization data with kings of Judah does not indicate activity in Judah, such as Hosea 1:1.

flavor.¹³⁶ Hays argues that the language is not quite as difficult as Hosea, but nonetheless it clearly depends upon a language tradition that is distinct from SBH.

Jeremiah

Decades ago, Greenwood observed that Jeremiah includes clear prophecies about the restoration of the northern kingdom, “perhaps the most conspicuous example in the Tanak of patently false prophecy.”¹³⁷ In his mind, the northern kingdom was completely gone, and these prophecies were the wishful thinking of a remnant of northerners living in isolation in the southern kingdom. It is not hard to hear Cross’s influence in this argument. Let us consider the proposed existence of the IPM at this point. If the IPM had somehow been transmitted to the prophetic schools in the south, then this northern kingdom, now lost for a century, would be the subject of prophetic inquiry.

Hays sees northern influence in Jeremiah, and Huffmon sees the Rechabites as possible successors of Elijah’s northern school (Jer 35).¹³⁸ The framing of the Rechabites makes it clear that Jeremiah is acquainted with them, but certainly not a member of the group. Jeremiah resonates strongly with Deuteronomy in many places, and part of that resonance gives him certain affinities with the IPM.¹³⁹ This contrasts strongly with postexilic authors who tended to marginalize the northern kingdom of Israel, given the association with the Samaritans, but Jeremiah treats the restoration of the north as a key aspect of prophetic vision.¹⁴⁰ Recently, Benedetta Rossi has pointed to Jeremiah’s reliance upon his scribe Baruch as a possible indication of prophetic continuity. Rossie argues that the language of Jeremiah indicates a plurality of prophets who employed writing as their chief act of mediation.¹⁴¹

When Jeremiah has YHWH asking, “Is not Ephraim still my dear son?” (Jer 31:20), Jeremiah is clearly pointing to a potential restoration alongside Judah (Jer 31:31). Jerusalem is about to be destroyed, but there is a promise for restoration. The same could be true for Israel. How could such a kingdom be lost without hope of restoration? James Muilenburg commented extensively

¹³⁶ The issue of Israelian and Judahite Hebrew has been addressed in chapter two. See Christopher B. Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27: Josiah’s Festival Scroll for the Fall of Assyria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 160–71; Scott B. Noegel, “Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27,” *AuOr* 12.2 (1994): 177–92. Although Hays argues for a Josianic origin of the Isaiah text, he nonetheless presents a number of arguments that support this dissertation’s thesis.

¹³⁷ Greenwood, “On the Jewish Hope for a Restored Northern Kingdom,” 385.

¹³⁸ Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27*, 148–49; Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Rechabites in the Book of Jeremiah and their Historical Roots in Israel,” in *The Book of Jeremiah: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, eds. Jack R. Lundbom, Craig A. Evans, and Bradford A. Anderson, VTSup 178 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 191–210.

¹³⁹ For a discussion of these resonances, see Georg Fischer, “Jeremiah— ‘The Prophet Like Moses’?” in Lundbom, Evans, and Anderson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 45–66.

¹⁴⁰ H. G. M. Williamson, *I and II Chronicles*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 54; H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 112–14; Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah*, 150–51.

¹⁴¹ Benedetta Rossi, “Reshaping Jeremiah: Scribal Strategies and the Prophet Like Moses,” *JSOT* 44 (2020): 578–81. The relationship of Jeremiah and Baruch was discussed in chapter 4.

on the continuity of “covenant mediators” which included Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah.¹⁴² He saw Hosea and Jeremiah tied together as the greatest of these mediators because they mediate the covenant for condemned kingdoms. Hosea declares that Israel will once more be YHWH’s people, despite the fact that they scorned YHWH at present (Hosea 2:1, 6:11–7:1).¹⁴³ Likewise, Jeremiah calls for repentance among a sinful people who seem unrepentant, but YHWH still says he will heal them (Jer 3:21–25). The description of Judah in Jeremiah 14:10 is not much different from Hosea’s description of Israel in Hosea 7. In fact, Judah’s sin is so great that YHWH says even Moses and Samuel could not mediate the covenant between him and his people (Jer 15:1). Still, in the end a new covenant is given to Judah (Jer 31:31–34), and by extension, the possibility of this new covenant also welcoming Israel back cannot be ignored. In essence, Lundbom sees Jeremiah as the capstone of the great mediation for all of Israel which began with Moses.

Conclusion

What can we conclude from this evidence? It is clear that the prophetic record of the Hebrew Scriptures has a home in the preexilic period. The language and practices are not out of keeping with the language and practices of the ANE in the period *before* the exile. At the same time, the Israelite seers and prophets had their own unique way of doing things, perhaps because of their reliance upon *revelation* combined with the cultural practice of reference archives. Contrary to much of the scholarship in circulation today, we can say confidently that the prophets not fit their context, but likely formed the core of the text-writing body which produced the Hebrew Scriptures.

¹⁴² Jack R. Lundbom, “Jeremiah as the Mediator of the Covenant,” in Lundbom, Evans, and Anderson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 437–55. Lundbom received Muilenburg’s unpublished lecture texts upon Muilenburg’s retirement in 1972 and relies heavily upon them in his exploration of this topic.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 445–46.