

# Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4, Session 5, Terms for Prophet Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4, Session 5, Terms for Prophet, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Robert Vannoy's lecture explores the terms "nabi" (prophet) and "ro'eh" (seer) in the **Old Testament**. It examines a theory suggesting that these terms initially represented distinct roles, with the nabi receiving messages directly and the ro'eh receiving them through external means. **Vannoy critiques this theory by highlighting biblical examples that don't fit this pattern.** The lecture further investigates analogies between Israelite prophetism and similar phenomena in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, specifically Mesopotamia, scrutinizing the similarities and differences between ecstasies in Mari texts and Old Testament prophets. **Ultimately, the lecture argues for the uniqueness of Israelite prophetism, emphasizing that prophets deliver messages directly from God.** The lecture addresses whether there is a real distinction, or simply a difference in popular and technical terminology, and concludes that there is no substantive distinction.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4,  
Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player  
or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio  
podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets →  
Foundations).**



**Vannoy\_FoundProp  
hecy\_Session05.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4, Session 5, Terms for Prophet

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Robert Vannoy's "Foundation of Prophecy, Lecture 4."

#### Briefing Document: Vannoy, "Foundation of Prophecy, Lecture 4"

**Subject:** Analysis of Prophetic Terminology (Nabi, Roeh, Hozeh) and Examination of Analogies Between Israelite and Mesopotamian Prophetism

**Source:** Excerpts from Robert Vannoy, "Foundation of Prophecy, Lecture 4"

#### Main Themes & Ideas:

1. **Prophetic Terminology (Nabi, Roeh, Hozeh):** Vannoy explores the meanings of the Hebrew terms *nabi* (prophet), *ro'eh* (seer), and *hozeh* and their relationship to the concept of prophecy itself.
  - **Nabi:** Closely connected to prophecy, understood as a word from God. Emphasizes "forth-telling" rather than just "foretelling." Prediction is not the essence of prophecy. It's speaking for God. "The words of the prophet, the prophecy, are really words of God and it may or may not be predictive." Emphasizes the proclamation aspect.
  - **Roeh:** Translated as "seer," derived from "to see" (*ra'ah*). Vannoy addresses the argument that *nabi* and *ro'eh* were originally distinct roles that later became synonymous. He challenges the idea that *ro'eh* were primarily those who used external means (like divination) to determine God's will. "The *ro'eh* shows a person turned to God... the emphasis is more on receiving the message, seeing the message." It was a more popular designation for prophet compared to *nabi*.
  - **Hozeh:** Synonym for *ro'eh*, derived from the verb *haza* ("to gaze at"). Emphasis on receiving revelation from God. Terms are used interchangeably. "The vision that Isaiah saw, that's *hazon*. So you could call Isaiah a *hozeh* as well as a *nabi* or a *ro'eh*. I mean, all these terms are used interchangeably."
  - **Relationship between Terms:** "The prophet of today used to be called the seer." Vannoy ultimately concludes that there's no essential difference between these terms, seeing them more as variations in linguistic usage and emphasis. "*Nabi* shows us a person who is, you might say, turned towards the people to speak God's message so that the emphasis is on what he has received from God...in

*nabi* the emphasis is more on the proclamation, in *ro'eh* the emphasis is more on receiving the message, seeing the message."

1. **Critique of Applying External Patterns to Scripture:** Vannoy warns against imposing patterns from other cultures (like Mesopotamia) onto the biblical text, particularly regarding the roles of *nabi* and *ro'eh*. He argues that the biblical data often doesn't fit neatly into these external frameworks. "Here you have a pattern from elsewhere that is imposed on Scripture and the specifics of scriptural data are forced into an already preconceived pattern."
2. **Legitimate vs. Illegitimate External Means of Determining God's Will:** While the Bible condemns divination, sorcery, and consulting the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10), Vannoy acknowledges that the Old Testament includes examples of *legitimate* use of external means, such as the Urim and Thummim used by the high priest. However, he emphasizes that those who used legitimate means were not called *ro'eh*, and those who used illegitimate means were called "diviners, magicians, soothsayers or sorcerers."
3. **Analogies to Prophetism in Other Nations (Specifically Mesopotamia):** Vannoy analyzes alleged analogies between Israelite prophetism and similar phenomena in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, particularly Mesopotamia (specifically Mari). He acknowledges "formal similarities" but cautions against assuming an intrinsic link or derivation.
  - **Formal Similarities:** He acknowledges formal similarities between Israelite prophets and Mesopotamian ecstasies, such as receiving messages from a deity, delivering messages unasked, and sometimes criticizing the king.
  - **Important Differences (between Mari texts and Old Testament prophets):** Vannoy emphasizes crucial differences:
    - **Indirect Delivery:** In the Mari texts, the ecstatic's message typically reaches the king *indirectly*, through an intermediary official. In contrast, Old Testament prophets usually delivered messages *directly* to the king. "In all these texts the message gets to the king indirectly through a third party. It's customary for the Old Testament prophets to deliver their message directly to the king."
    - **Qualification of Authority:** Some Mari texts end with phrases like "Let my lord do what pleases him," which diminishes the authority of the message compared to the unqualified pronouncements of Old Testament prophets. "That type of a qualification detracts from the force and the authority of the message... That

certainly distinguishes it from the message of the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament prophets never gave a message from the Lord with that kind of a qualification attached to it."

- **Focus of the Message:** The messages in the Mari texts primarily concern external cultic obligations (sacrifices, reports), while Old Testament prophets focused on ethical and spiritual realities. "The message of the Mari text does not concern ethical or spiritual realities, only external cultic obligations. That contrasts greatly with the message of the Old Testament prophets whose primary concern was with the moral and spiritual condition of the king and the people."
- 1. **Uniqueness of Israelite Prophetism:** Vannoy asserts that the essential characteristic of Israelite prophetism is that the prophet speaks a message given directly by the one true God, not their own ideas. This distinguishes it from prophetic phenomena in other cultures. "The most essential characteristic of prophetism in Israel is that in Israel, the prophet doesn't speak his own ideas, he doesn't give his own words. He gives a message given to him directly by the one and only true God."

#### **Key Quotes:**

- "The words of the prophet, the prophecy, are really words of God and it may or may not be predictive. In other words, the prophecy is a word from God which fits well with the title nabi . As some of those citations pointed out, with the Greek prophetes, it's really speaking for God. It's not so much the essence of the human words; not so much foretelling as it is forth-telling. That forth-telling may include a few predictions but prediction is not the essence of what prophecy is."
- "Formerly in Israel if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, 'Come, let us go to the seer, ro'eh,' because the prophet of today used to be called the seer."
- "Here you have a pattern from elsewhere that is imposed on Scripture and the specifics of scriptural data are forced into an already preconceived pattern."
- "The most essential characteristic of prophetism in Israel is that in Israel, the prophet doesn't speak his own ideas, he doesn't give his own words. He gives a message given to him directly by the one and only true God."

#### **Points for Further Discussion/Analysis:**

- Vannoy's emphasis on the directness of divine communication in Israelite prophecy versus the indirectness in Mesopotamian examples.

- The implications of Vannoy's argument about the uniqueness of Israelite prophetism for inter-religious dialogue.
- The ongoing debate about the relationship between Israelite religion and the cultures of the ancient Near East.

I hope this is helpful!

## 4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4, Session 5, Terms for Prophet

### Foundation of Prophecy: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary difference between *forth-telling* and *foretelling* in the context of prophecy?
2. According to Alfred Haldar, how did the roles of Mahu and Baru in Mesopotamian society differ from each other?
3. According to Vannoy, what is the problem with using the Mesopotamian Mahu and Baru to explain the *nabi* and *ro'eh* from the Old Testament?
4. In what ways did the Israelite kingship differ from the other nations' kingship?
5. Describe the significance of the parenthetical statement in 1 Samuel 9:9.
6. How does the Septuagint translation of 1 Samuel 9:11 differ from the Massoretic text, and what is the potential implication of this difference?
7. What is the essential difference between the functions of *nabi* and *ro'eh*, if any, according to Vannoy?
8. What is the significance of Amos 1:1 in relation to the theme of visionary reception in prophecy?
9. What are "formal similarities" between prophetism in Israel and that of other nations?
10. What are the key differences between the Mari texts and Old Testament prophecies?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. *Forth-telling* refers to speaking or proclaiming a message from God, while *foretelling* refers to predicting the future. The essence of prophecy is forth-telling, not necessarily predicting future events.
2. The Mahu received messages from the gods directly in an ecstatic state, while the Baru received messages indirectly through external means such as reading

astrological signs or omens. Thus, the Mahu was an ecstatic, while the Baru was a diviner or interpreter of signs.

3. The biblical data doesn't necessarily fit the Mahu and Baru pattern. Samuel is called "a seer" but did not work with external means in order to determine the will of God.
4. Israel wanted a human king like the nations around about. However, the role and function of the king of Israel was quite different from that of the nations around it.
5. The parenthetical statement clarifies the relationship between the terms *ro'eh* and *nabi*, suggesting that the term "seer" was an older designation for what later became known as a "prophet." It indicates a shift in linguistic usage over time.
6. The Septuagint suggests that *ro'eh* was a more popular designation used by the people, while the Massoretic text claims that the *nabi* was previously called the seer. This difference impacts the understanding of whether the terms represent a distinction in common versus technical usage.
7. Vannoy argues that there is no essential difference between the two. *Nabi* emphasizes the proclamation of the message to others, while *ro'eh* emphasizes the visionary means of receiving the message.
8. Amos 1:1 highlights the visionary reception, as it states what Amos "saw" concerning Israel. This emphasizes the seer-like quality of Amos's prophetic experience.
9. Formal similarities are shared customs, religious institutions and practices that existed between Israel and other nations. However, there are also essential differences, with the prophet functioning differently inside and outside Israel.
10. Malack Dagon receives the message but does not deliver it directly to the king and passes it on to the king by letter through a third party. Also, two of the tablets end with the statement, "Let my lord do what pleases him," after the message has been given. The focus of the message in the Mari text does not concern ethical or spiritual realities, but only external cultic obligations.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of distinguishing between *forth-telling* and *foretelling* in understanding the role of a prophet, according to Vannoy. Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
2. Analyze the arguments for and against drawing analogies between Mesopotamian figures like the Mahu and Baru and Israelite prophets (*nabi* and *ro'eh*). What are the potential pitfalls of such comparisons?
3. Explore the relationship between the terms *nabi* and *ro'eh* as presented by Vannoy. How does he reconcile apparent contradictions in the biblical text regarding their usage?
4. Assess the claim that Israelite prophetism was derived from analogous phenomena in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. What evidence does Vannoy present to challenge this view, and how persuasive is his argument?
5. Compare and contrast the messages delivered by prophets in the Mari texts with those delivered by prophets in the Old Testament. What are the key differences in content, and what do these differences reveal about the nature of Israelite prophecy?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- ***Nabi***: Hebrew term meaning "prophet." It emphasizes the proclamation of God's message to the people.
- ***Ro'eh***: Hebrew term meaning "seer." It is a participial form of *ra'ah*, "to see," and emphasizes the visionary reception of God's message.
- ***Hozeh***: Hebrew term meaning "gazer" or "seer." It is synonymous with *ro'eh* and derived from the verb *haza*.
- ***Mahu***: A term used in Mesopotamian languages to designate "prophets." According to Haldar, the Mahu were ecstasies who received messages directly from the gods.
- ***Baru***: A term used in Mesopotamian languages to designate "prophets." According to Haldar, the Baru received messages indirectly through external means such as omens or astrology.
- ***Urim and Thummim***: Objects used by the high priest in ancient Israel to discern God's will, representing a legitimate use of external means of divination within a specific religious context.
- ***Septuagint***: The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).
- ***Massoretic Text***: The authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible.
- ***Mari Texts***: A collection of cuneiform tablets discovered at Mari, an ancient city in Mesopotamia, containing letters and other documents that offer insights into the culture and religion of the time.
- ***Ecstatic***: A person in an altered state of consciousness, often associated with receiving divine messages or visions.
- ***Formal Similarities***: Analogous customs, religious institutions, and practices shared between Israel and other ancient Near Eastern cultures.
- ***Diviners/Soothsayers***: People who attempt to determine the future or the will of the gods through various means, such as interpreting omens or casting lots; these practices were forbidden to the Israelites.

## 5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 4, Session 5, Terms for Prophet, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Prophecy in the Old Testament: An FAQ

- **What is the primary function of a "nabi" (prophet) in the Old Testament, and is prediction essential to this role?**
- The primary function of a "nabi" (prophet) is to be a spokesperson for God, delivering God's words to the people. While prophecy can sometimes involve prediction, its essence lies in "forth-telling," meaning speaking on behalf of God, which may or may not include foretelling future events.
- **How does the role of the "ro'eh" (seer) relate to that of the "nabi" (prophet) in the Old Testament, and what does 1 Samuel 9:9 suggest about their relationship?**
- The terms "ro'eh" (seer) and "nabi" (prophet) were closely related, often used synonymously. 1 Samuel 9:9 (a parenthetical statement) indicates that the title "seer" was an older term for what later became known as a "prophet." The passage suggests a shift in linguistic usage, with "nabi" eventually becoming the more common term. Some scholars suggest the terms were used to denote the difference between a popular (ro'eh) and a more technical (nabi) means of designation.
- **What was the theory proposed by Alfred Haldar regarding the distinction between "nabi" and "ro'eh," and why does the biblical data not fully support this theory?**
- Alfred Haldar proposed that the distinction between "nabi" and "ro'eh" in Israel mirrored the Mesopotamian distinction between "Mahu" (ecstatic receiving direct messages) and "Baru" (interpreting external signs). However, the biblical data doesn't fit this pattern. Figures like Samuel are called "seers" but did not rely on external means, and those who did use divination were not called "seers" but diviners, magicians, soothsayers, or sorcerers.
- **Did the Israelites ever legitimately use external means to determine God's will, and if so, who was authorized to do so?**
- Yes, the Israelites used external means to determine God's will legitimately. The High Priest could use the Urim and Thummim to inquire of God, and after Saul

killed the priests at Nob, Abiathar escaped, bringing the ephod to David, who inquired of the Lord through it.

- **What are some alleged analogies between Israelite prophetism and that of other ancient Near Eastern nations, specifically Mesopotamia?**
- Some scholars argue that formal analogies exist between Israelite prophetism and that of other nations, particularly Mesopotamia (Mari texts), Egypt, and Canaan. These include similarities in form (receiving messages from a deity, delivering them unasked with authority) and content (prophecies of deliverance, commissioning of the prophet).
- **Despite the alleged similarities, what are some crucial differences between the messages delivered in the Mari texts and those of the Old Testament prophets?**
- There are significant differences. In the Mari texts, the message often reaches the king through a third party, with the ecstatic delivering the message to an official who then relays it to the king. Additionally, some tablets end with qualifications like "Let my lord do what pleases him," which detracts from the authority of the message. Furthermore, the Mari texts often focus on external cultic obligations rather than ethical or spiritual realities, the primary concern of Old Testament prophets.
- **What are the Hebrew words for "seer" or "visionary," and how are they used in the Old Testament?**
- The Hebrew words are "ro'eh" (from the verb "ra'ah," meaning "to see") and "hozeh" (from the verb "haza," meaning "to gaze at"). Both terms emphasize the receiving of divine revelation. They are often used interchangeably with "nabi" (prophet), suggesting the prophet receives the message by seeing and then speaks the message given to them by God.
- **What is the speaker's final conclusion regarding the use of the terms, "nabi", "ro'eh", and "hozeh"?**
- Though all terms are used interchangeably to describe a similar function, "nabi" indicates a person turned towards the people to speak God's message, emphasizing proclamation. A "ro'eh" or "hozeh" is a person turned towards God and gazing at His message, emphasizing receiving the revelation. The message in both cases is the same.