

Albright, W. F., Archaeology, Historical Analogy and early Biblical Tradition (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge) 1966

p. 49 . . . was Samuel judge of all Israel or only a little-known diviner? We actually have good reason to think that he was both judge and a man of the charismatic gifts associated in Israel with divining. As patron of the ecstatic prophets, to whom I shall turn later, he was a member of their circle, which was intimately bound up with such charismatic functions as divination. When he is called a ro'eh or "seer" it does not mean that he was a diviner in the Babylonian or even in the Canaanite sense. In other words, he was not like Balaam, a professional diviner with long training in the complicated "sciences" of divination. Instead, he was associated with the hozim who gave oracles through visions, or in some other simple way accepted by the Israelites. As we have said, he was closely connected with the ecstatic prophets, who were also oracular diviners. Furthermore, he was "a man of God," a prophet (a nabi, which means, as we know now, "one called to a vocation").⁵

p. 57 In 1 Samuel 19.20 we read: "And the band of prophets were in an ecstatic frenzy, and Samuel was presiding over them." Two different Hebrew words having the same meaning are here used in order to make it perfectly clear that when Saul came to the bank of prophets, Samuel was presiding over their dances and ecstatic / music. In two of these stories Saul is said to have been converted by the activity of the prophets and to have become one of them himself. On both occasions the same proverb is quoted, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" In other words, can a man like Saul become a religious ecstatic? Saul was obviously known as big and tough, and certainly not as the kind of man to be expected in a band of prophets.

5 Both in Old Babylonian and in early Northwest Semitic- the linguistic group to which the Patriarchs belonged - we find the same verb used of "calling," "naming," and "giving of a commission (to a man by a god)." Nabi does not mean "speaker," for Moses was nabi but not a speaker (in which capacity Aaron took his place). The nabi was specially called by God; he was not necessarily a prophet or diviner.