

PSALM STUDIES

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PSALM STUDIES

By

Sigmund Mowinckel

Translated by

Mark E. Biddle

Volume 2

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PSALM STUDIES 3

CULTIC PROPHECY AND PROPHETIC PSALMS

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INTRODUCTION AND FOUNDATION

1.1. THE PROBLEM

Among the Old Testament psalms one finds several in which the deity is introduced as the speaker, whether YHWH's answer follows more or less immediately after the lament and request, as in Pss 60 and 75, or whether the whole psalm is placed in YHWH's mouth, as in Ps 82 and the first part of Ps 110. In all these cases the form and style of the divine words are largely the same as in the prophetic literature. Sometimes the words sound very oracular, as in Pss 60, 2, and 110.

It is possible, of course, that we are dealing only with stylistic adaptations, with poetic fictions. A somewhat superficial consideration will always suggest as the likeliest assumption that the psalmists have given YHWH the word on paper fully aware that it is entirely a poetic fiction corresponding to no external reality.

One who has looked somewhat more deeply into the character of the poetry in the Psalter will hardly feel satisfied with this explanation. First, it is somewhat remarkable how relatively often direct divine speech to people occurs in these psalms, which, by nature, seek first to express human attitudes and ideas about and prayers to God. We are accustomed to assigning the singing of psalms to the sacrificial, not the sacramental, elements of the cult. Second, however, if we remember that the psalms per se were initially true cultic psalms, and if we make this otherwise self-evident postulate the starting point of explanation, we will soon find it in order that the sacramental elements of the cult are also represented in its poetry and music. God's involvement with people is no less solemn and musical art is no less valuable than people's prayers to God. In this case, however, one will more likely reach for the second possible explanation, that these YHWH sayings in the psalms express a cultic reality, that they correspond to an actual characteristic of ancient Israelite or Jewish worship.

As we will see, this was indeed the case. Only this assumption fully explains the characteristics of the psalms mentioned above.

A similar consideration brought Hermann Gunkel to conclude that there was a time in the cult of ancient Israel when the priestly promise of an audience in the name of the deity concluded the lament psalm by the sick person to be cleansed.¹ He started from the observation that the prophetic imitations of the communal laments, for example, Jer 14, fall into two major parts, as a rule: the request and the divine response. The second part corresponds in the psalms to "the assurance of being heard," a rather fixed component of the biblical lament psalms. "One may, accordingly, imagine that in the oldest lament ceremonies the prayer was pronounced first, whereupon the priest then proclaimed the response in God's name. This would correspond to Babylonian liturgies, for example."

Here Gunkel chose an idea, fruitful in many respects, but immediately laid it down again without pressing on to recognize the full reality. He could have had an Ariadne's thread of psalm exegesis here but spurned it because Wellhausen, Stade, and Smend had influenced him so strongly. In individual, specific psalms, he fell back into the views of earlier criticism according to which we have in the psalms private, noncultic outpourings of the heart. He understood the prophetic element in the psalm as the result of a dual imitation. First, the prophets imitated the psalmists in their prophecies and produced a mixed style in which the prophetic element was primary and authentic. Later the psalmists imitated this mixed style and adopted the prophetic element, now, however, as a literary form.

This thesis by Gunkel is, as has been said, influenced by his assumption that the current psalms, with a few exceptions, were not originally cultic psalms. In contrast, I am convinced that the situation was the converse. With very few exceptions, our biblical psalms were composed as cultic psalms. The prophetic element in the psalms, I believe, is not to be explained as an imitation but can only be comprehended on the assumption that we are dealing with true cultic psalms.

In order to answer this question, we must form a picture of Israel's worship services, with particular attention to their sacramental and prophetic aspects.

Our task will be to correlate Gunkel's hypothesis concerning the original meaning of the prophetic element in the Psalter, mentioned above, with what we know otherwise about the order of worship in Israel in order thereby to achieve confirmation or refutation of the hypothesis. Furthermore, we must examine whether the hypothesis is not valid in a much broader area than

1. Hermann Gunkel, "Psalmen," *RGG* 4:1935.

merely “in the oldest lament ceremonies.” In any case—and Gunkel would probably have agreed—we must understand “lament ceremonies” not just as those occasions on which the community gathered to do penance because of common misfortune such as drought, famine, pestilence, and defeat but simultaneously as the cultic procedures undertaken to free individuals from the misfortune of illness, impurity, and sin. Such procedures belong to most of the Babylonian liturgies known to us. We will see, subsequently, however, that the prophetic word generally played a rather prominent role in the celebration of the Israelite cult. Finally, we face the task of investigating the individual prophetic psalms and correlating them with the resulting insight into Israel’s celebration of the cult. We must attempt to explain them on the assumption of this very correlation.

The thesis to be tested below is this: the prophetic form of certain psalms reflects a cultic reality. In certain cases, the prophetic words, that is, the words given in a certain cultic situation as God’s response to a request by someone who viewed himself and was viewed by his contemporaries as prophetically gifted, had a fixed place in the cult. Most, if not all, prophetic psalms in the Psalter are true cultic psalms to be explained in relation to this cultic practice.

We must consider the evidence for the thesis stated above as produced: (1) if we have shown from other reports outside the Psalter that there were actually such fixed cultic prophecies in ancient Israel, and (2) if we succeed in satisfactorily explaining the pertinent psalms in terms of this assumption. We must always proceed from the assumption that, if the psalms can be explained as cultic psalms, it is a self-evident postulate that they are such. First, the psalms were actually in use in the Jewish community as cultic psalms; second, since Gunkel, it is no longer necessary to demonstrate that the psalm originated from the cult. In fact, the psalms only became separate from the cult as Holy Scripture. Only as Holy Scripture did the cultic psalms also become private devotional psalms and undergo a complete reinterpretation. This reinterpretation had already been introduced, however, in the final phases of the temple cult.²

1.2. CULT AND PROPHECY

1.2.1. General

It is necessary, first, to gain insight into the relationship between the prophetic and the cultic.

If the prophetic passages in the Psalter presuppose a cultic reality, the communication of divine response must have had a fixed place in the cult.

2. See *Psalms Studies* 1, §4.

At first this appears somewhat unusual to us. We consider it obvious that the cult, and thus the cultic liturgies, must also have contained the sacramental element. But the concept that we usually associate with the word "prophecy" apparently does not coincide with the idea we have formed of the cult. We are accustomed to finding the "prophetic" as the opposite of the "cultic." At first glance, there seems to be an unbridgeable cleft between the fixed forms and formulas of the cult and the free inspiration of the prophet. Yet this relationship actually exists. It already appeared in Israel in the fact that the priest was often simultaneously the divine revealer (see below). The priest could communicate the revelation through technical means, such as the priest who administered the Urim and Thummim. But as an officeholder, he could also bear a special inspiration pertaining to the officeholder, conveyed through succession or through initiation into office. To whom God gives the office, to that one God also gives understanding, in this case, inspiration, the gift of prophecy. Thus, according to late Jewish belief, the high priest per se had the gift of prophecy (see John 11:51).

Statements above concerning the thesis, however, also clearly suggest that we do not take the word "prophetic" in the usual meaning of the word in the histories of Old Testament religion. The term "prophetic" is a formal term per se. In the language of theologians, however, it has usually attained quite specific content. The very circumstance that a formal term is usually, but not always, used with specific content is a contributing factor, I believe, to the significant wrangling over what was and was not "prophetic" in Israelite religion.³ Various authors have employed this very word in a nonspecific and quite clearly, even to them, varying meaning. In this context, I do not understand how, at least usually, those tendencies, persons, and ideas in Old Testament religion, including the so-called writing prophets, are represented and how the favored ethical and anticultic, sometimes, indeed, even the personal, aspect of religion are emphasized. Here I take the word in its original formal sense. I understand a "prophet" here as one who, on commission of both the community and its deity, communicates in response to requests the necessary information in religious matters directly from a divine source by virtue of an unusual bestowal of power, one with certain knowledge of divine matters, whether he is inspired or can receive revelation, or has access to technical means through which he ascertains the will and instructions of the deity and can communicate the same in response to a question or a prayer. In this sense of the word, the prophet is not a private individual who happens to step forward. He is an

3. As, for example, in the question as to whether this religion was "prophetic" from its origins.

employee of society, a member connecting the two parties to the covenant, the community and the deity. In this sense, the religions of Babylonian-Assyria, Greece, and Syria/Asia Minor had their prophets. They were called priests, shamans, medicine men, and so on. Obviously, however, this alone says nothing about the value or lack of value of the various phenomena. Instead, this question depends everywhere on the religious and moral content the various forms have borne. In many places the prophetic institution contributed nothing to the further development of the religion to a higher level. In Israel, by contrast, for reasons that do not interest us here, it became the agent of some of the most important impacts in religious and moral development.

From the perspective of content, every cult consists of two elements, the sacrificial and the sacramental, as Christian liturgists have often stated. One could also say the human and the prophetic. It should be understood as though the two elements divide in a purely external manner into congregation and liturgist. The liturgist, the priest, can appear as the agent of both the sacrificial and the sacramental. The sacrificial elements are those actions and words in which the deity speaks to people and deals with them, such as blessings, responses to prayers, dedications, and sacraments in the proper sense of the word. To the degree that the cult consists of these two elements and contains speech and response, action and counteraction, it acquires a dramatic imprint and becomes a drama. To the degree that it intends and produces something—and it always does this—this drama is a creative act, a real, creative drama.⁴

In some form, the sacramental, the prophetic, is present in every cult. To the degree that it appears in the form of words, one can and must speak of prophetic words in the cult.

Since almost every cult, with the sole exception of certain truly Protestant tendencies, proceeds from the notion that the communication of such prophetic words cannot be accomplished by just anyone but that certain personal conditions are required, it is almost always the case that the cult has certain ministers whose task and privilege is to be agents of the cult's prophetic word. That is, the cult has special cultic prophets. The cultic prophet need not always have been a personality different from the actual liturgist. Liturgist and cultic prophet could be united in one person. In other cases, however, a particular cult has certain ministers who appear only or chiefly as cultic prophets. Then one distinguishes between liturgist, that is, the priest in the proper sense, and cultic prophet. As we will see, both forms occur in Israel.

4. See *Psalm Studies* 2, part 1, §1.4.2.

The personal conditions associated with the office of cultic prophet consist of a special equipping, a special empowerment or inspiration that makes one a bearer of the prophetic word. This equipping distinguishes cultic prophets from the laity, and, when cultic prophet differs from priest, it also sometimes differs from that of the priest. So it was in Israel, where the priest emphasized his hereditary qualifications and the cultic prophet, like the prophet in general, his free inspiration.

If the prophetic word appears as part of the cult, two situations are conceivable and attested. Only the appearance of the prophet needs to be fixed in the liturgy; every cult presses toward fixed "orderly" forms and sees them as a guarantee of its holiness and efficacy. The content and form of the words are left more or less to the authentic, spontaneous inspiration of the individual prophet. Alternatively, the content of the word may be fixed in the order of service. Then words proclaimed in the name of the deity witness to free, momentary inspiration only in terms of style and form. The transition between these two forms is fluid to the extent that it may often occur, even in the first case, that the content of the divine proclamation to be delivered was prescribed to the pertinent prophet. He must prophesy as the authorities want (see 1 Kgs 22:5–13). Only the precise poetic formulation of the words is left to the prophet.

If the psalms are actually supposed to be cultic psalms, and if, accordingly, we have psalms with cultic prophecies, then it is likely from the outset that we are dealing with divine sayings of the latter of the two types mentioned above. These proclamations in the name of YHWH through a prophetic spokesperson are probably to be regarded for the most part as passages determined by the worship order of an established, frequently repeated liturgy that was probably officially prescribed both in content and form. The divine response is not newly "inspired" each time but is prescribed by the order of worship. In worship, then, only the freely inspired prophetic form survives.

An intermediary form is also conceivable and likely. The situation can also be such that this or that prophetic psalm originated as the result of a spontaneous, subjectively authentic inspiration at a time when one left it to the free inspiration of the prophet to produce the formulation, and sometimes, perhaps, the content of the word, but that regarded this oracle as exemplary. Thus it later became a fixed component of certain cultic celebrations. This is quite certainly the case in Ps 60 (see below). I also have the impression that this circumstance prevails in most of the royal oracles.

Here the pious Bible reader may object that this idea, namely, that the production of prophecies that are both inspired and still prescribed in terms of content is the duty of the cultic prophets, would be a profanation of the psalms. It would amount to almost conscious dissimulation on the part of

the pertinent poet. We must not suspect the sacred men of Holy Scripture of such. Now, the profanation of the psalms is not nearly as great as the Orthodox profanation inherent in the argument that a burning, fervent prayer from deep distress such as Pss 22 or 69 is no longer a proper prayer but a “prediction” concerning Christ. How the faithful were able to tolerate and bear this mockery of prayer life for centuries is simply inconceivable to me. If one considers somewhat more closely, however, one will see that the interpretation indicated above of the “prophetic” psalms in question does not result in their depreciation. If I am correct, it should first be noted that persons with prophetic gifts and inspiration had their place and profession in the fixed order of the cult and that these prophetic psalms—which stem then without question from the circle of the ministers of the cult—were composed by prophetically gifted individuals. The initial origin of the psalm may then be an “inspiration.” In any case, they were written by those filled with the consciousness of their profession and their gift for proclaiming the will of God. Whether we share this conviction depends on the impression of personal authenticity that the individual psalms are able to elicit. It may be noted here that, in my view, it is precisely the prophetic psalms of the Psalter that take the lead when I sense even more of the authentic and personal experience in Pss 73, 122, 123, 126, 130, and 131, for example.

It should be said, second, that a distinction must be made between psychic origin and practical use. The later practical use cannot debase the origin. To the contrary, the lofty origin justifies the later practical use. Thus the Christian pastoral counselor, whether priest or lay, has a steadfast right to relate the “revelations” of Jesus that promised the forgiveness of sin to quite definite, specific individuals of Jesus’ time to any Christians seeking assistance and thereby to maintain that today God speaks these words to you through me. In so doing one is neither a dissembler nor a deceiver, and the words of the Lord are not soiled.

1.2.2. The Seer and Priest

As I have already indicated, cultic prophecy assumes a firm connection between prophets and sanctuary or between the priestly and the prophetic profession and character.

It is well known that the priest gave definitive responses to certain questions, that is oracles. These oracles are the so-called *tôrôt*, singular *tôrâ*, the same word that would later become the comprehensive designation for the law of God. The priestly *tôrâ* have their own particular style.⁵

5. See Sigmund Mowinckel, *Ezra den skriflærde* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1916), 98, 102, 111.

Notably, we do not encounter this priestly torah-style in the psalms but rather the *nābî'*-istic oracle style. The *nābî'* is the proper agent of divine revelations in Israel (see Deut 18:9–22).

Meanwhile, the seer (*rô'eh* or *hōzeh*; see 1 Sam 9:9) was incorporated into the *nābî'* with the passage of time. The seer's forms of revelation—visions, night visions, and dreams—were transferred to the *nābî'*.⁶ As a loanword, *nābî'*, the root for which does not occur elsewhere other than in Assyria,⁷ evidences non-Israelite origins. *Nābî'*-ism is a common Canaanite phenomenon. The role of seers, however, is genuinely Israelite, in all likelihood. The type of the seer in Samuel and Moses is a similar figure. Both were made into *nēbî'im* only in later tradition in accordance with the changed circumstances.

The ancient Israelite seer was simultaneously a priest. As has already been said, Samuel is typical. The redactional comment in 1 Sam 3:21 that calls him a *nābî'* does not belong to the original form of the tradition. This Samuel belonged from birth to the temple in Shiloh. He was the disciple and student of the priest Eli and his assistant in the priestly office; he tended the lamps of YHWH in the sanctuary. The account of the first revelation to Samuel is now abbreviated for the sake of the later legends that make him into a judge over all Israel. It was actually supposed to conclude with an account of Samuel's assumption of the priesthood after the death of his old teacher and the demise of his godless house.

Samuel's priestly status is also assumed in 1 Sam 9. He is very closely related to the sacrificial height, the *bāmā*. No sacrificial meal takes place without him. He must first "bless" the flesh of the sacrifice. Blessing in the cult is a priestly task, however. Even the late accounts in 1 Sam 13:7b–15a and 15 are aware of Samuel's relationship to sacrifice.

Like Samuel, Moses is also a priest and seer. Numbers 12:6–8 puts him high above a *nābî'*; Samuel also stands higher than the *nēbî'im* who are subject and loyal to him (1 Sam 19:20). The passages that make him a *nābî'* are Deuteronomistic (Deut 18:15; 34:10; Hos 12:14). Like Samuel, Moses was introduced to priestly lore by his father-in-law, Jethro (Exod 18:14–23). He was the priestly mediator of the covenant between YHWH and Israel (Exod 24:8). He was the custodian of the sacred tent of revelation, the mobile sanctuary, and he took the concerns of the people and of individuals to YHWH (Exod 33:7–11). As priest, he was simultaneously a revealer to whom YHWH communicated his will. In the name of YHWH, he made legal and cultic decisions. Finally, his descendants became priests after him (Judg 18:30).

6. See Sigmund Mowinckel, "Om nebiisme og profeti," *NTT* 10 (1909): 192ff.

7. The word *nb'*, "to speak, proclaim." The divine name *Nabî'u/Nabû* is a derivative.

We also see elsewhere that the priests as such were still mediators of revelation in later historical periods. They bore the ephod and thus gave oracular responses (1 Sam 14:3, 18–19, 37, 41–42; 22:18).

We also find that seers were people who held official positions. David had his own seer at court (2 Sam 24:11). Holders of the office of seer, however, had little to do with independent inspiration. Their activity was priestly in nature.

This connection between “priesthood” and “prophecy” is, in reality, very ancient and, as has been said, quite widespread. We also find other traces of it on Semitic soil. In Assyria, there was a special priestly class called the *barû*, the “seers.” As has long been noted, the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew *kōhēn*, *kahîn*, which means “seer,” also points to an original relationship. The relationship, or, more correctly, the identity of the two offices depends on the fact that the seer-priest was originally the one gifted with extraordinary power (mana) who by virtue of this endowment had both the insight to deal with the deity and the gift of “seeing,” of soothsaying and working wonders—soothsaying and wonderworking also belong together in Israel. The priest Moses is the great wonderworker who did the most remarkable miracles with his wondrous staff (Exod 4:1–17; 7:14–25; 8:12–19), as did the *nēbî'im* (1 Kgs 17:7–24; 2 Kgs 1:9–16; 2:8, 14, 19–25; 3:16–20; 4–8).⁸ The common Semitic word for priest, *kômar*, *kumra*, and the like—the fundamental meaning of which is “the hot one,” that is, the one endowed with power⁹—also bespeaks the fact that the priest is the one endowed with power who through it can act both as seer and soothsayer under certain circumstances. We encounter the original Semitic type of priest in the unity of sanctuary guardians who were, under certain circumstances, both sacrificial priest and soothsayer (seer, prophet).

We find the same assumption that the endowment with power qualifies one both for the priesthood and for soothsaying and prophesying in the Israelite assessment of the monarchy. The king, the chief, was originally the one endowed with power above others—a concept replaced in historical Israel by the parallel that he was one possessed by YHWH’s spirit. As such, he was both priest (1 Sam 13:9–10; 2 Sam 6:13–19; 1 Kgs 8:5, 14–64; 2 Sam 7:18; Ps 110:4) and revealer, one who was prophetically endowed (2 Sam 23:1–7) just as the chief Moses was.

We do not know whether in pre-Canaanite times there was already a division of the original unity into true priests, who were more ministers of the cult and administrators of the technical means of revelation, and seers,

8. It is better not to say “magical staff”; see *Psalm Studies* 1:63–67.

9. See Sigmund Mowinckel, “בָּמַר, בְּמַר,” *ZAW* 36 (1916): 238–39.

who were especially ecstatically predisposed and whose chief or exclusive profession was manticism—in other words, whether one already distinguished between general endowment with power, knowledge, and capability, on the one hand, and specifically ecstatic and visionary endowment, on the other. The earliest historical Israel may have already distinguished between a priest and a seer. Actually, the name *rô'eh* already suggests this possibility. A word with this basic meaning may not have been the original term for a person whose chief vocation was cultic. Arabic *kahin* only acquired this meaning in the course of development. Yet it can also be said that, at the most primitive stage of culture, the cult in the specific sense was not an everyday phenomenon. In everyday life, one needed the one endowed with power, the shaman, for example, more as a magician and manticist, more as a “seer” than as a leader of the cult. The minister of the cult, in the special sense, sometimes only developed from the “seer.” To this extent, the name *rô'eh* may indeed have originally been the name for the “seer-priest” in Israel. In any case, the Moses and Samuel sagas demonstrate that it was still well known at that time that the *rô'eh* stood in a precise relationship with the cultic site.

The division of the originally unified clairvoyant priesthood into (sacrificial) priests and seers probably first took place under the influence of Canaanite *nābî'*-ism. The priests were still primarily oracle-givers in David's time, probably also on special occasions, as guardians of the sanctuary, the professional administrators of sacrifice. At roughly the same time, however, a certain division had already arisen. Some people at that time were described only as “seers,” that is, oracle-givers (“Gad, David's seer,” 2 Chr 29:25). The ascent of the great temple of the realm gave rise to the development of a special profession of cultic and sacrificial priest, which never, however, abandoned its connection to the Torah, with the mediation of revelation. The true seers, therefore, were rather soon thereafter transformed into the image of the *nābî'*. *Nābî'*-ism engulfed the old institution of seer but thereby became, in many cases, an institutional temple and cultic prophecy.

The original unity of priest and seer had two after-effects in Israel. First, in certain cases the priests in the later specific sense of the word, that is, the cultic priests, remained the revealers of the deity. Second, the heirs of the seers, the *nēbî'im*, adopted much of the original connection with cult and priesthood. Thus we also often find in later times priest and *nābî'* united in one person (Ezekiel, Jeremiah).

1.2.3. The Priest as Mediator of Revelation

It is often attested that the priests exercised prophetic functions. In serious and difficult situations, they are posed questions, to which they are supposed to give a divine response.¹⁰

We can distinguish between cultic, juridical, and future-oriented questions.

Haggai asks the priests one cultic question: If someone has carried sacred flesh in a fold of his cloak and the cloak accidentally touches something edible, does the food then become holy? The priests answer no (Hag 2:10–12). In Haggai's time, this question probably had a traditional response. At some time, however, someone must have obtained a direct divine response concerning similar cases.

When Exod 18:26 says that the elders issued rulings in all simple matters while all the difficult cases were presented to Moses, the assumption is that Moses presented the questions to YHWH and obtained his decision. We may imagine this priestly rendering of oracles in juridical cases ("judgments of God," ordeals) as a very frequent occurrence, especially if it was meant to discover the secret perpetrator of some crime. The account in 1 Sam 14:36–42 offers a comparison: Who has excited YHWH's wrath, a member of the royal house or one of the people? The guilty party is identified through the Urim and Thummim, which the priests administered.

Through the same means, Saul attempted to obtain an authoritative answer to the practical question, "Should I pursue the Philistines or not?" (1 Sam 14:37; see also 1 Sam 28:6; compare David in 1 Sam 23:2–5; 30:7–10). These are questions that actually refer to the future: their substance is "What will happen if...?" Thus one asks about the outcome before one marches to war or begins the battle: David asks, "Is it true, YHWH, that Saul will pass through here?" YHWH answers through the ephod bearer, that is, the priest, "Yes." "Will the men of Keilah hand my men and me over to Saul?" Answer, "Yes" (1 Sam 23:9–12). Or, "Should I pursue this band of robbers? Will I overtake them?" The priest's answer, "Pursue them, for you can overtake them" (1 Sam 30:7–8; see further 2 Sam 5:19).

If one notes the form of these questions, one sees that they are phrased such that a simple yes or no suffices in response. The answers given reflect this form. Things are no different in 1 Sam 30:7–10. Verse 8 is only an expansion of the simple yes inherent in the question. This agrees with what we know about the priestly means of rendering oracles. When the mediator is an officially appointed servant of the authorities or of society, the means of revelation

10. Inquiries involving the oracle: Judg 1:1; 18:6; 20:18, 27–28; 1 Sam 2:25; 14:18, 36, 41; 23:2, 9–12; 30:8–9; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:19, 28; Exod 22:7–8.

must necessarily be purely technical. The priest must have the means at hand by which he can evoke a response every time one is desired. The responses mentioned above are given by the priest who carries the ephod. The ephod, however, is not an idol or image of god, not even in ancient times, but some kind of container or garment related to the storage or the use of the Urim and Thummim (see 1 Sam 14:41–42 LXX; 28:6).¹¹ According to these passages, however, the Urim and Thummim are lots used in the rendering of oracles. With lots, the question could be posed as an alternative. The lot gave the briefest answer possible.

The example in 1 Sam 30:7–8 demonstrates, however, that the priest who announces the answer was not satisfied with giving a simple yes or no. He put the response in the style of the question; he gave it a richer form. We probably have a highly illuminating example of this phenomenon in 2 Sam 5:23–24. Here, too, the question was put to the lot on the analogy of David's other requests for an oracle, and, on close examination, the answer contains no more than what the priest could ascertain through the lot. The question must have been, "Shall I march against the Philistines, or should I fall upon them in ambush?" The lot answered, "You should set an ambush for them." The appropriate time for springing an ambush, however, is late in the night, near dawn. The dawn will be signaled, however, by the wind excited by the sunrise. The sound of the wind in the treetops will be perceived as the steps of God striding on the heights of the earth. The military chaplain knew all this very well. Instead of the simple "You should ambush them," he gave the answer a

11. Meanwhile, it has come to seem very likely to me that in the older sources ephod is indeed a designation for an idol image, as the older critics maintained. Of course, this was not the original designation for the idol but an application. It was probably originally the name for some article of the idol's clothing used when obtaining oracles. The article contained the oracular lot and *may* have been worn by the priest when giving an oracle. Because, in the consciousness of the one seeking the oracle, this article of clothing was the most important thing about the icon, the whole image bore this name (See Karl Budde, "Ephod und Lade," *ZAW* 39 [1921]: 1–42; Gressmann, *Auswahl*, 56–57; Georg Hoffmann and Hugo Gressmann, "Teraphim: Masken und Winkorakel in ägypten und Vorderasien" *ZAW* 40 [1922]: 75ff.; see esp. §8). Whether the original ephod was a coat or a loincloth, or perhaps a cloak containing a pocket for the lot, or perhaps only a broad band to hang around the neck (or the loins) to which the oracle pocket was attached, can hardly be determined and is also largely beside the point. I find the most recent conjecture by Gressmann (*Auswahl*, 107) that the ephod may have been "a carrying strap for the divine image" to be less likely, since the transfer of the word to the divine image itself seems quite unlikely to me. For the context above in the text, the question of the original meaning of the ephod is less important. It is certainly beyond question that, even in ancient times, the ephod was related to the giving of oracles and that "the fixed ephod" (= divine image) was an oracular divine image.

richer, more mythological form by indicating both the consequences and the self-evident grounds for the divine response, “Do not pursue them, but fall upon them from the rear and come upon them from the balsam trees. When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, spring forth, for then YHWH has gone before you to smite the army of the Philistines.”

1.2.4. The *Nābī*’ as Minister of the Cult

The old Semitic seer-priesthood was suppressed on Palestinian soil by the Syrian and Canaanite *nābī*’ role.

The fact that the *nābī*’ role is not authentically Israelite in origin—if one understands “Israelite” as that which stems from pre-Canaanite times—is not generally acknowledged but should not be doubted. Enthusiastic and orgiastic prophecy—and that is the very core of ancient *nābī*’-ism—is a common phenomenon in Canaan, Syria, and Asia Minor, while we find nothing of this kind on the soil of pure Semitism. I refer here simply to the collection and examination of the material that Gustav Hölscher has undertaken.¹² The arguments given for the inner-Israelite origin of *nābī*’-ism are invalid. Some maintain that it must have arisen as a reaction against the specifically Canaanite because the *nābī*’ wore the style of the wilderness period. The fur coat per se need not be traced to the wilderness period or a nomadic ideal any more than the ascetic lifestyle. The “magical” coat of the *nābī*’ more likely refers to an orgiastic cult and the associated initiation sacrifice.¹³ The fact that Amos 2:11 regards *nābī*’-ism as a gift of YHWH has no value as evidence, of course.¹⁴ If the fusion of Israelite and Canaanite elements was, indeed, a fact, then everything valuable was naturally regarded as an endowment and gift of YHWH. The cooperation of the *nēbī’im* with Jehonadab ben Rechab (2 Kgs 10:15–21), also emphasized by Stade, and the *nēbī’im*’s zeal for YHWH, in general, are no more evidentiary. For whom should the Yahwistic *nēbī’im* be zealous, if not for the God by whom they were inspired? The fanatical adherents of Islam are not the Arabs but the Sudanese Dervishes. As those possessed by YHWH, the *nēbī’im* were naturally fanatical worshipers of YHWH. One expects such of any collabora-

12. Gustav Hölscher, “Zum Ursprung des israelitischen Prophetentums,” in *Alttestamentliche Studien: Rudolf Kittel zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht* (ed. A. Alt; BWAT 13; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), 88–100. I had already assessed much of the material presented by Hölscher in “Nebiisme,” 217–24, 358–60, and drawn the same conclusions as Hölscher.

13. See my “Nebiisme,” 203–4, 227–37. Among today’s Dervishes, too, the occasional practice is to prepare the garments of the Dervish order from the wool of the sheep brought by the novice and used as an initiation sacrifice (see *ibid.*).

14. Contra Bernhard Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1905), 1:67.

tion inspired by the same fanaticism. But one cannot infer common origins from such collaboration. Indeed, the YHWH cult of the monarchial period, like the people Israel in the same period, originated only as a mixture of Israelite and Canaanite. Nonetheless, the people also perceived itself as a unity. The attitude of the later prophets, some of whom were not even actually proper *nēbī'im* (see Amos 7:14), toward the Canaanite elements of the cult is naturally not probative for its origin and original nature. In general, these prophets do not represent authentic and true *nābī'*-ism, were also usually rejected by the *nēbī'im* of their time, and were consequently engaged in constant polemics with them (cf. 1 Kgs 22; Jer 27–28).¹⁵ Therefore, the appearance of the *nēbī'im* alongside Jehonadab ben Rechab by no means indicates that they react against the Canaanite per se but that, as YHWH *nēbī'im*, they struggle against the competition of the Baal *nēbī'im* and, as zealous YHWH worshippers, argue against the Baal cult. No one at that time could have distinguished “Canaanite per se” from “authentic Israelite,” precisely because the two elements were already indissolubly melded with one another and constituted the unity of historical Israel. Consequently, we also see that everything that was considered valuable was spontaneously depicted as Mosaic, even such an undoubtedly “Canaanite” creation as the *mišpātīm* of the Covenant Code and the culture it presupposes. Obviously, as proponents of the “national religion,” the *nēbī'im* were always “nationalist” in sentiment, in certain cases representing what can be considered the most sacred heritage of the patriarchs (e.g., Samuel in relation to Agag, 1 Sam 15:32–33), but that nation and that national religion was, in fact, the Canaanite and Israelite mixed nation and mixed religion. If the mixture simply existed and was no longer recognized as such by contemporaries, then its old practices and sanctuaries, no matter their origins, will have been venerated and guarded with equal zeal by all the elements incorporated into the mixture. The conflict between Saul and Samuel in 1 Sam 15 was between practical, political reason and blind, religious fanaticism, not between Canaanite and Israelite.¹⁶ Thus, the fact that we first hear of *nēbī'im* under Saul is, undoubtedly, a matter of chance. Their origins were not connected with the uprising against foreign rule.

15. I emphasized, somewhat excessively, the contrasts between the *nēbī'im* and the “writing prophets” in an early work and treated the most important texts (see “Profeternes forhold til nebiismen,” *NTT* 11 [1910]: 126–38).

16. Contra Hans Schmidt, “Prophetentum, ältestes, bis auf Amos,” *RGK* 4:1858–66. One may not base too much on the Ahijah legends in 1 Kgs 11:29–40. The account is Deuteronomistic. We know nothing about Ahijah's actual motives. Otherwise, one *nābī'* or the other could be found for every revolutionary or political act. For Ahijah, Israelite nationalism against Judahite foreign rule may have played a contributing role.

This *nābī*'-ism adopted from the Canaanites assumed much of the nature and the functions of the seer in the course of time, especially its connection with the temple and the cult. The situation could be expressed as follows: the old temple prophecy increasingly received the stamp of the *nēbī'im*.¹⁷

17. My view, that the seer-priest with the more technical and ecstatically contingent means of revelation was genuinely Israelite only to a minimal degree in contrast to the enthusiastic, spirit-possessed *nābī'* who was the Canaanite-Syrian type of the mediator of revelation, finds, it seems to me, analogical confirmation in Gressmann's observation in the essay "Teraphim" (133), mentioned above. He says, "while in Syria the bearers (of the divine image that gives oracles through 'hints') are usually explicitly described as inspired, we never hear of this in Egypt. The inspiration that surely makes the oracle even more credible is as entirely unnecessary as it is required for the lot oracle." In Israel, as we have seen, the seer, who had visions and dreams, and the priest, who administered the technical oracles, were actually often seen as inspired. It is beyond question, however, that equipping with the spirit "is by no means necessary" for these persons. When one finds them, nonetheless, they combine two originally quite independent forms of revelation, suggesting foreign influence. Now, we see at another point, according to Gressmann, that the inspiration of the spirit played no role among the Egyptians—and, according to Hölscher (see above in the text), we may add, among the ancient Arabs—but among the "Syrians," in contrast, a major role. Regarding the "oracle hint," Gressmann even deduces "that bearing the images of the gods for prophesying first became practice in Syria through Egyptian influence." According to Gressmann, this should probably be understood such that the giving of oracles by means of inspiration was the native practice among the "Syrians." Now, we surely will not go wrong to assume that the Israelites in pre-Canaanite times stood closer culturally to the Arabs and the Egyptians than to the "Syrians." On the other hand, a strong Canaanite influence through "Syrian" (Amorite and "Hittite") race and culture in pre-Israelite time is undeniable (see, e.g., Franz Böhl, *Kanaanäer und Hebräer: Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte des Volkstums und der Religion Israels auf dem Boden Kanaans* [BWAT 9; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911]). We can go further, however. It seems to me that Gressmann errs when he declares in connection with the statement above that, "in any case, prophetic excitement" is "more characteristic of the Semites than of the Egyptians." The error here lies in the word "Semites." In the time treated by Gressmann, which also comes into question for my topic, the "Syrians" were anything other than a pure "Semitic" race, from both physical and intellectual perspectives. The fact is that Syria and, as we also now know, Canaan were significantly infused by non-Semitic ("Hittite," "Aryan," "Indo-European") peoples and intellectual elements in very early historical and prehistorical times. We can say with all certitude—all the material assembled by Hölscher ("Zum Ursprung des israelitischen Prophetentums") implies it—that even orgasm and the emphasis on inspiration belonged to these non-Semitic elements. In Asia Minor we find very strong emphasis on orgasm and inspiration (see my "Nebiisme"). Gressmann mischaracterizes the difference between Egypt and Syria when he describes it as a difference between Egyptian and "Semitic" nature. Instead, the oracle system in Babylonia and Assyria and in Arabia shows us that the "Semites" stand alongside Egypt in this respect. The difference is rather one between Egypt and the Semites, on the one hand, and "Aryans" ("Hittites," in the broader

From the outset, the *nēbī'îm* were not priests. The Old Testament always distinguishes between priests and prophets. Just as the priest is the administrator of the *tôrâ*, which is always primarily linked to the cult, the *nābī'* is the mediator of the divine *dābār*, regarded principally as independent inspiration (see Jer 18:18). According to the Priestly document, the *nēbī'îm* were not permitted entry to the temple building proper. This prohibition reflects the old circumstance that from the outset they were not per se ministers of the cult in the more restricted and specific sense of the word, no *mēšārētîm*. Thus, as we will see below, not all *nēbī'îm* as such entered into the fixed institutional connection with the cult in which the old *rō'îm* and *hōzîm* stood. The *nēbī'îm* of later times who worked as institutional cultic prophets were simultaneously regarded as Levites (singers) and may also in most cases have arisen from their ranks. Since the essence of *nābī'*-ism was always orgiastic,¹⁸ the most likely assumption is that the *nēbī'îm* were originally community representatives gripped by the ecstasy of the orgiastic delirium of the cultic festival and filled by the divine power to rave. Ideally and theoretically this should actually happen to the whole community. Along with the priest-seers, they were the true *religiosi* in the community who arose from the laity.

Nevertheless, or perhaps consequently, they were always closely connected to the sanctuaries. To this extent, they assumed a status analogous to the Galls in Hieropolis.¹⁹ The *nēbī'îm* were active at feasts and cultic procedures (1 Kgs 18:16–40; Jer 26; 28; 36). The first band of *nēbī'îm* known to us came down from the *bāmâ* (1 Sam 10:5). The *nābī'* organizations were based at cultic sites, as at Ramah (1 Sam 19:19), Bethel (2 Kgs 2:3), Jericho (2 Kgs 2:5), and Gilgal (2 Kgs 4:38). Balaam must first build an altar and offer sacrifice before he can prophesy (Num 23:1–5, 14–16, 29–30). The *nēbī'îm* are often mentioned along with the priests (Isa 28:7; Jer 4:9; 6:13; 14:18; 18:18; Mic 3:11; Zech 7:3). According to Jer 29:26, they were under the supervision of one of the temple priests. Jeremiah was a priest and a *nābī'* (Jer 1:1), as was Ezekiel (1:3). We will not go wrong to imagine that most of the later temple

sense of the word, or as one now wishes to put it), on the other. This understanding is also supported by another analogy. The mysticism of apparently orgiastic Persian Sufism, which depends on possession of people by God analogous to Old Testament spirit-possession, is acknowledged to be of non-Semitic, Iranian origins. The Old Testament emphasis on the spirit in contrast to technical means of revelation, which was, as far as we can see, singular in the entire “Semitic” East, is, therefore, “Aryan” in origins—taking the term “Aryan” quite broadly here for the time being, since we cannot more precisely determine the “Hittite” and “Indo-European” layers in the Syrian-Canaanite population. This would be a nice topic for “anti-Semitic” authors.

18. Cf. Mowinckel, “Nebiism,” 224ff.

19. Ibid., 224–25.

prophets may have come from the circles of the lower cultic personnel (see 2 Chr 20:14). This close connection with priests and the temple depended in part on the very fact that the old cultic prophets were suppressed by the *nēbī'im* or were transformed in the image of the *nēbī'im*. Thus the connection of the *nēbī'im* to the temple became institutional.

Without question, Jer 29:26 involves an institution of temple prophets. A passage in the Chronicler (1 Chr 15:22, 27), which has so far either been misconstrued or, in the best case, not understood at all, demonstrates that there was such an organized institution of temple prophets. These verses speak of Conaniah, the Levite, who was *šār hammaššā'* (reading with LXX instead of *ysr bms'*). Without betraying a trace of uncertainty, Gerhard Kittel translates "the leader of the bearers" and maintains, also without hesitation, that *maššā'* can mean both "bearing" and "(musical) performance."²⁰ Immanuel Benzinger also thinks of bearing but knows quite well that *maššā'* never means and cannot mean performance; he also acknowledges that, given the context, one would not even expect a comment about bearing or bearers.²¹ The most clever is Buhl, who considers the phrase untranslatable in his Danish translation of the Old Testament. However, the sense of the phrase is quite clear. The chapter deals with the preparations for the ark-entry festival celebrated annually with a great procession.²² In addition to sacrifice, singing, and music, the prophetic voice was also an element of this festival.²³ As Pss 132 and 81 indicate, these prophecies were sometimes fixed both as to content and form (see below). Thus 1 Chr 15:22, 27 is to be interpreted accordingly. The word *maššā'* does not mean "burden" here but "oracle." Conaniah was "the leader of the oracle (system)." The passages shows us that the temple functionaries include some whose profession was to give divine statements, *maššā'ôt*. They were organized like the other temple functionaries. They were headed by a leader, a *šār*, who "understood" the art of giving oracles (v. 22b). These temple prophets belonged to the Levites and, according to the context and verse 27b, to the singers (see also 2 Chr 20:14). This is quite natural. Prophetic ecstasy was induced by music (1 Sam 10:5; 2 Kgs 3:15). The revelations were sometimes made to music (Ps 49:2–36). As we will see, we have cultic oracles in the form of psalms. Thus we also find it quite in order that we are to seek the professional cultic prophets and the poets of the prophetic psalms among the temple singers. This agrees with circumstances in Babylonia. Here a priestly

20. *Die Psalmen* (HKAT 13; Leipzig: Werner Scholl, 1914).

21. *Die Bücher der Chronik* (KHCAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901).

22. See *Psalms Studies* 2, part 1, §2.3.3.

23. See *Psalms Studies* 2, 172 and passim.

class bore the official name *barú*, “seers.” The *maḥḥū*, the (raving) prophets, were also officially organized here.

In somewhat later times, the image of such temple prophets does not bear the character of the old seers but of *nābī*'-ism. Stated more precisely, in the main, it bore the characteristics of *nābī*'-ism but was influenced by certain characteristics of the seers. This situation mirrors the general process of development of matters in Israel: ancient Israelite visionary prophecy was absorbed and replaced by Canaanite *nābī*'-ism. Indeed, since antiquity the most important oracular media of the seer-priests were visions and dreams, on the one hand, and purely technical means (lots, etc.), of which we have already seen examples, on the other. The abilities of these people, from a primitive perspective, depended on the possession of a particular power: they were clairvoyants and visionaries, and they could also work wonders; they had, for example, the necessary “psychic force” to bless. The vision or the dream was probably the proper form of revelation even in terms of style at the time. *Nābī*'-ism set the tone later. This shift is evident in the following matters. Possession by the divine spirit, the *rūah ywhw*, replaced the more indefinite gift of power. This change meant, however, that the enthusiastic form of prophetism suppressed the visionary and ecstatic form. The visionary, the ecstatic, was “beside himself.” His soul, his “heart,” left him for a while, sought out distant locations, and saw heavenly things (see 2 Kgs 5:26). He was caught up, and his alter ego stood listening in the heavenly council (see the night visions of Zechariah), or his soul went to some distant place (see Ezek 8:1–3; 11:1–2, 24–25). During this time the body of the seer lay rapt and as though dead in its usual place (Num 24:4). While Ezekiel's soul was in ecstasy in Jerusalem, his apparently lifeless body lay in Chaldea “in the presence of the elders of Judah” (see the description in Ezek 3:12–15). In contrast, a strange power has entered into the one possessed by the spirit; it has taken possession of him. He has become “enthused.” Through his mouth speaks the spirit of YHWH. The *nābī*' also does wonders. He does so because the spirit is in him. Because the spirit that knows everything, the divine word, is “in him,” he speaks true prophecies. Consequently, the form of revelation characteristic for the *nābī*' is the rhythmic word spoken by the spirit or by YHWH in which YHWH speaks in the first person. Thus the purely technical means of revelation (e.g., the lot) diminish. The *nābī*' always appears to observe the form of the free, spontaneous inspiration, even when he actually evokes it or quite dutifully proclaims words expected and required of him. Things that experience has proven to promote enthusiastic and orgiastic states appear as indirect means of revelation: music and dance (1 Sam 10:5–6, 10–13; 2 Kgs 3:15), loud, repetitive shouting, self-inflicted wounds (1 Kgs 18:26–29), handclapping and wild movements (Ezek 6:11; 21:19, 22), and so on. While, given the nature of his gift and his priestly office,

the seer was probably usually, if not always, an independent person, the first *nēbī'im* always appeared in groups and, for purposes of even greater intensity, induced the orgiastic delirium communally (1 Sam 10:5; 19:20; 1 Kgs 18; 22:6; 2 Kgs 2; 6:1–7; cf. *bēnê hannēbī'im*, an expression that points to organization and communal life, 1 Kgs 20:25; 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:1, 39; 5:22; 6:1; Amos 7:14; the expression *nēwāyôt* probably refers to a common dwelling, a kind of cenobium, 1 Sam 19:18–24). Thus, even the name *rō'eh* disappeared in later times. Then a mediator of divine revelations was always called a *nābī'*, even if he was not a member of the *nēbī'im* proper (Amos 7:14).

This does not mean that the older forms of revelation disappeared. It is known well enough that visions and revelatory dreams were also very popular forms of revelation among the *nēbī'im*. In reality, there is no psychological difference between ecstasy and enthusiasm. The actual psychic state of the seer and the *nābī'* were by and large the same. The boundaries of the concepts were also fluid in ancient Israel. Thus Ezekiel says that his visionary translation from Chaldea to Jerusalem was mediated by the spirit (of YHWH; Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24). This spirit was sometimes depicted as a being who gripped him externally (Ezek 8:2–3) and sometimes conceived as the spirit that entered the prophet (Ezek 2:2; 3:24).

In addition to the free inspiration of the *nābī'*, at least in theory, certain purely technical means of revelation survived, such as the sacred lot. It seems, however, that these were reserved in later times solely for the priest in the proper sense of the word. That was the case at least for the Urim and the Thummim. The revelations of the *nēbī'im*, however, to the extent that they were subjectively authentic, were always mediated psychologically. The *nābī'* was regarded as permanently endowed with the spirit. As such, when he spoke *ex professo*, he always spoke on YHWH's commission. This explains the fact that the cultic prophet usually spoke *bona fide* and with the sense that he spoke on the basis of inspiration even when he was duty-bound to speak and sometimes even spoke words precisely prescribed by the cultic liturgy. In many cases, this consciousness will have even evoked in him certain psychic states that he understood as being possessed by the spirit and that permitted him to appear *bona fide*.

We may infer from several accounts that these temple prophets were obligated in certain cultic proceedings to give an oracle suited to the subject of the cultic celebration, indeed, in agreement with the belief and expectation of the majority of the congregation or of the authorities. Thus, for example, the four hundred prophets of Ahab assembled to give a prediction concerning the outcome of a military campaign on the day of prayer preceding it. Naturally they predicted just as most of the clergy in warring states now preach. In this regard, the Old Testament prophets are, for the most part, no better or more

perfect than Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, or Methodist priests and preachers. One also expected a favorable oracle from Micaiah ben Imlah and declared it a crime against the state and treason when he did not give one (1 Kgs 22). In Jer 28, too, the whole people assembled in the temple for a day of prayer. The issue was the planned rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar: Would it succeed or not? "O, YHWH, give us good fortune; O, YHWH, let it succeed!" Then Hananiah ben Azzur stepped forward. He knew his "state-church" obligation and task. "Thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel, 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babel.'" The account in 2 Chr 20 is typical. The enemies of Judah have approached to attack. King Jehosaphat calls for a great day of penitence and fasting. The whole community assembles in the temple. The king as priest and intercessor for the people pleads with YHWH for help. Obviously, this does not occur formlessly but in accordance with an established ritual. Based on the analogies above, it was also part of the ritual, of the "order of worship," for the Levite—a singer, see below—Oziel ben Zechariah to fall into ecstatic rapture. As we know from 2 Kgs 3:15; 1 Kgs 18:28, and 1 Sam 10:5, the *nēbî'im* knew technical means for inducing ecstasy. Naturally, in form it is free, unsought, spontaneous inspiration. Therefore, the Chronicler also says, "the spirit of YHWH came upon him" (1 Chr 20:14). In YHWH's name, the inspired singer promises the complete defeat of the enemies. Then the whole congregation falls on their faces to pay homage to YHWH. The festival concludes with a(n anticipated) hymn of thanksgiving.

In both this account and the passage treated above (1 Chr 15:22, 27), the pertinent cultic prophets are assigned to the Levites, more precisely, to the singers. Indeed, from the last passage one must conclude that, if the leader of the oracle system was one of the singers, then the same must have been true of the entire organization of the institutional cultic prophets. This corresponds to the views of the later, postexilic period, according to which no non-Levite could belong to the temple officials. The Priestly writer and Chronicler make even the Gibeonite wood-cutters and water-bearers into Levites. We must assume, accordingly, that the postexilic period included the cultic prophets in the ranks of the Levites (singers) in order to preserve their legitimacy. Thenceforth, they were singers first and prophetically gifted persons second. To the same degree that the cultic prophecies they were to present were linked to the order of worship (see above) and thus came to stand on the same level as the other cultic psalms, the difference between cultic prophets and ordinary singers was obscured until the perception that the cultic oracles were once the particular cultic task of a special profession was finally lost. Thus for the Chronicler, the Oziel ben Zechariah mentioned above was none other than a normal singer-Levite incidentally gripped by the spirit on this particular occasion so that he could announce YHWH's response. The Chronicler may

have thought that this was a particular demonstration of YHWH's grace to the pious King Jehosaphat.

Thus the institution of cultic prophecy gradually died out. The performance of certain long-fixed prophetic psalms took its place gradually and almost unnoticeably. All of the temple music was more or less the work of an admittedly very much diluted divine inspiration (1 Chr 25:1–3) in which the performance of the oracular psalms no longer stood out.

How early or late this took place can hardly be stated. The old institution of cultic prophecy, much more independent in terms of its essence and forms, certainly survived until the exile. This is evidenced by Jer 29:26 (cf. 20:1–6) and the fact that at that time many of the wholly independent *nēbī'im* still came from the ranks of the priests (Jeremiah, Ezekiel). But we still encounter prophets after the exile who appear entirely as temple prophets, in the first instance Haggai and Zechariah. It is particularly clear with Zechariah that almost all his picturesque language and his entire conceptual world originated in the cult: the candlesticks, the temple oil, the cultic curse, the purification rites (impurity born away by figures with bird's wings; cf. the bird in purification in Lev 14:6–7), the fast days, and so on. His highest goal was to see the temple completed and the cult resumed. In addition, he was also very much interested in the reconciliation of the two rival temple authorities, the governor and the high priest. It is most likely that the Zechariah in question was also from a priestly family.²⁴ Joel, too, most probably appeared as a cultic prophet (see below). Under Nehemiah, we still encounter *nēbī'im* who reside in the temple and appear in the dispute over religious policy to be totally partisan on the side of the priestly party, probably just as the temple *nēbī'im* in Jeremiah's time stood under the authority of the priests (Neh 6:10–14). It is a very likely assumption that these temple *nēbī'im* were simultaneously active in the official cult in some fashion. By all appearances, the Maccabean era, in contrast, had no institutional cultic prophecy, just as there was no longer any institutional prophecy (see 1 Macc 14:41), unless Ps 110 is "Maccabean," which I consider excluded, in part because it cannot be harmonized with the passage just cited.

1.2.5. Form and Technique of the Cultic Oracle

The means by which the priestly prophet learned the deity's response to a question or a request posed to him were also originally most certainly also

24. This resolves the apparent contradiction between Zech 1:1 and Ezra 5:1; 6:14. Iddo is not the personal grandfather of the prophet but the clan from which he came, identical with the Iddo of Neh 12:4.

technical in nature.²⁵ The giving of oracles through the Urim and Thummim mentioned above, the sacred lots, and the ephod indicate this clearly enough. Other legitimate oracular techniques seem to have been known. The psalm superscription *‘al šūšan ‘ēdūt* in Pss 45:1; 60:1; and 69:1 may refer to a certain manner of obtaining cultic oracles (see *Psalm Studies* 4).

Many analogies suggest the assumption that obtaining oracles in Israel was connected somehow to sacrifice (cf. Babylonian and Assyrian hepatoscopy and Etrurian and Roman haruspicy and augury). The sacrifice of Balaam (Num 23:1–5, 14–16, 29–30) points to the connection between sacrifice and prophecy (cf. the report in the Golenischeff Papyrus concerning the sacrificial festival of King Zekar-Baal in Byblos).²⁶ Hieroscopy consists of learning the will of the deity from certain characteristics of the sacrificial animal (e.g., of the liver) or of the circumstances accompanying the sacrifice procedure, such as the ascent of the smoke, which were understood and interpreted as “signs.” Genesis 4:4–5 indicates that such hieroscopy was also practiced in Israel. There were probably many such signs, not all of which, naturally, need have been connected with hieroscopy. In Ps 74:9, the people complain that it could no longer “see its signs,” that is, the oracular signs favorable to it (the same expression occurs in Assyrian). To the contrary, they say, the prophets are silent. When Ps 86:17, an illness psalm of the usual type,²⁷ says, “Give me a sign for the good,” it should certainly be interpreted in relation to the request, frequent in the Babylonian and Assyrian psalms, “Give me a good sign,” and should most likely be related to a hieroscopic sign. Finally, any everyday event could become a mantic sign for the prophets.²⁸

Dreams also come under consideration as sources for cultic oracles and signs. The fact that the dream was a frequently occurring technique for the *nābī* is well known.²⁹ Babylonian and Assyrian psalms frequently say, “Give me a good dream (one that promises salvation).”

Incubation is a special kind of dream oracle that must have been familiar to the cultic prophets. According to 1 Sam 21:8 and 1 Kgs 3:5–15, this form was known in Israel. The lament psalms may point to it a few times.³⁰

The account in 2 Chr 20:14–17 and the prophetic psalm in Hab 3 (see v. 16) demonstrate, however, that in the course of time the cultic prophets appro-

25. See Paul Volz, *Die biblischen Altertümer* (Cologne: Komet, 1914), 162–68.

26. See Hugo Gressmann, Arthur Ungnad, and Hermann Ranke, eds., *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1909), 1:226 (final paragraph).

27. *Psalm Studies* 1:75, 149.

28. *Ibid.*, 1:149.

29. See “Traum,” *RGG* 5:1321.

30. *Psalm Studies* 1:158–61.

priated the freer forms and means of expression grounded in the inspiration of the spirit. The difference between the technical and the more psychologically grounded revelations of the *nābi*' is not sharp. Technical means could evoke psychic affects that the affected person would regard as signs of divine inspiration. An example of such a case would be when ecstasy was induced through external means such as music and dance and the ecstasy, in turn, produced mysterious psychic states or objectified the subconscious contents of the prophet's consciousness as divine inspiration. Thus the oracular forms intermingled. Everything was derived from the "spirit." One will even have claimed that the professional priest-prophets were also possessed by the spirit and, thus, as office-holders, received the gift of soothsaying. We have seen above that this belief was still vital in the Gospel of John.

1.2.6. Cultic Prophecy and the Composition of the Psalms

The examples treated above deal mostly with public days of fasting and prayer and with cultic inquiries prior to war and battle. In addition, the occurrence of the cultic oracle at a grand national religious festival is indicated (1 Chr 15). The prophetic psalms must have been inserted in this context.

We may already consider it proven that direct divine speech in the mouth of an official and authorized mediator of revelation on certain occasions in the ancient Israelite cult had its place in the liturgy of the respective day. We already know from the many cultic psalms that those liturgies had poetic and musical form, at least in part. Many psalms are cultic liturgies themselves. From the outset, the divine word of revelation in Israel had poetic, rhythmic, and metrical form. The same must have been true of the words of revelation in the liturgies.

A cultic liturgy in which various voices sound in rhythmic form, perhaps a psalm of lament, communal supplication, with a response by the cultic prophet in the name of the deity, then concluding with a thanksgiving, is, indeed, a psalm in the broader and Old Testament sense of the word. The psalms of the Psalter are by no means always uniform constructs in the sense that they permit expression only to one voice and attitude. Several of them are cultic and liturgical compositions, in fact, expressing several voices and attitudes.

The psalm compositions transmitted to us in which prophetic voices can also be heard will be examined from this perspective. It will be our task to seek cultic oracular psalms among the transmitted "prophetic psalms" and, in given cases, to demonstrate that they are such.

Here, however, we may also say a few words concerning the psalmists. It is inherent in the nature of the matter that the duty to write cultic psalms lay with the ministers of the cult. They will also have had an interest in the

plentiful availability of such psalms. As is inherent in the nature of the matter, engagement with these psalms will also, undoubtedly, have resulted in many of the temple ministers having an appetite and gifts for such work.

Among the cultic ministers there is a class for whom we may presume a particular interest in the composition of psalms. This is the class of temple singers. They were responsible for providing the temple music, and we know that song and music always belonged together in that day. At least those songs sung in the name of the congregation, of the people, were sung, without doubt, by the professional singers. We can hardly go astray if we assume that the cultic songs of an individual, such as the lament psalms to be sung to accompany the rites of purification, were also sung, not by the respective sick person, but by the singers. There were surely not many of the common people with the skill to perform the cultic psalms in accordance with the tradition and precisely observing all the ritual details. Judging from all the analogies, the songs were not sung “from the music” but by memory. The laity cannot be expected to do this. Every ancient cult places great weight on the proper execution of all the prescribed details and finesse items. Nor will we go astray if we assume that most, if not all, of the old cultic songs were composed by men who belonged to the class of the temple singers. This class, after all, was involved with the cultic songs.

We know from the ancient Near East, however, that writing was attributed then to special inspiration. The poet was a divinely inspired person who had received a “supernatural” gift. We know from many indications that ancient Israel also shared this belief. The poet and the prophet were particularly close to one another then. The *nābi*’ was always also a poet. In ancient times, his oracles always had rhythmic and metrical form (see the Balaam oracle and the blessings of Jacob and Moses). The ancient victory hymn in Judg 5 has been attributed to the prophetess Deborah. Only someone gifted prophetically could have composed such a song—so it was thought. Just as the prophet could see distant and future matters even “with closed eyes” (Num 24:3), so that his closed eye is, in reality, the sole truly “open” eye (Num 24:4), and just as he can hear the secret divine and heavenly voices with his opened ears (1 Sam 9:15; Isa 22:14), the poet of Ps 19A has heard the heavenly hymn that “is without speech and without words and inaudible (for human ears).” Just as the prophet was translated through music to an inspired state (see above), so also the poet (Ps 49:2–5). His ear becomes receptive so that he can receive the secret wisdom (*ḥokmā*, *māšāl*, *ḥîdôt*) that stems from the deity and communicate it to humanity. To the tones of the harp, he communicates his secret lore. This very prophetic consciousness speaks from the introductory words of this psalm. A *maskil* is itself a cultic song that stems from such unusual empowerment, “ability,” and knowledge and that, as a result, also has the cor-

rect impact.³¹ Thus we also understand when the Chronicler employs the word *nibbā'* of the cultic functions of the singers (1 Chr 25:1–3) or even calls the singers *nēbî'im* (1 Chr 25:1, *ketiv*):³² the singers themselves are prophetically gifted and exercise their art by virtue of prophetic inspiration.

If this is true, we should also suspect that the liturgies that evidence a prophetic consciousness in the specific sense of the word and that communicate direct divine revelations also originated among the temple singers. Conversely, however, there were also usually singers who appeared in the cult as inspired persons, as cultic prophets—or perhaps more correctly, who were obligated to appear as such on certain occasions. Indeed, as such they had the gift of singing and composing, that is, the gift of inspiration, of being possessed by the spirit, of prophecy. For ancient Israel, this was just as self-evident as it was for Mohammed: whoever can compose is inspired and can also prophesy under certain circumstances.

This conjecture is confirmed in the sources. The cultic prophet mentioned above, Oziel ben Zechariah, was a descendant of Asaph, according to 2 Chr 20:14; that is, he was one of the temple singers. Even the fact that we have so many prophetic psalms among the temple songs (see below) confirms that a close connection existed between psalmody and temple prophecy.

We have another source that confirms the connection between prophets, temple singers and psalmists: the book of Habakkuk. I place less weight here on the fact that Habakkuk was apparently a person very familiar with cultic psalmody and its forms. I only mention here that the first two chapters of his book have not only adopted isolated motifs from psalmody but appear in the form of a liturgy of lament and repentance with a complaint (1:2: “How long, YHWH?”), a description of the crisis (1:3–4), the honor motif (1:12–13), assurance of being heard (2:5–20), and a divine response (2:1–4), so that the attempt has even been made to understand the two chapters not as a prophecy with lament motifs but, conversely, as a repentance liturgy significantly influenced by the style and conceptual world of the prophets and composed by a prophet. More important in this context, however, is the fact that Hab 3 is an authentic psalm so markedly influenced by prophecy that it was surely composed by a *nābî'* (see 3:16). This psalm was used in the cult and was probably also written for cultic use—the cultic and liturgical information in verses 1 and 19 (see also 3:3, 9, 13) demonstrates this for us.

In terms of genre, the psalm is to be regarded as a mixture of prophecy and psalm of confidence. It begins as a psalm of confidence (3:2). The poet's

31. See *Psalm Studies* 4.

32. There is no need to alter the *ketiv* in these passages.

confidence rests both on YHWH's former mighty deeds (v. 2b) and especially on the fact that he has received a revelation (v. 16). The content of this revelation is communicated in verses 3–15. At the same time, however, we learn from this that the intention of the psalm is not that of a psalm of confidence in general. The declaration of confidence is based in a particular situation of distress in which the people and king, the whole “congregation,” find themselves (vv. 12–14). Beneath the confidence, the request for help in distress sounds clearly and notably. The psalm intends to be a confident petition, a *tēpillā* (v. 1). The revelation received is not communicated directly here as a response to a request for transmission to the community; rather, in the form of a description of YHWH's coming to help, the poet expresses his thankful “assurance of being heard.” The description, which speaks of YHWH in the third person at the beginning, shifts into the second person in verse 8, intensifying the impression that the description evokes, namely, that it was meant to have the effect of a confidence motif and an “assurance of being heard.” All YHWH's great saving acts in ancient times and in the present, including those now expected, flow together here into one so that the question as to whether the prophet describes past or future should actually not even be raised. The poet wants to say, “You, who always do such things, will also surely save your people and its anointed this time.” YHWH's intervention here is depicted in the conceptual forms of the enthronement myth: appearance for battle, battle with the primordial sea, new creation (the current time of distress is a time of chaos, of *tōhū wābōhū*, v. 17), “myth of the battle against the nations,” deliverance from distress (see *Psalms Studies* 2, part 1, §2.1). The psalm concludes with the explicitly stated assurance of being heard and the anticipatory statement of thanks (vv. 18–19), as is so often the case in lament psalms and liturgies for days of prayer.

The *nābī'* Habakkuk is cited as the composer of this psalm, the same man whose prophecies in chapters 1–2 are so markedly influenced by psalm style, and there is hardly any reason to doubt the accuracy of this information. During my proofreading of this work, I first became aware of an essential confirmation of my hypothesis concerning the relationship between (temple) prophets and Levites, or singers. The superscript (v. 1) of the LXX legend of Bel and the Dragon contains a tradition concerning the genealogy of the prophet Habbukuk. He is called *Ἀμβακουμ υἱοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Λευι*. This is the very Habakkuk in which I found testimony to the accuracy of my view based solely on the nature of the prophecy attributed to him! The comment in LXX derives, naturally, from some midrash on Habakkuk or from an apocalypse circulating under his name. This does exclude the possibility that even such a document could have contained an accurate tradition concerning the prophet's father and profession. In actuality, there is very little reason to doubt

the accuracy of the tradition. The psalm must be preexilic in any case, because it presupposes an anointed one, a king of Israel (v. 13). The distress of which the poet thinks is, thus, Assyrian domination. In the advance of the Chaldeans he sees the signs of the approaching great day of YHWH,³³ of the day of judgment and the day of the enthronement of Israel's God. We must imagine that the people, the "righteous"—Habakkuk is a nationalist prophet, probably sympathetic with Deuteronomisticism—encouraged on some occasion by the signs of the time, arranged a day of prayer in order to pray for the end of Assyrian domination, particularly despised after the Josianic reform. There may have been some particular political reason for doing so. On this occasion, the temple prophet and psalmist Habakkuk, who, accordingly, may have been one of the singers, composed the psalms (or one of them) to be performed and in it promised his people YHWH's assistance. The psalm was sung during one of the associated cultic proceedings as a psalm of petition with the intention "of putting YHWH in a gracious mood" (*lmnšḥ*, actually, "in order to make [YHWH's countenance] radiant," see *Psalms Studies* 4).

If one wanted to deny the accuracy of the tradition in verse 1, one could object that the verse is still probative for our main thesis, because it demonstrates, in any case, that it was considered natural to find the poet of a prophetic cultic psalm among the *nēbī'im*. One would hardly do so if, in reality, such were not to occur with some frequency.

The book of Joel also points in the same direction. Here, too, the same mixture of psalm and prophetic style appears. Gunkel is probably correct that the first two chapters of the book "contain a liturgy performed in relation to a great plague of locusts."³⁴

33. In this interpretation of the book of Habakkuk, I agree fully with Budde.

34. Gunkel, "Psalmen: 4," *RGG* 4:1934.