PROPHETS AND PROPHECY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

WRITINGS FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD

Number 41
Volume Editor
Peter Machinist

SBL
SBL PRESS

PROPHETS AND PROPHECY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

SECOND EDITION

by

Martti Nissinen

with contributions by

C. L. Seow, Robert K. Ritner, and H. Craig Melchert

SBL PRESS

SBL PRESS

Atlanta

Library of Congress Control Number:2019942245

Printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Series Editor's Foreword

Writings from the Ancient World is designed to provide up-to-date, readable English translations of writings recovered from the ancient Near East.

The series is intended to serve the interests of general readers, students, and educators who wish to explore the ancient Near Eastern roots of Western civilization or to compare these earliest written expressions of human thought and activity with writings from other parts of the world. It should also be useful to scholars in the humanities or social sciences who need clear, reliable translations of ancient Near Eastern materials for comparative purposes. Specialists in particular areas of the ancient Near East who need access to texts in the scripts and languages of other areas will also find these translations helpful. Given the wide range of materials translated in the series, different volumes will appeal to different interests. However, these translations make available to all readers of English the world's earliest traditions as well as valuable sources of information on daily life, history, religion, and the like in the preclassical world.

Covering the period from the invention of writing (by 3000 BCE) down to the conquests of Alexander the Great (ca. 330 BCE), the ancient Near East comprised northeast Africa and southwest Asia. The cultures represented within these limits include especially Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Aramean, Phoenician, and Israelite. It is hoped that Writings from the Ancient World will eventually produce translations of most of the many different genres attested in these cultures: letters (official and private), myths, diplomatic documents, hymns, law collections, monumental inscriptions, tales, and administrative records, to mention but a few.

The Society of Biblical Literature provided significant funding for the Writings from the Ancient World series. In addition, authors have benefited from working in research collections in their respective institutions and beyond. Were it not for such support, the arduous tasks of preparation, translation, editing, and publication could not have been accomplished or even undertaken. It is the hope of all who have worked on these texts or supported

this work that Writings from the Ancient World will open up new horizons and deepen the humanity of all who read these volumes.

Theodore J. Lewis
The Johns Hopkins University

Abbreviations

4 R	Rawlinson, H. C. *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. Vol 4. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1875.
4 R^2	Rawlinson, H. C. *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. Vol 4. 2nd ed. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1891.
5 R	Rawlinson, H. C. *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. Vol 5. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1909.
A.	Tablet signature of texts from Mari
AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABL	Harper, Robert F., ed. *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum.* Edited by 14 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892–1914.
ABRT	Craig, James A. *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1895–1897.
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AD	Sachs, Abraham J., and Hermann Hunger. *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*. Vols. 1–3. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988–1996.
ADD	Johns, C. H. W. *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*. 4 vols. Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1898–1923.
ADOG	Abhandlungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung: Beiheft
AHw	Soden, Wolfram von. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959–1981.

AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs/Monografías sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente
ANES	*Ancient Near Eastern Studies*
ANET	Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AO	museum siglum of the Louvre (Antiquités orientales)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AOS	American Oriental Series
AOTU	Altorientalische Texte und Untersuchungen
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
Asb	Assurbanipal
Ash	collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
ASJ	*Acta Sumerologica* (Japan)
Ass	prefix of excavation numbers from the German excavations at Assur
AThR	*Anglican Theological Review*
AuOrSup	Aula Orientalis Supplement
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BB	Bezold, Carl, and E. A. Wallis Budge. *The Tell el-Amarna Tablets in the British Museum.* London: British Museum, 1892.
BCSMS	*Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*
BE	tablets in the Collections of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BIWA	Borger, Rykle. *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BLMJ	museum siglum of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem

BM	tablets in the Collections of the British Museum
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
Bu	tablets in the Collections of the British Museum
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BWL	Lambert, Wilfred George. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1963.
BzA	*Beiträge zur Assyriologie*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. 21 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CB	Chagar Bazar
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CDA	Black, Jeremy, ed. *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012.
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. *The Context of Scripture*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2016.
CRAI	*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*
CRRAI	Comptes rendus de la Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
DBSup	Pirot, Lous, and André Robert, eds. *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément*. Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1928–.
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
DT	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
EA	El-Amarna tablets
ErIsr	*Eretz-Israel*
EVO	*Egitto e Vicino Oriente*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*

FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FLP	tablets in the collections of the Free Library of Pennsylvania
FM	Florilegium marianum
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IDBSup	Crim, Keith, ed. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
IM	tablets in the collections of the Iraq Museum
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARG	*Jahrbuch für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
K	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
KAR	Ebeling, Erich. *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1919–1923.
KTT	Krebernik, Manfred. *Tall Bi'a-Tuttul II: Die altorientalischen Schriftfunde*. Saarbrücken: SDV, 2001.
LÄ	Helck, Wolfgang, Eberhard Otto, and Wolfhart Westendorf, eds. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972.
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LAS	Parpola, Simo. *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*. 2 vols. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970–1983.
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies

LKU	Falkenstein, Adam. *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*. Berlin: Vorderasiatische abteilung der Staatlichen museen, 1931.
LTBA	Matouš, Lubor, and Wolfram von Soden. *Die lexikalischen Tafelserien der Babylonier und Assyrer*. 2 vols. Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatische Abteilung, 1933.
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
M.	tablet signature of texts from Mari
MAOG	Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft
MARI	*Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*
MdB	*Le Monde de la Bible*
MIOF	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
MSL	Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon/Materials for the Sumerian Lexikon
MVAG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NABU	*Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*
NARGD	Postgate, J. N. *Neo-Assyrian Royal Grants and Decrees*. Rome: Pontificial Biblical Institute, 1969.
NBL	*Neues Bibel-Lexikon*
ND	tablet signature of texts from Nimrud
OAC	Orientis Antiqui Collectio
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBRT	Dalley, Stephanie, C. B. F. Walker, and J. D. Hawkins. *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell al Rimah*. Hertford: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1976.
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Inscriptions
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
Or	*Orientalia* (NS)
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PFES	Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society
PIPOAC	Publication de l'Institut du Proche-Orient Ancien du Collège de France
PNA	*The Prosography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Vol. 1 edited by K. Radner; vols. 2 and 3 edited by H. D. Baker. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998–2002.
PRT	Klauber, Ernst Georg. Politisch-religiöse Texte der Sargonidenzeit. Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1913.
PSBA	*Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*
Qad	*Qadmoniot*

RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RAcc	Thureau-Dangin, François. *Rituels accadiens*. Paris: Leroux, 1921.
RB	*Revue biblique*
RES	*Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RINAP	The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period. RINAP 4 = Leichty 2011; RINAP 5.1 = Novotny, and Jeffers 2018.
RlA	Ebeling, Erich, et al., eds. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–.
Rm	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
RS	tablet signature of texts from Ugarit
SAA	State Archives of Assyria. SAA 1 = Parpola 1987a; SAA 2 = Parpola and Watanabe 1988; SAA 3 = Livingstone 1989; SAA 4 = Starr 1990; SAA 6 = Kwasman and Parpola 1991; SAA 7 = Fales and Postgate 1992; SAA 9 = Parpola 1997; SAA 10 = Parpola 1993; SAA 11 = Fales and Postgate 1994; SAA 12 = Kataja and Whiting 1995; SAA 13 = Cole and Machinist 1998; SAA 16 = Luukko and Van Buylaere 2002; SAA 21 = Parpola 2018.
SAAB	*State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SB Gilg.	Standard Babylonian edition of the Epic of Gilgameš
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SD	Studies and Documents
SEÅ	*Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
SEL	*Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico*
Sem	*Semitica*
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SFES	Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
Sm	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
SpTU	*Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk*
StOr	Studia Orientalia
StOr	*Studia Orientalia*
T.	tablet signature of texts from Mari

TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TCL	Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre
TCM	Textes cunéiformes de Mari
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TI	Langdon, Stephen. *Tammuz and Ishtar*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1914.
TS	Texts and Studies
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TTKi	*Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke*
TUAT	Kaiser, Otto, ed. *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1984–.
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UC	tablets in the collections of University College London
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UM	tablets in the collections of the University Museum, Philadelphia
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VA	inscriptions in the collections of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VAT	tablets in the collections of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
WdF	Wege der Forschung
VS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
W	field number of tablets excavated at Uruk/Warka
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
W-B	tablets in the Weld-Blundell Collection in the Ashmolean Museum
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
YBC	tablets in the Yale Babylonian Collection
YOS	Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtgeschichte*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMGSup	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft Supplementbände

ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZTT	tablets from Ziyaret Tepe
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Explanation of Signs

[ ]	Brackets enclose restorations
< >	Angle brackets enclose words omitted by the original scribe.
<< >>	Double angle brackets enclose words or signs omitted by the editor.
( )	Parentheses enclose additions in the English translation.
…	A row of dots indicates gaps in the text or untranslatable words.
(?)	A question mark in parentheses follows doubtful readings in the transcriptions and doubtful renderings in the translations.
italics	Italics in the English translations indicate uncertain readings.

Acknowledgments

The corpus of documents of prophecy in the ancient Near East is constantly growing. Ever since the first edition of *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* was published in 2003, several new texts pertaining to the prophetic phenomenon have been published. Moreover, a number of texts were not included in the first edition either because they were still lacking an adequate edition or because I failed to recognize their relevance as documents of prophecy. Therefore, it is time for a new edition almost one-fourth larger than the first one, including the transcription and translation of thirty-four new texts. To avoid confusion, the numbering of texts of the first edition has not been changed, but the new texts are added at the end of each chapter as numbers 50a–b, 65a–b, 67a, 118a–j, 135a–q, and 141a. I am aware of some Old Babylonian texts mentioning prophets still awaiting a proper edition; they are not included in this collection (A. 3087; M. 5529+; M. 7270; MDP 18 171).

Again, it is a great pleasure to offer my acknowledgments to a number of people who devoted their time to working on both editions of this book. First of all, I want to thank C. L. Seow, Robert K. Ritner, and H. Craig Melchert for their contributions, without which this volume would be seriously incomplete. Peter Machinist worked on both editions of my manuscript with great precision and care, correcting my English as well as my Akkadian and giving editorial advice, for which I am profoundly indebted to him. As always I owe a great debt of gratitude to Simo Parpola, who made a multitude of remarks and corrections to the Assyrian part of the manuscript of both editions and helped me out with various difficulties. It is he who first introduced me to the world and spirit of Assyrian prophecy and who has ever since been a never-failing mentor, support, and source of knowledge. Warm thanks are due to Raija Mattila for her remarks on the Assyrian texts, as well as to Gina Konstantopoulos and Sebastian Fink, who checked the translation from Sumerian in no. 135f.

In matters concerning Mari, I owe a great deal to the counsel given by Jack M. Sasson, who read the Mari chapters of the first edition carefully through and gave me valuable linguistic and bibliographical advice. Special

thanks are due to Dominique Charpin, who also read my translations of the Mari texts in the first edition and provided me with important new literature, readings, and sources. I owe to him the possibility of including the texts FM 6 1 (no. 3) and FM 6 45 (no. 65) in this collection almost simultaneously with their publication.

I am also grateful to my friends who first turned my attention to some newly edited texts included in this collection: Herbert Niehr (no. 143), Daniel Fleming (no. 135p), and Niko Porkka (no. 141a). A major part of the work on the new texts included in the second edition took place during my two-month visit at Humboldt University of Berlin in the fall of 2015. I offer my heartfelt thanks to Bernd Ulrich Schipper for this opportunity.

Finally, I want to thank the series editor Ted Lewis and the editorial board of the Writings from the Ancient World series for the approval of my manuscript and Bob Buller for once again preparing the manuscript for publication.

I dedicate this book to my fiancée Maarit with much love.

Introduction

Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy

Ancient Near Eastern sources for prophecy have hitherto been scattered in various publications, often without an appropriate and up-to-date translation and, hence, virtually inaccessible to nonspecialist readers. The purpose of this volume is to bring together a representative sample of written documents from a variety of times and places, translated from the newest editions in order to update the present knowledge of the distribution of prophecy in the ancient Near East as well as to provide the reader with a tool for the study of prophecy as an established institution in the ancient Near Eastern world.

Prophecy, as understood in this volume, is human transmission of allegedly divine messages. As a method of revealing the divine will to humans, prophecy is to be seen as another, yet distinctive branch of the consultation of the divine that is generally called "divination." Among the forms of divination, prophecy clearly belongs to the noninductive kind. That is to say, prophets—like dreamers and unlike astrologers or haruspices—do not employ methods based on systematic observations and their scholarly interpretations but act as direct mouthpieces of gods whose messages they communicate.

This understanding of the term concurs with those definitions of prophecy in which the transmissive or communicative aspect is emphasized as an overall feature that should be found in all phenomena and literary documents that are claimed to represent prophecy (e.g., Overholt 1989; Huffmon 1992; Barstad 1993b; Petersen 2000; Stökl 2012; Weippert 2014; Nissinen 2017). Other aspects, such as religious and social conditions of the activity, personal qualities of the human beings involved, the possible prediction and other distinctive features of the messages and the means of obtaining them, are subordinate to the basic understanding of prophecy as a process of transmission.

The prophetic process of transmission consists of the divine sender of the message, the message itself, the human transmitter of the message, and the recipient(s) of the message. These four components should be transparent in any written source to be identified as a specimen of prophecy.

As a phenomenon, prophecy is cross-cultural, being observable in various cultural environments throughout human history (Overholt 1986; Grabbe 2000, 2010). As a term, however, *prophecy*, together with its derivatives, has established itself primarily in the language of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures. A significant part of the canon of the Hebrew Bible is called *nəbîʾîm,* the prophets, and the prerequisite for the conceptualization of prophecy by Christians and even Muslims is the biblical idea of prophecy, as developed in early Judaism from the Second Temple period onwards. Because of the emphatically biblical background of the concept of prophecy, its adaptation to extrabiblical contexts has seldom happened independently from the biblical paradigm and without a comparative purpose. The ongoing debate about the degree of historicity of the Hebrew Scriptures and the quest for authentic prophetic words within the heavily edited prophetic books and narratives of the Hebrew Bible have made many scholars seek arguments from related phenomena in the surrounding cultures. On the other hand, the need to study the ancient Near Eastern documents in their own right, independently from the agenda of biblical studies, has been increasingly emphasized.

The Study of Prophecy in Transition

That prophecy as a phenomenon is not restricted to the early Jewish or Christian realm has never been a secret. It is recognized by the Hebrew Bible, in which the "prophets of Baal" make their appearance (1 Kgs 18). Even for Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, there were acknowledged precursors in pre-Islamic Arabia (Hämeen-Anttila 2000a). The existence of extrabiblical prophecy has long been an issue for modern scholars as well. Phenomena and written documents related to biblical prophecy were sought in different sources and milieus, ancient and modern, already in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., Hölscher 1914; Lindblom 1962; Haldar 1945). This quest provided important insights but was largely impeded not only by definitional unclarity but also by the uncertainty about the distribution and nature of ancient Near Eastern prophecy because of the lack of pertinent sources.

The situation changed when the first letters with quotations recognized as prophetic words were found in the excavations of the eighteenth-century BCE archives of Mari, an important city-state in the middle Euphrates region. The first two letters were published by George Dossin in 1948 (no. 38) and 1950 (no. 1), and the subsequent volumes of Archives royales de Mari (ARM), especially the female correspondence (ARM 10) published by Dossin in 1967, brought more cognate letters to scholarly notice. These sources inspired a lively scholarly involvement that produced a considerable amount of literature (Heintz 1990–2000). For decades, the Mari letters formed the primary

extrabiblical evidence for prophecy in scholarly literature, even though the prophetic aspect in them and especially their equivalence to biblical prophecy did not remain unchallenged (e.g., Noort 1977). Since the criteria for classifying texts as prophecy were largely based on the study of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, many would avoid the use of the word *prophecy* outside the biblical context altogether. Moreover, the chronological gap of one millennium and more between Mari and the Bible presented problems for comparison, especially because little material was found outside the two corpora to tie them historically and phenomenologically together. Nevertheless, a few long-known documents of prophecy in West Semitic milieus, like the Egyptian Report of Wenamon (no. 142) and the Zakkur Inscription (no. 137), as well as the Balaam Inscription from Deir ʿAlla (no. 138), which became public knowledge in the 1970s, were there to testify that the biblical band of the "prophets of Baal" was not quite without historical foundation.

To be sure, divine messages to the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal from the seventh century BCE had already been excavated in the middle of the nineteenth century from the ruins of Nineveh, which by the time of these kings had become the central capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Cuneiform copies and translations of most of these texts, actually referred to as "prophecy" by some contemporary scholars (e.g., Delattre 1889), were published as early as the 1890s. The revival of the comparative study of prophecy generated by the study of Mari letters left the Neo-Assyrian sources at first virtually untouched. The preliminary work done in the 1960s by Karlheinz Deller and Simo Parpola on the Nineveh tablets, which were far from easy to read and interpret, resulted only in the 1970s in scholarly contributions in which they were again recognized as prophecy (Weippert 1972; Dietrich 1973; Huffmon 1976a/b; cf. Ramlot 1972, 880–81).

Even in the new phase of study, with two corpora of ancient Near Eastern prophecy from different places and periods, the complicated state of publication was a challenge that could be faced only with a well-developed bibliographical sense and a good knowledge of cuneiform sources. Relief for this situation was brought first by Jean-Marie Durand with the edition of the prophetic letters from Mari as a part of the first collection of the Mari correspondence (ARM 26/1, 1988) and finally by Simo Parpola, who met a long-felt need with his edition of the Neo-Assyrian prophetic oracles (SAA 9, 1997).

Hence, when it comes to the study of ancient Near Eastern prophecy, the third millennium of our present era began propitiously with two authoritative editions of the principal text corpora at hand. However, these volumes do not include all evidence of ancient Near Eastern prophecy. Some Mari letters with prophetic content are published or forthcoming in volumes of the ARM series

subsequent to the edition of Durand. In addition, there are several ritual and administrative texts from the Old Babylonian period in which prophets are mentioned. As for the Neo-Assyrian sources, the edition of Parpola includes the tablets that are prophetic oracles as such, whereas other texts that refer to prophets or quote prophecy are dealt with in other publications (e.g., Nissinen 1998c; 2000b, 2000c). The two oracles from Ešnunna (nos. 66–67), contemporaneous to those of Mari and published by Maria deJong Ellis (1987), deserve special attention, representing the genre of prophetic oracles outside Mari and Assyria. Finally, the presence of persons with prophetic titles is amply documented in sources from the twenty-first to the second centuries BCE from different parts of the ancient Near East.

The Nature of the Sources

The existing evidence of prophecy comes from all over the Fertile Crescent, witnessing to the wide distribution of prophets and proving prophecy to be a common cultural legacy that cannot be traced back to any particular society or place of origin. However, the evidence is quite fragmentary. Of the many places and periods of time, we can say only that prophets were there, but little can be learned of their activities. Some significant ancient Near Eastern cultures reveal even less. Ugarit leaves us entirely in the dark, the Hittite evidence is equivocal, and the Luwian sources are represented by a single text (no. 143). Egyptian texts conventionally called prophecies are to be taken as literary predictions rather than the result of a prophetic process of communication (see below). An overall picture of ancient Near Eastern prophecy can be drawn only by filling many gaps with circumstantial reasoning and with the help of comparative material. To use an archaeological metaphor, the sources collected in this volume constitute only the defective set of sherds, of which the badly broken vessel must be restored.

Given the circumstances, the ancient Near Eastern evidence of prophecy consists entirely of written sources, even though it is probable indeed that prophecy was oral communication in the first place. The relatively small number of documents and their haphazard state of preservation for posterity indicate that writing was only exceptionally part of the prophetic process of communication and that, when it was, the written document was not necessarily filed in the archives, at any rate not for long-term preservation. It is certainly not by accident that the majority of the prophetic documents come from Mari and Nineveh, which are in general the two most abundant Mesopotamian archives found thus far. On the other hand, the huge process of collecting, editing, and interpreting prophecy that took place as a part of the formation of the Hebrew Bible is virtually without precedent in the rest of the

ancient Near East. Only in Assyria do the collections of prophetic oracles to Esarhaddon document the reuse of prophecy in a new situation, thus bearing witness to the modest beginnings of such a process.

The written sources that constitute the available documentation of ancient Near Eastern prophecy divide into different types. Some of these consist of little more than the wording of prophetic utterances, while in others the words of the prophets—quotations of a known personality or literary paraphrases—are part of the text of another writer, often as one issue among others. In both cases, the way from the spoken word to a written record may be long and twisting, often employing several intermediaries between the prophet and the addressee. The messages transmitted by the prophets are exposed to all the stylistic, ideological, and material requirements active in the process of transmission, which may carry beyond the oral stage into the written. Hence, the so-called *ipsissima verba* of the prophets are beyond reach, which only stresses the need to pay attention to the socioreligious preconditions of the whole process instead of the personality of the prophet (Nissinen 2000c).

A great number of texts do not quote words of the prophets but mention them in different contexts and in association with people representing different kinds of professions and social roles. These texts not only give the only available evidence of prophecy in certain periods and places but also let prophets appear in a variety of social, cultic, and lexical contexts. Taken together, these sources yield important insights, however random and scanty, into the socioreligious profile of the prophets—all the more because there are no major discrepancies between the sources in this respect, even though they derive from a time span of more than one and a half millennia. Many of those from the Mesopotamian or cuneiform realm present prophets in close connection to the goddess Ištar, often associated with persons of distinctive behavior or bodily appearance.

The Prophets

Who, then, are identified as *prophets* in the written sources? There is no single word for a prophet in any language represented in this book, that is, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hebrew, and other West Semitic. The justification for translating certain appellatives with the English word *prophet* is taken from what the sources inform us about the persons in question. We have already noted that, as a rule, people who transmit divine words that allegedly derive from direct communication with a deity are called by modern interpreters prophets, whatever the original designation may be. All visionaries and dreamers cannot be lumped together as prophets, though, but the line between prophets and other practitioners of noninductive divination is difficult to draw and

may be partly artificial. As a result, there is no infallible definition of who should be called a prophet in each time, society, and situation.

Some designations, nevertheless, have established themselves as prophetic ones. The widest range of attestations belongs to *muḫḫû*(*m*) (Babylonian)/*maḫḫû* (Assyrian) and the respective feminines *muḫḫūtu*(*m*)/*maḫḫūtu*, known from Old Akkadian through Old and Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian to Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian. At Mari, *muḫḫûm* is the most common prophetic title, whereas in Neo-Assyrian documents *maḫḫû* appears only in literary contexts and in lexical lists. The word is derived from the root *maḫû* "to become crazy, to go into a frenzy," which refers to receiving and transmitting divine words in an altered state of mind. This verb is actually used of the condition in which divine words are uttered (e.g., in nos. 23, 24, 33, 51). Many of the occurrences of this word family reveal nothing of the prophetic capacity of the persons thus designated, but whenever their activities are discernible to some extent, they either assume a cultic role (nos. 51, 52, 103, 118, 122, 135o) or convey divine messages (nos. 10, 12, 16, 25, 31, 32, etc.). In Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, prophecies are called *šipir maḫḫê* "messages of the *maḫḫû*" (nos. 97–99, 101).

At Mari, there is another designation for persons who are involved in prophetic activities. The word in question is *āpilum* (fem. *āpiltum*), from the root *apālu* "to answer," and could be translated as "interpreter" (Merlo 2004) or "spokesperson" (Stökl 2012, 43). The etymology suggests a transmitter of divine answers to human inquiries, and the *āpilum* actually does convey divine messages in the very same manner as the *muḫḫûm* (e.g., nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8). It is difficult to recognize any substantial difference between these two groups of prophets. Durand has suggested that the oracles of an *āpil*(*t*)*um* may have been provoked, unlike those of the *muḫḫû*(*tu*)*m,* which were spontaneous, but the evidence is not unambiguous (see Merlo 2004). In general, the activity of both classes is described in a similar way, although it seems that an *āpil*(*t*)*um* could travel from one place to another, whereas the activity of a *muḫḫû*(*tu*)*m* was more restricted to the temple to which he or she was affiliated (see Durand 1988, 386–90; 1995, 322–28). In the light of the preserved sources, both groups show themselves to belong to a prophetic institution that had an established position in the society of Mari, although it apparently had a different social and political status from other kinds of divination, above all extispicy. According to the available documentation, the messages of the prophets were transferred to the king by go-betweens, who were often the royal ladies of Mari. This indicates that the relation of the prophets to the king was more indirect than that of the haruspices (*bārû*); nevertheless, even direct contacts are not excluded (see Charpin 2001, 34–41; 2002, 16–22).

Prophetic activity at Mari was not restricted to people called *muḫḫû*(*tu*)*m* or *āpil*(*t*)*um*. In a number of documents, there are people belonging to neither of these two groups who act as mouthpieces of deities. One of them is called "the *qammatum* of Dagan of Terqa," whose message is reported in two different letters (nos. 7, 9). The word *qammatum* is of unclear derivation—if not a proper name, it may refer to a person with a characteristic hairstyle (Durand 1995, 333-34)—but the role of the female person in question is clearly prophetic. Moreover, a group with the appellation *nabû,* which has been regarded as etymologically related to Hebrew *nābîʾ* "prophet" (Fleming 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; but cf. Huehnergard 1999), is made to deliver an oracle to the king of Mari (no. 26). Even two persons called *assinnu*, a "man-woman" whose gender role is changed from man to a genderless person, appear in prophetic function (nos. 7, 8, 22, 23); this is significant with regard to the undefinable sex of some Assyrian prophets and the repeated appearance of prophets grouped with *assinnu* in lexical and administrative lists (nos. 123, 124, 126, 130, 135l, 135m, 135q).

In Neo-Assyrian sources, the standard word for a prophet is *raggimu* (fem. *raggintu*), which has replaced the word *maḫḫû* in colloquial use as well as in formal writing. Accordingly, the verb *ragāmu* "to shout, to proclaim" is used of prophesying (nos. 91, 109, 111, 113). Insofar as *raggimu*/*raggintu* can be taken as a general title of a prophet even in cases when the word is not explicitly used, which is plausible indeed, it is evident that they were devotees of Ištar of Arbela, whose words they usually transmitted. However, their activity was not restricted to the city of Arbela, and they could act as the mouthpieces of other deities, too. In Neo-Assyrian society, prophets seem to have enjoyed a somewhat higher status than their colleagues at Mari, especially in the time of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, who not only deposited a selection of their oracles in the royal archives but also were the only Assyrian kings to recognize the significance of prophetic messages in their inscriptions. This was probably due to their personal attachment to the worship of Ištar of Arbela.

The sources documenting prophecy from the West Semitic world add a few items to the list of prophetic designations. The oldest of them, dating to circa 1700 BCE is a seal-amulet from Deir Rifa in Egypt (no. 141a) mentioning Qen the seer (*ḥz*). The three letters from Lachish (nos. 139–141), which constitute the only extrabiblical evidence of prophets in preexilic Israel, use the standard biblical word *nābîʾ*, whereas the Zakkur Inscription (no. 137) and the Deir ʿAlla inscription (no. 138) know another title well attested in the Hebrew Bible, namely, *ḥzh* "seer, visionary" (Heb. *ḥōzê*). In apposition with this word, the Zakkur Inscription uses the word *ʿddn,* which, on the other hand, may be related to the Egyptian *ʿḏd ʿɜ* "great seer" or the like, in the Report of Wenamon (no. 142).

Texts Included and Excluded

It is not always easy to distinguish prophecy from other oracular or divinatory activity and identify a person as a prophet, and the same holds true for recognizing a text as a specimen of prophecy. To be acknowledged as such, a text should reveal the relevant components of the process of transmission. This means that the implied speaker of the words uttered or quoted should be a deity, the implied addressee, respectively, a human being, and the message should be communicated to the addressee or recipient by a human being, the prophet. If this process of communication is only partly or not at all identifiable in the text, its prophetic nature is at issue and often cannot be unequivocally confirmed or denied. This problem is interwoven with the question of the often indefinable and even artificial borderline among prophecy, dreams, and other visionary activity. Therefore, an absolutely water-tight set of criteria is difficult to create, and the selection of prophetic texts remains debatable.

The texts included in this volume can be divided into three groups:

1. Oracle reports and collections. The Neo-Assyrian oracles to Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal are clearly represented as divine words proclaimed by prophets (nos. 68–96), as are the oracles to King Ibalpiel II of Ešnunna (nos. 66–67), in which the prophet is not mentioned but the form and content suggest a prophetic origin. The Balaam text from Deir ʿAlla (no. 138), which seems to combine oracles or visions from different sources, as well as the Amman Citadel Inscription (no. 136), may be taken as further representatives of this type. The Dialogue between Assurbanipal and Nabû (no. 118a) is a borderline case, since the dialogue is not presented as being mediated by a third party. It is included because of the many affinities with the prophetic oracles as a representative of their contemporary literary use.

2. Quotations of prophetic messages in letters and other kinds of literature. This is the main type at Mari (nos. 1–50b), and is also represented by an Amarna letter (no. 121), two Old Babylonian texts (nos. 135a–b), a number of Neo-Assyrian documents (nos. 103, 106, 107, 109, 111–115, 118d–g), Late Babylonian chronographic texts (nos. 134–135), as well as the Zakkur Inscription (no. 137) and the Report of Wenamon (no. 142). That we have to do with prophecy is in most cases confirmed by the title of the person who speaks. However, this is not always the case, and the prophetic nature of the quotation may then be deduced from the literary context, the comportment of the person in question, and the contents of the message.

3. Texts with references to persons having a prophetic title. These make up the miscellaneous group of the remaining sources, made up of inscriptions (nos. 97–101), literary and religious texts (nos. 51, 52, 64, 118, 118b, 118h, 122, 133, 135o–p, 143), letters (nos. 105, 108, 119, 135k, 139–141), extispicy

reports (nos. 118i–j), legal and administrative documents (nos. 53–63, 65a–b, 67a, 102, 104, 110, 118c, 123, 130–132, 135c–j), omen texts (nos. 127-129), and lexical lists (nos. 120, 124–126, 135l–n, 135q).

Some texts, more or less frequently presented by other scholars as further representatives of ancient Near Eastern prophecy, are excluded from this volume:

1. Texts that are not compatible with the definition of prophecy as primarily transmissive activity. This category includes the Egyptian predictive texts referred to as prophecies (Lichtheim 1973–1980, 1:139–84; Devauchelle 1994; Blasius and Schipper 2002), and the literary predictive texts also called Akkadian Prophecies or Akkadian Apocalypses (Talon 1994, 98–114; Neujahr 2012; cf. Ellis 1989; Nissinen 2001b). These are literary creations that share many elements with prophecies but probably do not go back to actual prophetic activities. However, as deriving from a literary culture that also generated apocalypticism (Lambert 1978; Lucas 2000), these texts are not without relevance to the study of prophecy and its learned interpretation.

2. Texts in which the reference to prophecy is yet to be substantiated. Among these are the texts from Emar mentioning persons with the title *munabbiʾātu* and the like (Fleming 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Lion 2000). While it is not excluded that the word is etymologically related to Hebrew *nābîʾ* and Akkadian *nabû* attested as a prophetic designation at Mari (see, however, the critique of Huehnergard 1999; Stökl 2012, 161–67), the contexts of the attestations do not unequivocally speak for the prophetic interpretation of the word and leave the door open for other possible explanations. This also holds true for the Hittite prayers in which the king seeks relief from plagues with the help of different kinds of divination—eventually, but not certainly, including prophecy of some kind (Weippert 2014, 233–36; Lebrun 1994).

3. Texts that are still lacking an adequate edition. These include references to *āpilu* in three texts from Nuzi (HSS 13 152:16; 14 149:6 and 14 215:16; see Mayer 1978, 140–41; Lion 2000, 23–24) and in a Middle-Babylonian omen from Assur (KAR 460:16; see Lion 2000, 24). In *CAD* 1.2:170, these occurrences of the word *āpilu* are—probably wrongly—separated from those in Mari texts and given a different meaning. Moreover, several unpublished texts from Mari and one from Elam are known to contain references to prophets (M. 5529+; M. 7270; A. 3087, for which see Durand 1988, 398; Charpin 2015, 16; MDP 18 171). In the absence of complete editions, these texts are excluded, even though their relevance to this volume is acknowledged.

In addition, there is an interesting, though enigmatic, document that deserves a special mention. The Aramaic text in Demotic script, Papyrus Amherst 63, still lacks a complete edition and is, therefore, not included in the collection at hand. A full translation of the text is provided by Richard C.

Steiner (1997), according to whom the text derives from an Aramaic-speaking community that had been first deported to Samaria by Assurbanipal and later colonized in Upper Egypt. This long composition of poetry of different kinds (e.g., poems that share a common tradition with the biblical Pss 20 and 75) includes a passage that bears a close resemblance to biblical and extrabiblical prophecies. It presents an oracle of salvation spoken by Mar ("Lord"), the chief god of the community, upon a lament expressed in the first-person singular (vi:12–18; translation from Steiner 1997, 313):

> Mar speaks up and says to me: "[Be] strong, my servant, fear not, I will save your.… To Marah, if you will…, to Mar from your shrine and Rash, [I shall destroy your] en[emy in] your days and during your years [your] advers[ary] will be smitten. [Your foes] I shall destroy in front of you; your foot on their necks [you will place. I shall suppo]rt your right (hand), I shall crown you with posterity; your house.…"

The relevance of this passage to the study of ancient Near Eastern prophecy is beyond doubt, and it can only be hoped that an edition of Papyrus Amherst 63 will soon evoke scholarly interest in the whole composition; unfortunately, the analysis of the text by Karel van der Toorn (2018) appeared too late to be consulted in this book.

Conventions of Transcription and Translation

The transcriptions and translations of Akkadian are my own; those of West Semitic texts and Egyptian were prepared by C. L. Seow and Robert K. Ritner, respectively, and that of Luwian by Craig Melchert. Since a detailed linguistic analysis is not in place in an anthology such as this one, I have purposefully avoided aiming at originality. Therefore, the reader is not likely to find revolutionary new readings and interpretations but will notice that they rarely deviate substantially from the interpretations of Durand (ARM 26/1), Parpola (SAA 9), and other standard editions. Restorations of fragmentarily preserved texts also mostly follow their suggestions.

The West Semitic and Egyptian texts are given in transliteration, whereas the Akkadian texts, according to the policy of the SBLWAW series, are given in transcription rather than in sign-for-sign transliteration of the cuneiform script. This way of presentation is chosen to make the text look like a language rather than a cryptogram and to give the noncuneiformist reader, more or less familiar with Akkadian, a better impression of the phonetic structure of the original text. I am fully aware of how hazardous an enterprise this kind of normalization is. In many cases, for example, the length of the vowel or the

phonetic form of the plural nouns can only be guessed, and the different conventions of transcription may clash. I have tried to be consistent in following the principles of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project in Neo-Assyrian texts and those of von Soden (*GAG*) elsewhere. However, uncertain transcriptions and downright mistakes are likely to occur and are all my responsibility.

For these reasons, I cannot stress enough that the transcriptions are prepared for the purposes of this volume and are *not* the original text but an interpretation. Any serious work on them requires consulting the authoritative editions, which are always indicated. Two texts (nos. 130, 132), however, are transcribed and translated here for the first time; previously they were published in cuneiform copies only. Some transcriptions are based on photos or transliterations found in databases such as Archibab and Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (www.archibab.fr; cdli.ucla.edu; nos. 118b, 135d, 135e, 135g, 135m). All the other texts are adequately edited in other volumes, and the transliterations, which give a more accurate rendering of the cuneiform script, can be found in them.

The translations are not literal reflections of the wording of the original language but strive for modern, idiomatic, and readable English. Akkadian phrases are not necessarily translated word for word, and parentheses are generally avoided even though a word in the translation may not have an exact equivalent in the original.