

Harrelson, W., Interpreting the OT

p. 208 There were prophets in the ancient Near Eastern world whose words and deeds resembled those of Israel's prophets at most points. A man such as Elijah was not in all respects a unique phenomenon in the ancient world. Prophets are even known to have reprimanded or denounced the kings under whom they served (certain texts from Mari on the Euphrates River being the best examples to date). Israelite prophecy was different from most other prophetic movements because of the following two points: (1) Israel's prophets addressed their rebukes to the people in the name of the God of Israel. One covenant people of Yahweh was attacked in the name of the one God of all the people. Individuals and groups were singled out, as here, for reprimand, but the prophetic word of Yahweh was a word from the God of Israel about the breach of the covenant between God and people. Thus Israelite prophecy from first to last was a movement calling for reform and faithfulness on the part of the whole people. (2) The prophets of Israel threatened divine punishment upon the entire people of Israel. Again, individuals and groups could feel the divine wrath for their particular acts of unfaithfulness, but the word of the prophets called for all Israel to "prepare to meet" God (Amos 4.12). These two points - actually one point with two elements - have no counterpart in the prophetic movements known from Mesopotamian, Syrian, Phoenician, Canaanite, or Egyptian societies. There is a deadly seriousness about the prophetic word, therefore, that one senses in all the activities of these prophets. Life and death is the issue; life for a faithful people, death for a people who depart from the way of the covenant God.

p.163 a prophet (Hebrew nabi) was formerly called a seer (roeh) shows that the term for Israel's prophets (nabi) is a late-comer, probably deriving from the ecstatic seizures of bands of men such as Saul is soon to meet (10.5-8, 10-13).