

Lindblom, J., *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford) 1962. Reprinted 1963

p. 94 Seer is a man or a woman who claims to possess the faculty of knowing things that are concealed from ordinary men. The chief methods used by the seer are dreams, extraordinary perspicacity, clairvoyance, communications from ghosts and spirits, and finally, external signs and omens. Sometimes the seers also obtain their extraordinary knowledge in a psychic state of ecstasy or trance. Characteristic of the prophets are ecstasies of various kinds, based on a direct contact with the divine world or the divine power ('the spirit of God'), a supernormal state of mind in which divine revelations are communicated in the form of visions and auditions. Being overwhelmed by God the prophet feels himself compelled to proclaim publicly what he has seen or heard. Nevertheless the prophet may occasionally use the methods and do the work of a seer.

Briefly one could also say that a seer's general function was, by using different methods, to see things of various kinds on this earth hidden from common men; the main function of a prophet was, filled with or touched by the divinity, to receive revelations from the other world and utter them as oracles to men. The dividing-line between a seer and a prophet can not be drawn sharply. Both could on occasion execute the same functions.

p. 95 One reason for the disappearance of the seers in Israel was the theocentric nature of the Yahweh religion; another was the fact that the functions of the seers fell into disrepute because of their resemblance to analogous phenomena in Canaanite paganism. The polemics of the prophets and the laws against pagan soothsaying and divination necessarily threw an air of ignominy even over the activities of the Israelite seers. Their proceedings were then regarded as illegitimate and incompatible with the true Yahweh religion.

This development involving the disappearance of the seers in the strict sense and their replacement by the prophets is observed by the author of the well-known remark in 1 Sam. 9. 9: 'Formerly in Israel when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is not called a prophet was formerly called a seer.' It is not very likely that this remark indicates merely a change in the mode of expression; it rather implies an observation concerning historic facts: in earlier times there existed in Israel