

Robert Vannoy, Foundation of Prophecy, Lecture 4

Terms Used to Refer to Prophets Continued

e. Nabi - prophet

We were just talking here about the relationship between prophecy, that is, the message of the prophets, and term *nabi*, meaning “prophet.” What I’m saying is the two are very closely connected. 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.

f. Roeh - Seer

Let’s go on to another term and that is *ro’eh*. It’s really a participial form of *ra’ah*, to see. It’s been translated “seer”. Now as soon as you come to that term, and look at the literature on it you’ll find that there are those who attempt to argue that *nabi* and *ro’eh* were originally two different types of people. In other words, you could distinguish between the *ro’eh* and the *nabi*, and that it was only in later time that the two words became more synonymous.

1. Mahu & Baru from Mesopotamia

One scholar, his name is not that important, but I’ll give it to you, Alfred Haldar, argued that you find the same difference in some Mesopotamian languages designating “prophets” as you find in the Old Testament. In Mesopotamia, you have some people who are called *Mahu* and *Baru*. What Haldar argued was that the *Mahu* was the same as the Hebrew *nabi* and the *Baru* was the same as the Hebrew *ro’eh*. So it has these two designations in Akkadian Mesopotamia texts and he said the equivalent in Israel is between the *Mahu* and the *nabi* and the *Baru* and the *ro’eh*. Now, in Mesopotamia the *Mahu* and *Baru* were similar in that both of them had the task of discerning what the will of God was and then making that known to other people. But there was an important

difference between the *Mahu* and *Baru*. The *Mahu* received the message from the gods directly and he did so in an ecstatic condition. So, the *Mahu* was an ecstatic and while he's in that ecstatic condition, he gets a message from a deity, which he then transfers on to others. He does that while he is still in an ecstatic frame of mind.

The *Baru* however was different. The *Baru* received the message indirectly through external means. In other words, the *Baru* was someone that would read astrological signs or read omens of various sorts. One of the ways in which the *Baru* determined the will of the Lord was to examine the livers of sacrificial animals and to look at the configurations of the liver. Different configurations of livers have different significances and he would in that way determine the will of God or he would pour oil out on water and see what kind of pattern developed and read something from that or cast lots – various external means of determining the will of God.

2. External Means of Determining God's will

Now what Haldar tries to do then is say that just as Mesopotamia had their ecstatics and their *Baru* priests, the same distinction in Israel can be found between the *nabi* and *ro'eh*. The *nabi* was the ecstatic who received this message directly from the deity. The *ro'eh* was someone who received information externally and then passed it on to others. Now that's an interesting theory. The problem is, if you look at biblical data it becomes quite clear the biblical data doesn't fit the pattern. 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. For example, Samuel is called "a seer" 1 Samuel 9:11, but he did not work with external means in order to determine the will of God.

Now let me just say something further about this business of determining the will of God by external means before we go further. That is not completely excluded from the Bible. Remember the high priest had the Urim and Thummim in his robe and he could determine the will of God through use of the Urim and Thummim. When you get in the time of David and after Saul had wiped out the priests at Nob, Abiathar escaped and he brought the ephod to David and in the next few chapters you see David saying, "Bring me the ephod" and then he asks questions of the Lord. "Shall I go to this place or not?"

And the Lord said, “Yes, go”. “Will I be victorious?” And the Lord said, “Yes, you will,” or “No, you won’t.” There was the use of external means in a legitimate way through the biblical material. However, the individual who can use the external means is never called a *ro’eh*. Abiathar who had the custody, you might say, of the Urim and Thummim, he was a priest; he wasn’t a *ro’eh*. So it doesn’t fit the category.

You do have reference to individuals who used external phenomena to determine the will of God. But the interesting thing is they are never called “seers”. They are never designated by the term *ro’eh*. They are called diviners, magicians, soothsayers or sorcerers. If you look at Deuteronomy 18:10, in that passage which describes what the prophet is to be and how God is going to speak through the prophet, you read there, “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcrafts or casts spells, who is a medium, a spiritist, who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.” The Lord is condemning the very thing that these *Baru* priests did in Mesopotamia, looking at omens from livers or from astrological phenomena or whatever. That was something that was forbidden to the Israelites.

3) 1 Sam. 9:9

Now, there’s a verse that I think is instructive although it’s also a verse that raises a lot of questions. But 1 Samuel 9:9 is instructive regarding the question of the relationship between the usage of *ro’eh* and *nabi* in the Old Testament. It reads, “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.” “The *nabi*, prophet, of today used to be called a *ro’eh*, seer.” Now that verse, if you’re looking at the NIV, you will see it’s in parentheses. It’s a parenthetical statement that is inserted after verse 8. If you look at the larger context, I think you would conclude that it really fits better after verse 11 than it does after verse 8. You see this is where Saul’s out hunting for his father’s lost cattle and he find can’t them. His servant says, “There’s a seer, why don’t we go and ask him?” He says that in verse 8. The servant said, “Look, I have a quarter shekel

of silver. I'll give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take." Leave verse 9 out for the moment. "'Good,' Saul said to his servant. But they still couldn't find the donkeys, so they set out for the town where the man of God was. As they were going up the hill to the town they met some girls coming out to draw water. They asked them, 'is the seer here?'" Then you get the use of the word *ro'eh*. "Is the seer here?" And, you see, verse 9, then, if you put it down there after verse 11, "Formerly in Israel if a man went to inquire of God he'd say, 'Come let us go to the seer' because the prophet of that day used to be called the seer." Now what many people think is verse 9 was not part of the original text. It was an explanatory gloss probably in the margin of the text. At some point in the process of transmission, it got put into the text but they put it in the wrong place. It should have been put in after verse 11 to explain what a seer is rather than after verse 8 where it really doesn't fit so well. I think it's reasonable to conclude that it probably is an explanatory gloss, not part of the original text. But the important thing that it is telling us is there's not essential difference between a prophet and a seer. It's a matter of linguistic usage. "The prophet of today used to be called the seer." The word "seer" is older than "prophet" and in later times, the word *nabi* or "prophet" was the more common term and the word "seer" became rather archaic language, you needed an explanation so there'd be no confusion.

I think that's probably what's going on here, but if you think about it and put it in its larger biblical context, it raises some other questions. When do we date this remark? That question becomes rather significant because a long time after Samuel, prophets were still called seers. You'll find it in Isaiah for example, the use of the word "seer." Also perplexing is that the term *nabi* is used long before the time of Samuel. Abraham was called a *nabi* back in Genesis 20, verse 7. And *nabi* is used in Numbers, it's used in Deuteronomy, it's used in Judges. In fact, Samuel himself is called a *nabi* in 1 Samuel 3:20. So then the question becomes, if the word "prophet" is used before the time of Samuel, how can it be said that what was later termed a prophet was in the time of Samuel called a seer? Now some people might say, "Here's a clear evidence that all the

texts in the Old Testament in which the word “prophet” is used are to be dated long after the time of Samuel.” Is that a legitimate conclusion?

Let’s go to the Hebrew text. The Hebrew is, “For the prophet of today was called formerly the seer.” Now a translation of that is a bit difficult. Notice what the NIV does—The phrase “because the prophet of today” takes it as a kind of construct: the prophet of today. “He used to be called a seer.” King James and NASB repeat the verb. “For he that is now called the prophet, or the prophet of today, was called formerly a seer.” You only have one verb in the Hebrew Scripture. The NASB says, “he is called now *nabi*.”

Now, if you go to the Septuagint translation of 1 Samuel 9:11, there you get a different idea introduced because there you have, “For the people before time called the prophet, the seer.” See, how do you tell. Where does that Greek *ha laos* [the people] come from? “The people” before time called the prophet the seer. So back to the Hebrew *ha’yom*. What the Septuagint translation presupposes from the Hebrew, instead of *ha’yom* [today], you would’ve had *ha’am* [the people]. Do you see how easily that could be confused? In the “*yom*” just make the substitution of an “*ayin*” for a “*waw*.” I think that the Septuagint probably puts the correct light on what’s going on here. The difference between the reading of the Septuagint and the Massoretic text is that the Septuagint indicates that *ro’eh* was a more popular designation of the people. Whereas *nabi* was a more technical or official word for prophet. The people formerly called the prophet, the seer. If that’s the case, the word “*ro’eh*” could continue in use in later times and the term “prophet” could have been used early as we actually find it is. And there’s no essential difference between the two. It’s a distinction between a more technical and a more popular usage of it, not an absolute semantic differentiation. So the prophets were seers. They were made to see by God what they should proclaim to others. So even though the words “*nabi*” and “*ro’eh*” are both used, I think we could say they speak of the same function. The people called the prophet a seer formerly.

Now if you’re going to make a distinction between them, I think that to this degree it is legitimate. To say that *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. The *ro'eh* shows a person turned to God. In other words, in *nabi* the emphasis is more on the proclamation, in *ro'eh* the emphasis is more on receiving the message, seeing the message. So you could say the *nabi* puts more stress on the active function of proclamation while the *ro'eh* puts more stress on the passive function of receiving the message. But there's no essential difference between the prophet and the seer.

Student Question: "How would seer, the ones that are being asked by a king to come and read the writing on the wall or whatever, interpret dreams and stuff like that, how do they not get confused?" Well I think what you're getting at there is this question of how you distinguish between the two of them called "prophet" or not. Is that it? I guess if you know people – if the people are calling, you know, Isaiah or Obadiah or something, and they're just using the word "seer," then how would they distinguish the actual prophets, then, from somebody else that they call a seer? Yes, in fact if you look at Isaiah 6:1 where Isaiah says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." There you have the verbal form, *ra'ah*. So Isaiah had a visionary experience of God. He saw the Lord. He could legitimately be called as a *nabi*. I think the emphasis of that term *ra'ah/ro'eh* is on this visionary means of receiving the message. Whereas the emphasis of the term *nabi* is more on the proclamation of the message to others. But a *ro'eh* and a *nabi* are the same thing. It's just a different designation. There seems to be a preference among the people for using the term *ro'eh* earlier and *nabi* later. It's a more popular versus technical label, for those performing this function. But there's no reason biblically to see any distinction.

4) Amos 1:1

Let's look at Amos 1:1. I was looking for *ro'eh*, but it's a verb instead of a noun. "The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa. What he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake." If these are the words of Amos, you would expect in the way we talk for the following phrase to read, "The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa. What he heard concerning Israel two years before the flood." It doesn't say that

it says “what he saw.” The focus is on that visionary kind of reception. The verb here is *haza*. It’s this next word we’re looking at, which is “he saw”. It’s the same thing. It means “to see” or “to gaze at.” I think the important thing here is this kind of attempt to separate the *nabi* from the *ro’eh* as being two different kinds of individuals is not given in the biblical text, they’re the same.

Student Question: “So someone that just worked for the king wasn’t considered a prophet, but was a fortune teller or one who predicted the future were they also called seers?” No, they’d be called soothsayers, diviners, or givers of omens. There were other words for those kinds of individuals.

G. Hozeh

Let’s go on to *hozeh*. I won’t say much about *haza*. It comes from the verb *haza* just like *ro’eh* comes from the verb *ra’ah*. And *haza* means “to gaze at”, or “to look at”. It’s really a synonym for *ro’eh*, it’s used in the same way. Just as with *ro’eh*, the emphasis seems to be on receiving the revelation of God. So if you look at Isaiah 1:1, “The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” The vision is *hazon*. It’s a noun derived from the verb *haza*. 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.

3. The Origin of Prophetism in Israel

Let’s go on to three. “The origin of prophetism in Israel.” You notice the three sub-points. A. is, “Alleged analogies to Israel’s prophetism in other nations.” B. is, “Internal Israelite explanations for the origin of prophetism,” and C. is, “What I think is a biblical explanation of prophetism.” So first, we want to spend more time on A than on B and C.

A. Alleged analogies to Israel Prophetism in Israel

A. is, “Alleged analogies to Israel’s prophetism in other nations.” You’ll find in the literature that it’s been said that analogies can be found in prophetism in Israel among

other peoples, and nations in the ancient Near East. Then what usually happens is scholars attempt to explain the phenomenon of the prophetism in Israel as being a derivative of these phenomena outside of Israel so that the origin of Israel's prophets is attributed to or explained by analogous phenomena that are found outside of Israel.

Formal Similarities

Now, a few comments about this. I think that from the outset, we have to be honest, clear and open and say that we cannot deny that we may come across what I would call "formal similarities" between what we find in Israel and the phenomena of prophetism elsewhere. In fact when you think about it there are a lot of customs, religious institutions and practices in Israel that have formal analogies among other peoples. But I'm not sure saying that says a whole lot. Even if there are formal similarities, the question is: does that give a basis for saying there's some kind of intrinsic connection or link between what we find in Israel and in the surrounding nations? It seems to me, in view of what we have already said about the nature of the prophetic function in Israel, that if these are people chosen by God through whom he will give his word to his people by putting his word in their mouths, to speak of any kind of intrinsic link between what goes on in Israel and what we may find among other peoples, would have to be something that would be highly questionable. It would seem to me that to speak of derivation is something that would be excluded on the basis of the prophetic Scripture. But having said that, it's also very clear that God speaks to human beings, including to his people Israel in the Old Testament period, in the context of the culture, the institutions, the thought forms of the people to whom he is speaking. When you look at the Old Testament, you will find many phenomena in the Old Testament for which you can find formal analogies outside of Israel. The Old Testament is full of regulations for bringing sacrifice. Other ancient peoples used sacrifices in their religious observance. The Old Testament sign of the covenant was circumcision. Other ancient people practiced circumcision. Circumcision acquired a very specific significance or meaning in the context of the Old Testament, but it was not something unknown in the ancient world.

Think of the whole concept of covenant that seems to have been quite clearly molded upon a concept of treaty that governed international relations, those Hittite treaty forms. The biblical covenant form is molded around the Hittite treaty form. God takes an instrument of human legal relationships and utilizes it to structure the relationship which he establishes between himself and his people, that's the great thing.

Just take the idea of kingship. Israel, at a certain point in time, wasn't satisfied with God as their king; they wanted a human king like the nations around about. The Lord told Samuel, "Give them a king." So Israel had a king like the nations around about. However, with the qualification when God told Samuel to give them a king Samuel described the manner of the kingship. In 1 Samuel 10:25, the role and function of the king of Israel was quite different from that of the nations around it. So you had a similarity and difference. Israel had a king but it wasn't a king who functioned in the same way that kings outside of Israel did.

Israel had a priest. Other ancient peoples had priests. So why should Israel not have a prophet if other ancient peoples had prophets, but what are the essential differences between them? The way in which the prophet functions in Israel and the way in which the prophet functioned outside of Israel was different. So if you can find outside of Israel a formal, I'm saying formal, analogy with what you find in Israel with respect to the prophetic function, I don't think that detracts in any way from the uniqueness of Israel's prophets. Yes, other people had prophets, but in Israel, there's something different. 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. So when you ask the question about analogies to prophetism outside of Israel with what you find in Israel, I think you have to keep that in mind.

But even having said that, I think then the next question becomes, "what kind of evidence is there for even some kind of formal analogy to prophetism outside of Israel if it's not in it's essence this intrinsic quality where God is placing his words in the mouth of these individuals?" What kind of formal evidence do we find in the ancient world for

this phenomenon of prophetism? Notice on your outline, I have Mesopotamian analogies, Egyptian analogies, Canaanite analogies, and a conclusion

1) Mesopotamian Analogies

First is Mesopotamian analogies. The most important extra biblical text for Mesopotamian analogies are texts that were found at a place called Mari which is in the vicinity of Babylon in upper Mesopotamia. It was a prosperous city before the time of Hammurabi. Hammurabi lived at around 1700 B.C., so it's fairly early. The ruler there in the time just before it fell to Hammurabi was a ruler known as Zimri Lim. There have been about 5,000 cuneiform tablets found in an archive in the excavation of Mari. Among them some find traces of what they call prophetism in Mesopotamia. If you look at letter A. on that handout, the first text there under Akkadian letters, you'll notice the heading "Divine Revelation." This material's taken out of Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* usually abbreviated ANET. It is the standard English language translation of extra-biblical texts from the ancient Near East edited by James Pritchard, published by Princeton University Press.

a) A Letter of Istarastu to Zimri Lim of Mari

The first text there is a letter of Istarastu to Zimri Lim, who was the king of Mari. Let me read the text and make some comments on it. It reads, "Speak to my Lord. Thus Istarastu your servant. The day I dispatched this tablet of mine to my lord, Malack Dagon, a man from Shotga came and spoke to me as follows, 'In a dream of mine, I was set on going in the company of another man from the fortress of Sigaricone in the upper district of Mari. On my way, I entered Turka and right after entering, I entered the Temple of Dagon and prostrated myself. As I was prostrate, Dagon opened his mouth and spoke to me as follows, "Did the kings of the Ammonites and their forces make peace with the forces of Zimri Lim?" I said, "They did not make peace." Just before I went out, he spoke to me as follows, 'Why are the messengers of Zimri Lim not in constant attendance upon me and why does he not lay his full report before me? Had this been done, I would long ago have delivered the kings of the Ammonites into the power of Zimri Lim. Now go, I send you. Thus shall you speak to Zimri Lim saying, "Send me, your messengers. Lay

your full report before me and then I will have the kings of the Ammonites cooked on a fisherman's stick and I will lay them before you.”” That's the end of the quote. “This is what this man saw in his dream and then recounted to me. I now hereby write to my lord. My lord should deal with this. Furthermore, if my lord so desires, my lord shall lay his full report before Dagon and the messengers of my lord shall be constantly on the way to Dagon. The man who told me this dream was to offer a sacrifice to Dagon. And so I did not send him on. Moreover, since this man was trustworthy, I did not take any of his hair or the fringe across his garment.”

So, Itorastu says that on the day he wrote this letter, there was this man from Shotga, a man called Malack Dagon, who came to him with the message. Malack Dagon says he had dreamed in the dream instead of going in the company of another man. In the dream, he and this other person went to Turka, that's a place near Mari, and to a temple of a deity by the name of Dagon, probably the same as the Dagon mentioned in the Old Testament as the god of the Philistines. But the letter goes on to say when Malack Dagon went into the temple, in his dream, the god asked him a question, “Did the kings of the Ammonites make peace with the forces of Zimri Lim?” There were probably skirmishes between the soldiers of Zimri Lim and these people called the Ammonites. When Malack Dagon gives a negative answer, the god says, “Why aren't the messengers of Zimri Lim in constant attendance upon me? Why don't they give me a full report? Had they done that, I would have delivered these people, the Ammonites, into the power of Zimri Lim.” And then he says, “Now go, I send you, thus shall you speak to Zimri Lim saying, ‘Send me your messengers. Lay your full report before me, and I'll have these Ammonites cooked on a fisherman's pole.’”

So after Itorastu tells Zimri Lim what this Malack Dagon had seen in his dream, he advises him to follow the instruction of Dagon. Now, some see in Malack Dagon an analogy with the prophets of Israel and they set it up this way: Malack Dagon delivers a message from the deity that Zimri Lim was supposed to obey and the prophets of Israel often gave the message from the deity Yahweh to a king that he was to obey. However at this point, we'll come back to this later, but at this point I think it's worthy to notice that

Malack Dagon does not do that directly. Malack Dagon gives the message to Itorastu and Itorastu passes it on to the king by means of a letter, a tablet, writes it down, sends it to him. So there's some similarities as well as differences.

b) A Letter of Kidri Dagon to Zimri Lim of Mari

Let's go on to text B., which is a letter of Kidri Dagon to Zimri Lim. It's a brief text. It reads, "Moreover the day I sent this tablet of mine to my lord, an ecstatic of Dagon came and addressed me as follows." This is the word *Mahu* for ecstatic. That's the ecstatic of Dagon. The translation "ecstatic" is based on etymology and general usage, but the Mari material gives no evidence of extraordinary psychic condition. "This ecstatic of Dagon came and addressed me as follows, 'That God sent me to hurry right to the king that they're to offer mortuary sacrifices for the shade of Yadu Lim.' This is what the ecstatic said to me. I have, therefore, written to my lord that my lord do what pleases him." Now Kidri Dagon sent this letter to Zimri Lim. He was the governor of a place near Mari. And he says this ecstatic came to him with this message, "Write to the king that they are to offer mortuary sacrifices for the shade of Yadu Lim." Yadu Lim was the father of Zimri Lim, so the father of the king. It seems that Zimri Lim had failed to bring offerings to the spirit of his dead father. So Kidri Dagon gets this message from an ecstatic and passes the message on to the king. You notice in the last line he advises the king, "You should do this." But then he qualifies, "Let my lord do what pleases him."

c. Ecstatic Text to Zimri Lim of Mari

C. on your outline is G. on your handout. I won't read all of that but it's a broken tablet; there's a gap in the middle and it seems to concern the message of an ecstatic saying that Zimri Lim had to bring an offering to the deity on the 13th day of the coming month – maybe the same offering referred to in the previous text. You notice how it ends. "May my lord do in accordance as his deliberation pleases."

D. Another Letter of Kidri Dagon

D. of your outline is F. on your handout. Another letter of Kidri Dagon with a reference to an ecstatic. So this ecstatic came here earlier. But it is difficult to understand. It seems that the message concerns the building of a city gate. Exactly what is said about

the gate is not so clear. Some say instructions are given for a gate to be built. Others say it's a warning not to build it, but it's an ecstatic who reveals a message that is to be given to the king with respect to the city gate.

E. Conclusion Concerning the Mesopotamian Analogies

E: "Conclusion concerning the Mesopotamian analogies." Right here there's a list of books and articles. In that literature, many have argued that there are similarities in both form and content, between the ecstasies of these texts and the prophets of the Old Testament. Let's look at some of these. As far as similarities in form, it's argued that just as a prophet in Israel received his message from the Lord, Yahweh, so in Mari the ecstatic received his message from Dagon. That's fair enough. It's a formal similarity. Secondly, as the prophet in Israel brought his message unasked with divine authority to the king, so also in Mari with this ecstatic the message was sent on to the king unasked. The king didn't ask for the message. There is no determining in advance whether the king would want to hear the message or not. He was given the message, so another parallel. Thirdly, just as the prophet in Israel is often critical of actions of the king, so here in Mari with the ecstatic there's criticism. "Why didn't you keep me informed? Why didn't you offer a sacrifice? You should have." So those are what you might call formal similarities: similarities in form.

What about similarities in content? Some have argued that in that first text you find something comparable to a prophecy of deliverance in the Old Testament. In other words, "if you had kept me informed (you'll see in 2, 4, 6 lines down), had this been done, I would have gone and delivered the kings and the Ammonites into the power of Zimri Lim." So a parallel to a prophecy of deliverance in the Old Testament. A second similarity is found also from that first text about 8 lines down. "Now go, I send you. Thus shall you speak to Zimri Lim." Similar to Jeremiah 1:7, "You must go to everyone I send you to, say whatever I command." "Now go, speak." So I think at that level you can say, "Yes, there are some similarities between the Mari material and the Old Testament in form and even some faint similarities in content." But having said that, I think it's very important to notice this isn't done. There are also some very important differences. Let

me mention a few of them.

1) First Text, Malack Dagon

First, in that first text, Malack Dagon, who received that message, does not go directly to the king. He goes to one of the king's officials; he goes to Itorastu. It is Itorastu who puts the message on a tablet and sends it on to the king. So there's an intermediary, you might say, between the prophet who receives the message and the person who delivers it to the king. There's a third party there. In the other three letters, the ecstatic goes to Kidri Dagon who passes the message on to the king in written form. So, in other words, 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. A classic example of this is Elijah who confronts Ahab. He just goes out and confronts him. Or Isaiah, who goes out and confronts Ahaz directly.

2) Two of the Tablets end with a Striking Statement

Secondly, two of the tablets end with a rather striking statement. It's E. and G. in the handout. E. ends with the statement, "Let my lord do what pleases him" after the message has been given, and G., "May my lord be well in accordance with his deliberation that pleases him." So two of those tablets ended with that kind of a statement. That type of a qualification detracts from the force and the authority of the message. Here's the message, but do whatever you want. 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.

3) The Message in the Mari Text does not concern Ethical or Spiritual Realities

Thirdly, the focus of the message in the Mari text does not concern ethical or spiritual realities, but only external cultic obligations. "Offer this sacrifice," "give me a report about what's going on." 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. I want to elaborate a bit on that, but I'm already overtime so I'm going to have to stop. But let's pick it up with that at the beginning of

our next session and go forward from there.

Transcribed by Christa Walsh
Rough edit by Ted Hildebrandt
Final edit by Katie Ells
Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt